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ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

JANUARY 21/22, 2023

ACTS
16:6-10

DONOT
ENTER

SEEK:PART3

A SERMON BY
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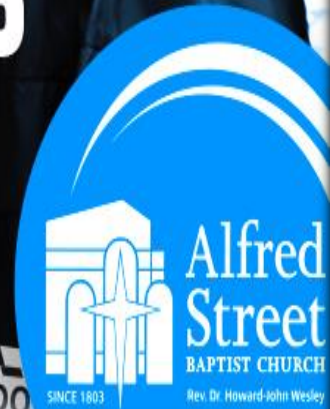


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Date: January 21 and 22, 2023
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: "Do Not Enter"
Scripture: Acts 16:6-10

"Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

SERMON SUMMARY

This weekend's sermon raises the question that most, if not all of us have asked: "how does God speak to us?" To find an answer, Pastor Wesley takes us into the second half of the book of the *Acts of the Apostles* and shares three ways God reveals God's self to Paul and to us. God speaks in at least three ways:

- Through doors that God closes and doors that God opens
- Through dreams and visions
- Through the spirit of Jesus Christ

KEY POINTS

1. The second half of the book of Acts is a record of the movement of the Gospel from Jerusalem and Judea into the rest of the known world (Acts 1:8), and how Paul and his many companions were guided by God throughout their travels.
2. God speaks to us in a myriad of ways and God may speak to each of us differently.
3. Sometimes God speaks to us through obstacles in our path, and sometimes by making a path *through* our obstacles.
4. Though God can speak to us in dreams and visions, each requires interpretation.
5. As we consider the Spirit of Christ, there is a relationship between the will of God, the word of God, Jesus, and our lives. The transitive property made clear in this sermon is:
 1. Will of God Is in the Word of God
 2. The word of God is Jesus
 3. Jesus is the model for my life
 4. Will = Word and Word = Jesus so Jesus = Will and when I am in Jesus I am in the will of God.

***Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the
facilitators to choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.***

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. The sermon notes that there are times when God speaks to us by closing doors that no one can open. Share an experience with your Village about a time when God closed a door, blocking your path. How did you know it was God? What did you learn from this encounter?
2. One of the ways in which God spoke to Paul was through dreams and visions. According to tradition, in the African American culture, dreaming of fish is thought to foretell a pregnancy. Share a dream that you can remember. What did the dream mean to you? What revelation from God did it reveal through the dream?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Quoting Revelation 3:7, Pastor Wesley reminds us, “God can open doors no human can shut, and shut doors no human can open”. This statement was made to the Church at Philadelphia. While this particular church had been faithful (when others were not), they had been weakened by their fight against enemies and their struggle to obey the Lord. Why might this word, a word about open and closed doors, offer an encouragement to the church of Philadelphia? If you were weakened in a fight for the Lord, what would these words mean to you?
2. It was noted that there are 21 instances of dreams and visions in the Bible (e.g., Genesis 40, Judges 7, etc.). Recall the biblical stories of dreams or visions that have been helpful to you and share with your Village why they were helpful. Please cite the text as you share your story. (See additional resources for citations.)

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. In Acts 1:8, on the day of Ascension, those gathered with Jesus were charged to be witnesses to the good news throughout the world. We are also called to be witnesses. How has God opened a door for you to be a witness in the world to the good news? Did you walk through that door or close it? Why?
2. Can you recall a time when you did not realize God was speaking to you until after the fact? When and how did you realize it was God's voice? What was the outcome of the delayed realization?
3. Pastor Wesley quips in the sermon that it would be nice if God sent an email every morning with instructions for our day. Indeed, God could operate in this manner, but does not? What would be lost in our faith journey if God dictated our daily agendas with precise clarity? Would you like this kind of system? Why or why not?
4. Pastor Wesley notes, in Jesus "we see God in a definitive way. We see God most clearly." In the man Jesus we see a living human being who is kind to those at the margins, who loves even his enemies, who forgives, redeems, restores, and offers grace and salvation. In Jesus we see the will of God in the flesh. How does the Spirit of Christ, or said another way, the life of Christ make a difference in your life? How does the example of the Savior move you to behave in particular ways?
5. The sermon highlights three ways in which God speaks to those who will listen, open/closed doors, dream/visions, and the Spirit of Christ. Next week we will learn about God speaking through the holy word, wise counsel, and our sound minds. Other than these six ways, what are the other ways God speaks to you? How has God's speaking to you evolved over time?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS?

1. Over and over in this and many other sermons, we hear the term, ‘good news’. How would you define “the good news”? Given the status of our nation (e.g., rising inflation, decline in the workforce, vain strivings in the highest offices in the land, misuse of power, and increasing hate crimes) what **real** impact does or can this good news have?
2. In this sermon, we hear about the role of Paul throughout the second half of Acts. However, Paul does not show up until chapter 7 and isn’t “converted” until Chapter 9. Peter is the leader when the book opens. However, he disappears after Chapter 12. Sometimes, we do all of the groundwork, and then someone else comes along and takes the glory. Peter was a disciple **with** Jesus, Paul was not. But Paul occupies a lot more “real estate” in the Bible than Peter. What do you do when someone takes the glory you worked to establish in the church? How do you live with this kind of situation?
3. In his time, Paul “disrupted economic systems and challenged philosophical foundations”. What is the **church** disrupting now and how do we know? What should **we** be disrupting?

ACTIVITY

1. *State Your Case!*

Facilitators, read the question below, and allow Villagers to pick one response. Then, allow a short time for one representative to state the case for their choice.

Why do you think it is important to know how God is speaking to you?

- Reason 1: To sharpen your discernment.
- Reason 2: To gain access to revelation from God.
- Reason 3: To fully step into God’s plan for your life (your purpose).

SPIRIT WORK

1. Make a list of goals for yourself. Pray over that list, and look for scriptures to support your goal. Journal as the doors to your goals are either opened or closed. See if you can identify the ways that God showed up and directed your journey.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions specifically for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples

1. How do you reconcile when God opens a door for your spouse, but a door remains closed for you? How do you reconcile that with your spouse, and with God?
2. Have you been at a place in your marriage when you thought it might be time to close a particular door? How did God speak to you to confirm or redirect your decision?

For Parents

1. As parents, we always want more/better for our children than we had. What happens when our will for our children does not align with God's? Have you had an experience of attempting to open a door for your children that God has or was closing? What did you learn from this experience?
2. At some point your child will be confronted by God closing a door. As parents, how can we model discerning God's voice for our children in these moments? How do you prepare your child now for understanding how God may be speaking to them through closed doors?

For Young Adults

1. We are often told to be bold, go after our dreams, and not to quit. Even when we follow that advice, it is not always the case all will go our way? When your dreams do not work out, how do you discern the why (e.g., it was not God's will, lack of commitment, overwhelming obstacles, etc.)? What are some of the "next steps" you have applied in this circumstance?
2. We have entered a phase of our life when we are called to take on more responsibility. At what point in your life did you realize that God was indeed calling you to more responsibility? With these new responsibilities, what has God spoken to you? Has God provided pathways through your obstacles? If so, how?
3. How do you know that God is hearing and answering your prayers?

For Seniors

1. Paul's encounter with others throughout his Christian walk elicited different responses—acceptance, rejection, reception, and sometimes even riots. As you walk with Christ and share the good news, what responses do you receive from those you encounter? What has this taught you about the characteristics of those with whom you work best?
2. Is there a door from your past that God closed but you pushed open anyway? What was the effect of you not following God's direction?

For Women

1. We speak often about the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. But, this sermon speaks about the Spirit of Christ. Pastor Wesley infers that the Spirit of Christ can be understood by studying the way Jesus moved while he was on earth? When you think about Jesus, what aspects of his personality or examples of his actions are easier for you to model? Which ones are difficult? How can you use SEEK to pray about the later?

2. As women, there are a lot of plans other people will make for your life. What plans has God spoken to you over your life? Where are you with those plans? How are those plans in conflict with the plans others have made for you. How have you navigated this space and in what ways has God's voice become a part of your ongoing growth and process?

For Men

1. As men, we tend to have in our heads both the path we will take and the method to get there. How has God's voice redirected your path or your method?
 - a. How did you know it was God?

 - b. What was the outcome?

2. Have you ever encountered the Holy Spirit? If so, what was the effect of that experience on your walk with God?

For Returning Citizens

1. Before his Acts 12 conversion, Paul lived a life dedicated to the ruin of the Jesus movement. When Jesus entered his life ***everything*** changed. He was a brand-new man. What changes have you experienced in your life that have helped you become

a better person? How can you, like Paul, be a witness to those positive forces so that others might learn from your experiences?

2. Pastor Wesley reminds us that the book of Acts, among other things, is a record of the friendships Paul had. If a book were to be written about your life, who would be included in the chapter on friendship. Please describe a friend that has been important to you and why. How can you take what you received from that friendship and “pay it forward”?
3. Returning to society can sometimes be difficult. How can you determine if doors are being closed by God, or by stigma? How have you been affected by either?

For Differently-Abled Persons/People

1. Have you had experiences of God opening or closing doors? If so, how did you discern if an opportunity being denied to you is God closing a door, or opening a door for something greater?
 - a. In what ways has an opened or closed door resulted in a greater opportunity for you?
2. We speak often about the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. But, this sermon speaks about the Spirit of Christ. Pastor Wesley infers that the Spirit of Christ can be understood by studying the way Jesus moved while he was on earth? When you think about Jesus, what aspects of his personality or examples of his actions are easier for you to model? Which ones are difficult? How can you use SEEK to pray about the later?
3. In what ways is having a different ability an example of God opening a door, rather than God closing one?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**1. DREAMS AND VISIONS**

For more information on dreams and visions in the Bible, please refer to

<https://overviewbible.com/infographic-dreams-bible/>

2. TIMELINE OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/paul/timeline.cfm>