

“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.” Acts 16:9-10 (NIV)

Isn't it great when God actually tells us directly what He wants us to do?!

I don't know about you, but I can count the number of times that God has been that direct with me on one hand, and one of them I'm not sure if I misunderstood as all it did was cause stress and nothing came from it - unless you count questioning myself and my ability to hear from God! And the other one, has gained me maybe £2 over the best part of 10 years and not a penny of that since I believed it to be my calling...but thats the one I cling to, but before I tell of my experience, lets think of St Paul.

Yesterday we remembered the zeal that he had as a persecutor of the Church and how Jesus redirected that zeal into the increase of the Church instead. Today, we look at how sure of God's call Paul must've been to go to Macedonia because of a vision and not questioning the decision. Just like Abraham leaving his land to head where God wanted him without a clear vision ahead, Paul is heading out without knowing exactly what it will lead to. Paul has more guidance - an actual location (Macedonia) - but without any idea of exactly what was going to greet him when he went there. Just knowing that that was where he needed to preach the Gospel next. What faith!

Sometimes I wonder whether I will fully get my certainty back that I had but all I can do now is try to keep true to the call I believe God has currently on my life and relearn to spend time in His presence and see if He wants me to do something or retry the thing that sent me into a questioning of my understanding of the calling on my life.

To give my story of the one thing that I know is correct, I believe that writing is what I am to do for the time being. I left my job in a church as an assistant verger and I asked God what He wanted me to do...how was I meant to get by with no job lined up to go into and no eligibility to benefits etc. Almost instantly I felt my mind clear and a sense of peace fill me with just a single word planted in my mind to replace the otherwise overwhelming quantity of thoughts crowding my mind. That word? Write. Just 'write' and then my mind returned to normal and I was filled with a feeling of empowerment and freedom with having no human managers to go to for a while and just having God as my 'line manager'. It was liberating. Until suddenly after a few days - perhaps a week or so - the realisation dawned on me that I was being called to a complete surrender. A complete surrender I'm still honestly struggling with (about 5 years later). Whether the writing was ever meant to be my livelihood, or just the way God talks to me (I understand the world through written words and take things in better by grappling with them in front of a keyboard or a notebook.), I honestly don't mind. I have to remember that this is God's current call on my life and without work or benefits He has still provided for my needs through my partner's income and somehow us always having the money for what we need, even though it isn't massive income. I'm not sating life isn't a struggle sometimes, it is when you don't have your own money to go out and be independent with, but I have my laptop, hobbies and a roof over my head...what more do I need?

My encouragement to you today is to not be dismayed. You may or may not get told directly what God wants you to do. Sometimes you know by different ways being open or closed to you. Sometimes there may be a small prompting that you just feel something to be off or you have complete peace about something you are doing. Never ignore these things. God gave us these instincts for a reason...sometimes they can be confused and misleading, but never ignore them... sometimes you will be completely right to do (or not do) something due to these instincts. Regardless, always pray before deciding to follow or ignore your instincts.

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Tamsyn Moreton-Trayler

Pray;

Lord of the big encounters and the small promptings, help us this day to remember to involve you in all the things we do. We thank you that even though you may not appear to us in obvious visions all the time, that your guiding can still be visible through the opening up and blocking off of different routes we can follow in our lives. Please help us to remember to praise you when we are stuck in the corridors as well as when the doors and windows are open to us. We thank you that all things, even when we seemingly get it wrong, can still teach us important things. Nothing we experience is wasted. Sorry we allow the external noise of the world around us to get in the way of leaning on you and fully encountering you in all the small things you use to point us in the right direction. Amen.