

Guidance

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Preacher: Steve Tibbert

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, One Harbour. It's great to be with you again. Thank you for that. I'm just happy to be invited back. You know, that is, for me, that's a good start. So it's great to be with you again. And yeah, I'm from London, southeast London, actually. So you get a bit of the accent in there for you. And it's great to be with you again. And as Donnie said, we have got a growing friendship. It was great to have Donnie and Brian and James with us, with my team. So I was here a year ago. I shared a word I felt I had for you.

And then the guys came out in January. They joined us. They joined us as a part of our, well, we have 21 days of prayer in January. And we go, we pray from seven to eight every night. We get a few hundreds of people in praying. They came to one of our prayer meetings. And then obviously we've been invited back coming through again. So it's absolutely great to be here. I think I showed you this last year. This is my church. I like to sort of, so you kind of know who is this guy? Okay. Well, Kings is very diverse. So it's a third African, a third Caribbean, black Caribbean, and a third white. Very cross-generational as well. So everything we do is cross-cultural. So I'm misunderstood all the time. And I learned in the first meeting, again, though I, Deb reminded me, it was the same last year as a culturally here, that when someone's preaching, you just sit there and you hardly move. I mean, you don't, it's just like, hmm, so it just takes me a little while to kind of get used to that. That's okay. So if anyone wants to just go, hmm, just the odd, yeah. If I say something you think is anywhere near helpful, just go, hmm, anything. I'll take anything. Okay. Okay. Yeah. Amen. Yeah. Okay. So we do get a few people that get a bit carried away and that's just a bit too loud. So we have to say, it's not that good. So please quiet down, yeah. So it's fantastic to be with you. And so I've pastored a church in London approaching 30 years. I've just announced on my church in September, I'm handing over the leadership of my church to a 31 year old. Church has grown nearly year on year. It's a large church in the UK context.

It's a little smaller than your church. So we come here to learn as much to give. And we have four venues and seven meetings on a Sunday. So in that sense, it's really similar. And a lot of the challenges we're facing pastoring a growing church are similar to yours. And so it's fantastic to be with you. The other thing is, as Donnie said, I lead New Frontiers, which is, it's really a fellowship of apostolic leaders that all have their own families of churches, Advance being one of them. And Deb and I would have been with the Advance global team in Cyprus a couple of weeks ago. And I host and lead New Frontiers. And we gather the kind of apostolic leadership and their teams about once a year, mainly in Cyprus. So we've just had our global event. And that, there were around 200 people in the room. And that represent thousands of churches working in 90 different nations. So it is amazing to see what God is doing. And basically, well, I can tell you the gospel is bearing fruit all over the world. And it's very exciting. Just in the Advance movement, just hearing of some 80 churches wanting to join Advance. In the Catalyst family of churches, they just asked someone to hit up the raising up of 1,000 church planters. And so just remarkable multiplication, churches established and planted. And then we get involved in things, crisis moments when things go a little wrong.

And so I kind of troubleshoot some of the time. And so just like two weeks ago, I would have been, I would have been in Cyprus. I would be sitting outside. I was just in this environment where under the olive trees, the sea was there, and there was about 20 people, and they're all planting churches in the Middle East. And you're just listening to their stories in some nations, which are really challenging to be a Christian. I then met where I had a coffee with a guy two weeks ago who had to flee for his life from Kiev. And I know the church here supported. I think I thanked you last year for supporting what we call the Ukraine Fund. And then I was with another group of pastors, pastors, and it was all through translation. And they were telling us of the relief they were doing in a war zone. And just like you, it's fantastic to see you engage. We obviously see on our news, but we're a long way away. But we saw the hurricane come through and could see the devastation. So I thought it, I didn't know if it impacted you. I didn't really realize how big

North Carolina was. You know, I'm from England. We have a small, I mean, America's massive, but it's great to see your church engaging with that. Or other things that we do. So we were north of Iraq earlier in the year, and we were meeting with some pastors. They'd come out of a country which we couldn't get into. And we were meeting with them. Everything's through translation. And we had, there's a conference, and you're speaking, and then you have meals in each of the breaks. And Deb and I had three meals in a row with three pastors and their wife. And they were all in war zones, in different war zones. And I tell you, can I just say to you, I'm sure life's tough. And some of you have come here, and you need to hear God's comfort today. And I totally get that. But we should also count our blessings. And the fact that we can just rock up. Our decision was, shall we come to church today? We weren't being tracked by the police. We weren't in threat of persecution or prison.

[5 : 41] So I'm occasionally getting involved, and all the time, occasionally getting involved when real, real crisis is going on in people's lives. Fleeing for the lies because of war or persecution. And it makes me grateful. I sometimes, I don't know about you, I sometimes in my own context, and I've had a bit of a troubling week, I'm amazed how much it impacts my emotions.

Yeah? I think, ah. And then you meet heroes who, I was thinking of another pastor I know, had a meal with him recently, and he literally gets texts threatening his life about once a month.

And I just thought, how do you do it? And he just cracks on. I sometimes say, am I a Christian? Yeah? When you meet some real heroes of the faith. But for us, we should count our blessings.

Let's count our blessings that we could just come to church today, yeah? Okay? Turn to the person next to you and say, I'm glad I came to church today. Here we go. I came to church today. Okay, that's just a bit of crowd participation here. Okay. Okay, so look, last year when I was with you, getting to know Donnie, I took a risk. I brought a word which I really felt was a word for the church.

It's not something I normally do. It's not kind of my style. I brought a word about, out of Acts 11 and Acts 13, that I felt that you are a church that needed to have a massive vision, an Antioch vision, a church that doesn't just reach this community, but plants churches right over the US of A and to the ends of the earth. And that's the word I came. The good thing about visiting preacher, I haven't got to do anything with it. I'm on a plane in two days' time. So the elders can worry about it.

[7 : 16] That's their problem. And it's such an encouragement that they found it helpful. And then this year when I was just, Donnie invited us, we were coming through, I felt to bring just a message of very different in the sense it's a pastoral message, which I hope is going to be very relevant for many of you in the room. So if last year was more of a kind of leadership church message, this one is more pastoral and I hope it will help you. In fact, what we'll do, I'll just read from Acts 16. Let's just get to the passage quick and then I'll make some comments of context for you. So let's just read Acts 16, 6 to 10. And I'm going to speak on how does God guide us as believers? How do we hear God's voice? How do we know that the decisions we're making line up with what is God's will for our lives? My experience for most Christians, been pastoring for 35 years, as most Christians, not all, but most really want to follow God. Yeah? They really want to stay in the will of God. And I'm hoping this message will serve you and help some of you here today. So

Acts 16, let me read it and then I'll put it in some context. 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. And when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. And so they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

And during the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us. And 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.

So the context, you know, Paul is drawn into ministry by Barnabas after the apostles in Jerusalem send Barnabas to Antioch to see what's happening because people are getting saved. And so Barnabas goes, sees the grace of God on the church, goes and gets Paul who comes and helps, and they establish this great church. And then in Acts 13, we read that they're sent out on the first missionary journey, and they go to Cyprus. They go to where Barnabas comes from. If you're going to plant a church, sometimes good to go, first place to go to, before you go to the other ends of the earth, is to go somewhere that you're aware of, contextually and culturally aware of. And that's what they do.

They go to Cyprus and they literally do the first missionary journey and it goes around like this. And then they come back, they report to their church, so they're rooted in church, Acts 14. They come back and tell the church in Antioch all that's happened. And then they go down to Jerusalem to, in a sense, give an account to other apostles, the council of Jerusalem, Acts 15. And they present their gospel and they're offered the right hand of fellowship and they're given the thumbs up and then they're given a letter and Silas joins the team and they go back and it's like, wow, it's all going great. And then something goes wrong. Yeah? Surprises us.

[10 : 28] There is a breakup in relationship in this apostolic team. Who would have thought of it? I mean, God's with these men. Yeah? And then suddenly they fall out and they fall out over a team member and the team member is Mark, John Mark, is a family member, is the cousin of Barnabas.

So there's a family dynamic. So you've had this massive global sort of gospel expansion, sorry. You've had this church planting, fantastic thing going on, everything's great. And then something happens right in the heart of this team and they fall out over a family member and they part ways.

And the scripture is open about it, but doesn't dwell on it. It doesn't go into all the details. And he said this and she said that. It just says they parted ways. And what happens is Barnabas goes back to Cyprus and Paul goes back the opposite way to the first missionary journey, the second missionary journey. And we'll put it on the, I've got a map here for you here somewhere.

And so Barnabas goes back here and Paul with Silas and then he doesn't, it's interesting. He, one of the first things he does, he then recruits another team member, Timothy. So sometimes when your team goes through a bit of change, you kind of get a bit hurt by it and you get a bit cautious. No, no, you just, okay, God, God's going to be sovereign in this. And then they do the second missionary journey. And this is where we pick up that they, they get, actually end up in Troas.

And they, they, the scholars think that they're basically wanting to get to Ephesus, but we read in the passage that God closed doors as well as opening doors. I don't know about you. I get more excited when God opens doors for me. Oh, I prayed and the door was open. Hallelujah. I prayed and it didn't open. Oh, what's going on? Where's God? Well, he's, he's still around everyone. Okay. And sometimes we have to learn to trust him. In fact, actually we probably need to learn this more. We need to trust him when he closes doors more than when he opens them. Yeah. And they, they thought they may go to Bithynia, but they don't, they end up in Troas. And that is the context of this apostolic team that are kind of trying to seek God and work out where they are. And what we see is that they get to a place, it's a, it's a port. And the scholars say that if you actually stand in the port and look out, it looks across to what is Europe now. And so we're, we're reading a passage today where the gospel breaks out into a whole new part of the world. This apostolic team set out, visiting churches they'd planted on the first missionary journey, and then all they experience is closed doors.

[13 : 23] I don't know. Have you ever had any closed doors? John Stott, who's an Anglican scholar, is with the Lord now, says, we too in our day need to trust him for guidance and rejoice equally in his constraints and restraints.

It is so easy, isn't it, to worship God when everything's going well. It's more challenging when there are more closed doors. I found it interesting that some of the most famous missionaries found that the first door they pushed was a closed door before God opened the door that was most fruitful. So Livingstone tried to go to China before he went to Africa, and Cary planned to go to the southern seas before finally being fruitful in India. My own story was I grew up in a town called Bedford.

It's about 50 miles north of London, where we live now. And I was, I was kind of a young guy that wanted to serve God. And I became the youth pastor in this church. And after being there five years, the eldership team I was a part of had a meltdown. The senior pastor who is and was my father in Christ had an emotional breakdown, and he was unwell for nine months. And I was the youngest guy on the team.

The elders said, why don't you lead, Steve, while you're, while Peter was off. And so I led this church, and they, I was supported by some experienced people, and I learned a lot. And then the pastor recovered came back, and everyone, we all felt that he was just about my age now, 60. And we felt that basically he should stay around, and I should, why don't we just let the young guy come through, yeah? And that's what everyone felt. I felt, I felt, yes, that's what I'm called to do. It's the only church I knew. And, and the pastor Peter came back and said, no, I don't think that's right. I feel I should leave the church. And so we respected that. But it had consequences. And what was, looked like an open door became a closed door, which had big consequences for us. So it meant that we moved from Bedford to London. And that's our story. It's my testimony. Can I tell you what? At the time, it was really difficult. Yeah, really, really difficult. Now, I can look back, I am extremely grateful to God that he closed that door. Because the story in, in, in the UK, the story of the church that I lead is, is a, it's a story to be told of God's faithfulness. And it came through conflict.

God can actually sometimes in your life use conflict more than when things are going really great. Did you know that? Yeah, I, that's what I've learned. I turn to the person next to you and say, I'm glad I came to church today. Come on, come on. Just checking you're still awake. The preacher's just said, conflict is good for me. I'm not sure I want to hear that, you know. Okay. Okay. You're still with me.

[16 : 36] That's good. Now, look, before I just get into five quick points, don't worry, I'll finish on time. I can go faster. Is, is that before I make a few practical pastoral points, five guidance points from this passage, can I say to you that guidance happens on the move? Yeah. Sometimes you meet people, maybe you're just new to this church. You're not even sure if you're staying around for long.

And so you're just going to say, I'm not, I'm going to sit back because I don't know if I'm going to be here for any length of time. Do you know, you might be here for 20 years. Yeah. And I've met people in my church that have been sitting on the back for a long time, waiting for God to speak because they don't think they're going to be here for a long time and they just get stuck there. In other words, participate, get involved, hear God's guidance on the move. Don't get stuck, keep moving. And God speaks on the move. That's what happens with this team. They think they're going to go south. They think they're going to go north, but they keep moving and they end up at Trias and they end up at this port.

I meet sometimes people, they say to me, I say, where are you in life? They say, I'm here, but I want to be there. And they live in where they want to be rather than the reality of where they are. You are in the port you're in today. Yeah. And as you're seeking God, you have to sometimes own where you're at if you're really going to find the purposes of God in your life. So in the port, you're at, but you're like me, you want to hear God. And what I'm going to try and do now is give you five things that hopefully will help you in hearing God. John Stott says, again, some important principles of divine guidance are in fact exemplified in the experience of Paul and his companions.

Let's look at them. Well, firstly, the first way God guides us is through the circumstances of life. So Paul sets out to plant churches. He wants to get to Ephesus. He gets there later.

We see that later in Acts. Maybe if I am ever invited back, maybe I'll do that. And there's the next part of the story, Donnie. But anyway, and they set out and it's all closed doors and they end up in Troas. And it's in that context that God speaks. And they go, oh, oh, right.

[18 : 55] That is why that door closed and that door closed because we're now here, a strategic move into Europe for the first time. Groundbreaking. That's what happens.

I've already said, I think I said, maybe I said it in the first meeting. I don't know. But I got saved. No, I haven't said this. I got saved at 19. I got radically saved. I mean, I was just like, if Jesus is raised from the dead, come on. If he's not, then we're to be pitied beyond all men. But if he is, it's worth giving your life to. I've never coped well with people that have a foot in both camps.

I'm a Christian, but I've got foot in the world. I'm keeping my options open. Yeah. Just in case what I'm believing isn't totally true, I might as well enjoy life. I mean, I just don't get it. If Jesus is raised from the dead, it's worth giving your life to. And so I was just like, I'm like in 120%. I'm in. Thank you. I was. And I feel called and I'm passionate and I was in a Baptist church. And so what they did was that if you're going to be a minister, they send you to Bible college. And so I was going to go to Spurgeon's Bible college in South London.

And I went down and did the interview and I was starting to feel a bit worried about it because they were going to teach me Hebrew and Greek. Yeah. Now, some of you think, well, of course, if you're going to be a pastor, you've got to understand the book. And that's totally true.

But what happened is the weight of the call is the best way I can understand. The weight of the cause about 2021, I just couldn't take the pressure. And so I started to have what basically a mental or emotional breakdown. I know to come back from work and crying to my food. Yeah. My parents who godly people, what has happened to their son? Now, you have to know, I left school at 16. I have no qualifications. Yeah. I got 4% in my French test. Four. I think that was put my name on the paper or something like that. I mean, I don't know if there's anyone out there that is thinking, I like this preacher because I've got no qualifications either. Yeah. I was just, and therefore the thought of being Hebrew and Greek, you're kidding me. And I was dating this beautiful girl and she'd gone to university and I was immature and I couldn't cope with the separation. And so I was literally, my life was falling apart. I felt called of God. I mean, I'm dyslexic. If you didn't know, even now, okay, if I send a text, I have a lot of responsibilities. I have to write a lot of things. A lot of people have to read them because they don't make sense when I write them. My wife, here, Deb, she's an English graduate. She's the brains of the operation. And she sees my text.

[21 : 58] Whenever I send a text, I say, could you just read it? And then she rewrites it. And trust me, it's so different. It's like, starts with, hello, how are you? And things like that. I'm just like straight to it. Boom, boom, boom, boom. Okay. So it's a lot warmer when it comes from Deb.

Okay. But anyway, my life's falling apart. The circumstances of my life was such that the thought of going to Bible college and becoming a pastor was way beyond the reality of where I was at. And so what happened is I just stopped everything. I didn't go to Bible college.

I broke up with this girl. Just so you know, I just, I've got to say this. I've sometimes preached this message before and I've just gone on and on and realized the whole congregation is going, why is he going on about this beautiful girl and his wife's and this is a bit awkward. Well, don't worry. She's the same girl. She's the same girl. 35 years. It gets better. Everyone gets better.

Yeah. Yeah. The world's lying to you. Yeah. Times can be tough, but it gets better. Yeah. Anyway, where were we? That's another seminar. Okay. Here we go. Circumstances of life. So sometimes God speaks to you through what's going on in your life. Secondly, God speaks to us through prophetic leading. So they're in Troas. Paul goes to sleep. Vision of Macedonian. Someone come over and help us.

And I would encourage you to be a church that leans into the prophetic, that is open to God to speak in these kind of charismatic ways. That's what happened to the apostle Paul. You see it through the whole book of Acts. To be honest, over my life, I've had a few occasions. So this doesn't help me when it's like, am I going to have coffee or tea in the morning? You know, it's, I don't need a prophetic moment for every little decision, but there's some key moments, both in my church corporately and my life personally, that prophetic words are helpful. I'll give you a corporate one. So I was in Zimbabwe.

[24 : 05] I was speaking to a group of young people and afterwards a guy came up to me and says, I want to give you a word. And he said, I see your church is like Niagara Falls. It's just, you know, Niagara Falls, it's a powerful waterfall. And he said, your church is like Niagara Falls, but God's calling you to lead a church that's got a vision as wide as Victoria Falls, which is a mile long. I mean, I've had the privilege of standing in both close to those waterfalls. And that prophetic picture has shaped the direction of my church for the last 10, 12 years. It's probably the reason I'm here today rather than my own local church because of that prophetic word. So God can speak through prophetic pictures, visions, and dreams. 1 Thessalonians 5 says, do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecy with contempt. Test everything and hold on to the good. Such a great, when it comes to the kind of more prophetic kind of ministry, this is such a helpful verse. Don't, don't despise it. Don't play it down. Don't put out the fire of God, but test everything and hold on to the good. Now in my church,

I don't know what it's like here, so I'll just go with it for a moment. I have some people in my church that when it comes to the prophetic, they're over here. I mean, they're just like, they've always got a dream, always got a picture. Have you met people like that? Is anyone like that? They're kind of, they live in that kind of awareness, the spiritual realm and things like that. And they can be a bit wacky as well, to be honest with you. To be really kind of like, they come up and as the pastor, you're trying to go, is this God or they just had pizza last night or something like that? What's going on?

And then on the other end, I bet there's a few of those in here. There's some people. There are, there's all those guys out there. And then don't worry, we're grounded over here. We don't worry, we ain't going to get involved with any of that stuff. Yeah. We're just going to, we're going to ensure that we don't go crazy here. Yeah. Okay. And we, we are rooted pastor. We are stable. We have spreadsheets. You know, okay. Okay. This is it. Any of those in there? Anyone got a spreadsheet?

Okay. So now I want to tell you, you need both for spiritual health. And if you've got a big decision, I trust me, if someone comes up to you and brings a prophetic vision or dream that connects to your journey, wow. Take it, receive it, test it, and hold on to the good.

And I do get worried though, just so you know, to keep it balanced here is that when sometimes if the guidance signs are all coming in the five, I'm giving you five, this is just one of them. If they're coming in a certain way and then someone gives a picture that you'd never, don't know this person, they give you at the back of a room and then you follow your life direction on one picture.

[26 : 54] Pastor, I get a bit concerned. I think, hey, come on. So eagerly desire the gift of prophecy, it says in the Bible. Yeah. So if you're here and you're sure, well, just share it and do it in a way sort of like, hey, I've wondered, I was praying, God gave me this picture and see, see if it works.

Yeah. But test it and hold on to the good. So this is what happened. This team, they're there and then Paul gets this vision and they, from that, they conclude some things. The third way God speaks to people is through the counsel of others. Verse 10, it says, we got ready to leave for Macedonia concluding. We concluded together. Proverbs 12 says, the way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. Or Proverbs 15 and 22, plans fail for the lack of counsel, but with many advisors, they succeed. I want to ask you, how good are you at getting counsel from others? Do you meet some people? They just, they've got it so together. They're basically, basically they're independent. Yeah. I'm running my life. I don't need any help from anyone else.

Anyone like that? Yeah. I'm just, I've got it all together. I don't know about you. I haven't got it all together. And I want to get as much help as I can from as many people as I can. So when it comes to a decision in the church or in the global family of churches or in my own life, I've got these like super teams. Yeah. And they are full of experts who are far brighter than me. In fact, sometimes if you meet a leader and he's not surrounded by lots of other gifted leaders, then, hmm. Okay. He's the one man superstar. I'm not into that. I've got, some of you know, I've got Andrew Wilson as my teaching pastor. I mean, he's a bright guy. I mean, he's got a brain the size of a planet. I mean, he's just like, I mean, seriously, he's nerdy and he's just, he's great. But I'm thinking, why wouldn't I want someone like that on my team? Yeah. I got a guy that is, he is like a senior partner in Linklaters, which is like the gold star legal firm in the city of London. They, they critique the government.

Yeah. And I've got to know him. He is one of the sharpest people I've ever met. And he, he has really, he takes me out for dinner twice a year. He says, come up to London. I'll take you out for dinner. I thought, okay, that's, but I'm not going for the dinner. Yeah. Actually, dinners are really nice. Yeah. Okay. But I'm not, I'm going because I want the wisdom of this man. And if I ever have to write something that is really, the stakes are high, I send it to him and he, I go, okay. So if I'm writing a text, I send it to Debs. Yeah. If I'm writing a legal document, I send it to Mike.

That's, that's a, because I just want good counsel. In my own life, I don't know. Who do you, who's on your dream team? When it comes to making a big financial decision, who do you talk to? I've got a couple of guys that are far sharper, sharper with that type of thing than I am.

[30 : 02] And so I say, I'm thinking of doing this. I'm thinking of investing that. I just want to, I want advice. What if you're married here and you just got a little bit stuck? I mean, just, well, just work it out. Well, you can work it out. In the end, you got to work it out.

But why don't you seek counsel from a couple that are maybe further down the road? Yeah. Just say, look, could we just talk this through? I mean, in my experience, guys are absolutely useless at this.

Women are pretty good about it, but guys like, man, I don't want to reveal that there's anything wrong with me. That was my American accent there. Do you see that, Deb? It just came out. I mean, just like the Holy Spirit came on me and it came out. No, it didn't. I'm mucking about. Okay.

But who's on your dream team? Who do you share your lives with? Anyone got kids here? Yeah. Wave at me if you have kids. Okay. That's another way of saying, God, help me. Kids, kids. I've got three sons. They're all married. They're doing well.

Well, okay. But man, you need help. How do you do it? What do you do with phones? What do you do? Do you steal the phones from them? How do you keep it? How do you keep boundaries? Remember, good parenting is really simple at the heart of it. Yeah. You got to love them, which is spelt T-I-M-E.

[31 : 20] And you got to set boundaries. And the tension, if you don't set boundaries, they'll just go crazy. If you're setting them too tight, they'll rebel. And so your parenting, all you got to do is you got to spend time with them, which equals love. And then you got to get the boundaries right.

There you go. I'll give you that one for free. Okay. It's a little bit more complex than that. Okay. Or if you're married here and you're in a bit of conflict, welcome to life. Yeah. You get two different people who kind of get together. You're going to have some conflict.

Actually, in my church, the second most highest thing on our pastoral list is cross-cultural marriages. Because not only are they dealing with difference, personality, history, and health modeling, there's all things that the cultural clash. So, you know, get help.

And, you know, you're in a great church. That's why it's great to be a part of a community. Yeah. You can share lives together. How do you do it? Oh, dear. You still with me? Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Just buy it. And in my church now, they would be yelling and saying, Pastor, wow, great. Great. Good call. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Just so you know. But obviously, I'm culturally aware, so I'm not making you feel bad about it. I'm just doing a bit of self-talk to keep myself going. Okay. All right. All right. Just by my external thinker, so I'm saying out aloud. Okay. Okay. I'm on fire. Thanks, Donnie. I mean, that's what I need. Okay. Okay. We've got to bring this into land now because time's going. Okay. Fourth one. Yeah. You with me? You're going to like this one. This is really deep. Okay. This is, and the point is God speaks us through common sense. Yeah. Wow.

Or I prefer life wisdom. Yeah. There's a principle. It's in Scripture. You tend to reap what you sow. If you're married here and you spend time together and you talk and you say sorry a lot. Yeah. And you think of the other person rather than your own rights, you tend over a period of time, mature and grow and get happy. Yeah. It's just, you don't have to go on a course for that. Yeah. It's good. I would go on a course. I, Deb and I have read loads of books about marriage and things like that. So I'm all for investing. Okay. But there's some, just sometimes it's just what is, what is the common sense thing to do here? Nicky Gumbel, who started the Alpha Course, which I'm sure you're familiar with, writes in his book that there's this woman that used to wake up in the morning and lie in bed and say, God, speak to me, what shall I wear today? I mean, I don't know. I mean, you can, if you, I guess, if you want to say that to God, you can. I always think he's got other things on. Yeah. And he's just like, come on, get dressed. I mean, I was, I, so, you know, I took responsibility this morning. I got out of bed and I got dressed. And then just so you know, just to really push the point home, I was wearing a short sleeve shirt until I looked at the weather and it's a bit colder today than it was yesterday.

[34 : 32] So I made a decision. I applied the principle of common sense and put on a long sleeve shirt and God's with me. Yeah. So sometimes it's just that there is wisdom of life. Yeah. And you see this in the scripture through Proverbs, the wisdom and literature that there are, there are people that are wiser than you. And if you find someone wiser than you, hang out with them. Yeah. Because they will help you hear God and make good decisions. Because sometimes, I don't know about you, we don't always make good decisions. And I want you to make good calls that keep you in the will of God. And so get wise counsel from others. And then lastly, God speaks through the word of God.

God says, I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go. What we have here in Acts 16 is what is known by the scholars of what's called the we passages. Okay. Because this is when Luke joins the team. So obviously he's written his gospel, he's researched these first chapters of Acts. At this point, he uses the word we. So we know that he joined Paul's apostolic team at Troas. And what he did for us is he recorded it, wrote it down in the scripture, and I'm sharing it with you today, trusting that for many of you, God is speaking to you out of the word of God. And it may just be highlighting things or just just an aside that as we've looked at these few verses today, that God speaks to us. When I was about 25, let me tell you, no, no, when I was about 30, I'd been a youth pastor for three or four years and I felt I had to move on from the church I was at. And I wondered whether I should plant a church or go to an existing church. So I was seeking God. I was trying to hear God for my life. And I went to this conference, church planting conference, and there was someone speaking, a guy called Colin

Potter. I just remember his name. And he's talking about how he's planted a church. And he quotes Titus 1.5, which says, Paul speaking to Titus, will you kind of strengthen and complete the unfinished work and appoint elders in every church? And I'm listening at a church planting conference, and he says that, and I'm in a conversation with a church which I now lead and have done for nearly three decades, and they had no elders. And they had the elders who all stood down. It was all a bit tricky. And I went in and I thought, God, speak to me out of the word of God. I'm trusting as I've shared just a few things from Acts 16 today that God has spoken to you. Hey, look, I don't know if you do this very often here, but I'm just going to ask you to respond in a moment, okay? This is what we're going to do. I'll just tell you right up straight, okay? No surprises. So in a moment, I'm going to pray. And then after I've prayed, if you feel you need God's guidance, or you feel God has spoken to you today about a situation, I'm going to ask you to stand up where you are, okay? In a moment, not now. Not for me. I'm on a plane in a few days, yeah? But really for you, that you, in a sense, you're saying, God, I need to hear your voice, yeah? Or God, you have spoken to me in light of what I've heard. I'm going to act, yeah? And then I'm going to hand over to Brian and we're going to break bread together. So let's pray. Father, I thank you for this church, a remarkable community and such a privilege to be here, Lord. I pray for this word that it would bear fruit in people's lives. It would help them to follow Jesus and hear your voice. And I ask, Lord, now that you'd speak to people, that they would know that you're guiding them. I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, look, if you know God's spoken to you today, if you just think, no, this is this area of my life, I want to just say, I want to submit it to God. Can I ask you just to stand where you are right now? And thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus. Brilliant. Thank you ever so much.

So, Lord, I just feel these standing and I just ask Holy Spirit, you would reveal yourself to them and, Lord, whatever they're standing for, that you know, you know their unique circumstances, you know the unique opportunities and challenges they face. And I pray you would guide them, either through the prophetic or the word of God or through common sense or their circumstances, Lord Jesus, that you would, through the counsel of others, you would guide them. And we want to be your people led by you. I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.