

How Do I Handle God's Redirection?

Acts 16:6-40 – Purpose vs. Preferences

This study explores Acts 16:6-40, where Paul, Silas, and their companions face divine redirection, unexpected challenges, and powerful breakthroughs. Through this passage, we will examine how to trust God's purpose when our preferences are challenged, how to discern His leading, and how to respond to redirection with faith and flexibility.

I. Why This Study?

A. Objective:

1. To examine how Acts 16:6-40 provides guidance on handling God's redirection in life and ministry.
2. To explore the tension between personal preferences and divine purpose.
3. To gain biblical wisdom on responding to setbacks and unexpected changes with faith.

B. Relevance:

1. We all encounter moments when God redirects our plans, whether in relationships, career choices, ministry, or daily life.
2. Paul and his team teach us how to respond with trust and obedience rather than frustration.
3. This passage helps us discern when to embrace change, when to wait on God, and how to recognize His leading.

II. Context of Acts 16:6-40

A. The Background of Paul's Second Missionary Journey:

1. Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) sought to preach in Asia and Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit _____ them (vv. 6-7).
2. Instead, Paul received a vision calling him to Macedonia (vv. 9-10).
3. Their journey led them to Philippi, where they encountered Lydia (vv. 11-15), a demon-possessed slave girl (vv. 16-18), _____ (vv. 19-24), and a miraculous prison escape that led to the jailer's _____ (vv. 25-34).

B. Historical Insight:

1. Macedonia's Strategic Importance: Philippi was a major Roman colony, making it a gateway for _____ the gospel into Europe.

2. Roman Law and Citizenship: Paul and Silas' unjust beating and imprisonment (vv. 22-24) highlight the challenges of being a Christ-follower in a _____-_____ world.
3. Diverse Audiences: This chapter shows the gospel reaching different people—Lydia (a wealthy businesswoman), a slave girl (oppressed and exploited), and a Roman jailer (a government worker).

C. Key Takeaway:

1. God often redirects us not because our plans are _____, but because His plans are _____.
2. Recognizing divine redirection requires spiritual _____, _____, and _____.

III. How Do I Handle God's Redirection?

A. When God Closes Doors, He Opens Another Path (vv. 6-10)

Key Verses:

1. "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." (v. 6)
2. "During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" (v. 9)

Key Lessons:

1. Not every _____ opportunity is a _____ opportunity.
2. God's 'no' is not rejection but _____.
3. Sometimes, God reveals His will through _____, supernatural _____, and _____.

B. Obedience Leads to Divine Encounters (vv. 11-15, 16-18)

Key Verses:

1. "One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia... The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." (v. 14)
2. "Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her." (v. 18)

Key Lessons:

1. When we follow God's redirection, we encounter people we might not have expected to _____.
2. God positions us for divine _____—sometimes with the influential (Lydia) and sometimes with the oppressed (the slave girl).
3. Spiritual opposition often follows _____.

C. 3. Worship in the Waiting (vv. 19-26)

Key Verses:

1. "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them." (v. 25)
2. "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken." (v. 26)

Key Lessons:

1. Worship shifts our perspective from _____ to God's _____.
2. Even in suffering, God is working behind the scenes.
3. Faithful endurance in trials can _____ others.

D. 4. Purpose Over Preference: God's Plan is Bigger (vv. 27-40)

Key Verses:

1. "The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas... 'What must I do to be saved?'" (vv. 29-30)
2. "But Paul said to the officers: 'They beat us publicly without a trial... Now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No!'" (v. 37)

Key Lessons:

1. Sometimes our suffering is the key to someone else's _____.
2. God uses our difficult situations to _____ His power and bring others to faith.
3. Standing firm in purpose means seeking _____, not just personal _____.

IV. Scholars' Insights on God's Redirection

A. Augustine of Hippo (4th century, North African Church Father)

"God often denies what we want to give us what we need." (Confessions)

- Augustine's journey from a life of personal ambition to a deep commitment to God's calling illustrates how divine redirection often leads to

transformation. His teachings emphasize that what feels like a denial is often divine preparation for something greater.

B. 2. Teresa of Ávila (16th century, Spanish Mystic & Theologian)

“When something blocks our way, God is leading us to another door.” (The Interior Castle)

- Teresa understood that God often redirects us away from paths we assume are best. Her writings reflect the idea that spiritual obstacles are sometimes divine interventions, guiding us toward a deeper relationship with Him.

C. 3. Justo L. González (Contemporary, Cuban-American Theologian & Church Historian)

“God’s mission always involves movement—whenever the church or an individual becomes stagnant, the Spirit stirs us to new horizons.” (The Story of Christianity)

- González emphasizes that God’s redirection is not just about individual guidance but about the movement of the church as a whole. His work highlights how Latin American and other global Christian communities have experienced divine redirection in ways that expanded their witness.

D. 4. James Cone (20th century, Black Liberation Theologian)

“God’s redirection is often a movement toward justice and liberation.” (God of the Oppressed)

- Cone teaches that God’s guidance is often about more than personal decisions—it is about societal transformation. His perspective reminds us that sometimes God closes doors because He is calling us to engage in the work of justice and reconciliation.

E. 5. Kosuke Koyama (20th century, Japanese Theologian & Missiologist)

“God is the God of the slow step, walking with us, turning us, redirecting us through patience and grace.” (Three Mile an Hour God)

- Koyama offers a vision of God’s redirection that focuses on slowness and attentiveness. In a world that values speed, his teachings remind us that divine redirection often requires waiting, listening, and trusting God’s pacing.

F. 6. Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Contemporary, Ghanaian Theologian & African Women’s Rights Advocate)

“When God calls, He calls us beyond ourselves—sometimes beyond our comfort, our culture, and even our understanding.” (Daughters of Anowa)

- Oduyoye's work highlights how God's redirection is often about moving beyond cultural expectations, especially for marginalized voices. She challenges believers to trust God when He leads them beyond familiar territories.

G. 7. Orlando E. Costas (20th century, Puerto Rican Missiologist & Theologian)
"Mission is not about taking God where He is absent, but about joining Him where He is already at work—often in unexpected places." (Christ Outside the Gate)

- Costas' work challenges us to rethink divine redirection in light of mission. He reminds us that when God redirects our steps, it is often to bring us into alignment with His ongoing work in places and among people we might not have initially considered.

Acts 16:6-40 teaches us that redirection is not rejection—it is an invitation to trust God's higher plan. How will you respond?

V. Prayer Focus

1. Pray for wisdom to recognize God's redirection.
2. Ask for faith to trust His purpose over personal preferences.
3. Seek patience and endurance in unexpected trials.

VI. Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. Recognizing Redirection – Have you ever experienced a closed door in life? How did you respond?
2. Discerning God's Leading – How can we recognize when God is redirecting us rather than delaying us?
3. Faith in Difficulty – How did Paul and Silas' response to suffering influence those around them? How does worship help us endure trials?
4. Personal Preferences vs. Purpose – In what areas of life might God be calling you to release your preferences in favor of His purpose?
5. Divine Appointments – How can we recognize and respond to the people God places in our path?
6. Justice and Boldness – Why do you think Paul insisted on a public apology? How can we stand firm in truth while being flexible in approach?