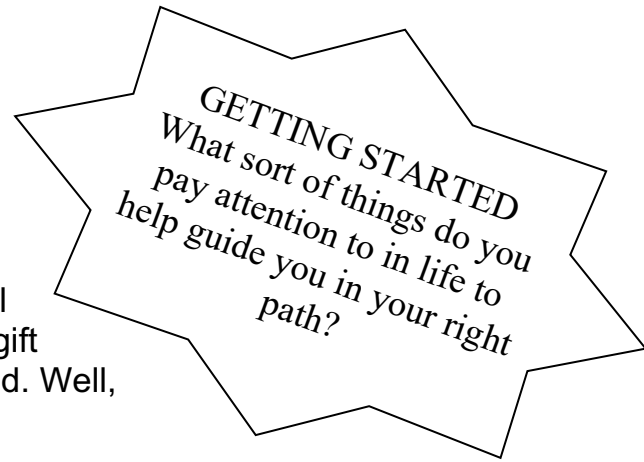


Where is God in difficult times?

Session 2 ~ Circumstances Closing and Opening Doors



In the beginning... ~

So last week we talked about God being the creator of all things. If you want to find God, look at creation. Life is a gift from God. All that we have and all that we are is from God. Well, so where else is God at work in difficult times?

Looking at the apostles is a good place to look in scripture. They endured all sorts of trouble, setbacks, and suffering. We will take a look at two pieces of scripture. First, at the Apostle Paul, who needed guidance. The early church had no traditions to follow and no structure to help them out. They were starting from square 1.

The Apostle Paul was a traveling man... ~ Read Acts 16:1-5

How do you suppose Paul made his decisions? What things would he consider? Where would he look to for help.

Companion in our pilgrimage on earth...

Really. There were probably many things that Paul and those first apostles considered in making their decisions. They apparently must have looked towards those around them. Timothy became a very close companion with Paul. It was here on his second missionary journey that Paul meet Timothy for the first time.

They also considered the traditions of those they encountered and showed respect. You can see that in the decision to have Timothy circumcised. Paul never wanted to put anything in front of those he ministered to make them stumble.

Nope. Not going there... ~ Read Acts 16:6-7

There were a lot of ways that lead Paul in his ministry. Another way was through his circumstances around him. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Paul recognized that the events of his life were guiding him in his ministry. Through the circumstances of his life, God was leading him to where he needed to go.

God is working in the circumstances of life?

When my family and I were discerning our call to ministry and navigating our way through seminary, we were unsure how to know whether we were making the right choices. We knew we didn't have all the right answers. We decided to let God lead the way by allowing him to open and close doors before us. We weren't going to force things that were not supposed to be. However, we were also going to walk through doors that opened before us. God works through the circumstances of life to guide unto a right path.

Go... ~ Read Matthew 10:5-10

So little time, so many places to go...

How were those first apostles supposed to know where to go and what to do? Where they to roll a dice? Pray for a vision? Point at a map blindfolded? Initially they do receive instructions for Jesus. Go into the villages where they need help. "proclaim the good news ... Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." Jesus tells them to go and be my disciples as I have taught you.

But if you are not welcome... ~ Read Matthew 10:11-14

Jesus also tells them, however, to pay attention to what is going on around you. They are told to go where they will receive you. If someone doesn't want you there, then don't force it. Put it behind you and move along. If someone welcomes you, then accept that invitation and move forward with sharing the message of Jesus. Stay there and minister to them. God was speaking to them through the circumstances in their lives. When a door was shut to them, they moved on to the next.

Well ok... So God leads us in everything?

So I think it's important to not stretch this method of hearing God and knowing his will too far. There are things that we simply will never understand and perhaps are not supposed to understand. Why did this happen to me in my life? There are many circumstances of life that are not fair. We live in a broken and sinful world. We live in a world in which God gives us freewill. We live in a world in which people, including ourselves, do not follow God's will and purpose for us.

However, scripture does tell us that there is a battle between good and evil. Scripture tells us that God is at work around us. Trying to lead us in life through our circumstances. Revealing to us the will of God.

"When one door closes, another door opens,
but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door,
that we do not see the ones which open for us."

~ Alexander Graham Bell ~