

Surprised by God **Acts 16:1-15**

Here's the main thing I want you to hear today:

Christians need to listen to and respond to the Holy Spirit.

We're going to see a great example of that in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul had his plans but God had His plans and God's plans need to prevail for this reason:

Christians need to listen to and respond to the Holy Spirit because God is sovereign and you are not.

You can see this put very simply in Proverbs 16:9...

In his heart a man plans his course but the Lord determines his steps.

The Apostle Paul had decided to preach the gospel in Asia. God had plans for Paul to preach the gospel in Europe. How did that work out? Paul was open to God's leading. Even though Paul had it all figured out ... Even though his plans were good plans ... Even when it was in line with the revealed will of God – Paul's plans needed to change so that he could fully embrace God's plans.

Here are some of the surprises Paul faced in his ministry at this time:

God's choice of communication.

Acts 16:6 – Blocked by the Holy Spirit
Acts 16:7 – Blocked by the Spirit of Jesus
Acts 16:9 – Vision of a man from Macedonia

That all seems a bit odd.

Just to be clear, these places where God blocked Paul from going, DID hear the gospel later. Paul did go there later but not now. The issue of being blocked is clearly not the merit of the activity but the timing of the activity. Don't preach the gospel in these places just yet. Go to these other places first.

God's choice for location.

Paul's choice was Asia. God's choice was Europe. Nothing wrong with preaching the gospel in Asia. God's will for Paul was to include Europe. But Paul was doing so well in Asia. Why change it up now? That's God's call.

God's choice for women to receive the gospel first in Philippi.

It was Paul's method or plan to go to the synagogue first and begin his proclamation of the gospel there. There were no synagogues in Philippi because there weren't enough Jewish men – 10 Jewish men were needed to build a synagogue. Paul went to the women. That was a surprise move for him.

Home Group Questions:

1. Read Acts 16:1-15. What stood out to you when you read that or heard it taught on Sunday?
2. Here's a series of questions to discuss about listening to and responding to God:
Do you always, sometimes or never receive a leading from God that you know is from God and you know you have to obey? When was the last time you softened or changed some type of core belief that you hold? How open are you to God's leading?
3. How comfortable are you with this topic of listening to and responding to the Holy Spirit?
4. What do you do to help you listen to God?
In other words, do you work in moments of silence with your Bible reading? Do you have a place of solitude? Do you give attention to the Holy Spirit promptings that occur throughout your day? Have you developed an expectation that God will speak to you?
5. God is sovereign and you are not. What does it feel like to you for your plans to change? Do you think God could be blessing you when He changes your plans?
6. Discuss in your group the concept of God in a box. What do you think that means? Do you sometimes do that as an individual?

Has God ever done the unexpected in your life?