

How's That Workin' For You?
Making Decisions That Bless your Life
“Seeing God in Your Circumstances”
(Part 5)

Intro: Do circumstances indicate the will of God for our lives? I remember back in HS, wondering if I should go out with this new girl named Lisa. Story of Lisa coming on water ski trip (Share) Sometimes we can look at circumstances like this. But, how important are circumstances really in discovering God's path for us? Can I see God in the circumstances?

- I want to give you 4 ways to see God in your circumstances as we make decisions. 4 ways to look at circumstances from a biblical perspective in decision making.

I. Circumstances Alone Do Not Indicate God's Direction

Acts 16: 5-7 “So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day. Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.” (NLT) (Explain the context)

- Paul and Silas could have went anywhere to preach about Jesus. But having the freedom to do something doesn't mean we should do it.
 - A. Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should
 - 1. This is something that really confuses many people. Often we think that because an opportunity presents itself to us, we should automatically do it. It must be God's will because I can do it.
 - 2. Absolutely Not! Notice from the story even though they could go anywhere, God stopped them from traveling in areas He didn't want them to. Remember last week about listening to the Holy Spirit?
 - 3. Circumstances by themselves are not enough to determine God's will. (You got a new job offer / have a business opportunity / The bank approved your loan / She said YES to your proposal. Must be God's will to get married!
 - 4. Just because you've experienced some favorable circumstances doesn't mean this is God's path of blessing for your life. WHY? Because basing the decisions of your life on circumstances alone doesn't work. WHY? Because circumstances constantly change.
 - 5. How many times have we followed favorable circumstances only to later see them change to disaster? Here's why it doesn't work to live this way...

B. Making decisions on circumstances alone is living by sight not by faith

II Cor. 5:7 “We live by faith, not by sight.” (NIV)

- 1. Our perception of life is too limited for us to make decisions based upon what we see. WHY? Because we can't see what God sees. What looks like a great

opportunity today could end up being a dead end tomorrow.

- Think about all those people who invested in ENRON.
- How about all those people who gave their money to Bernie Madoff – stole \$65 Billion in a Ponzi scheme. “Seemed good at the time.”
- How about all those people who got those loans approved but now can’t afford their homes?
 2. As followers of Christ we are called to live (walk) by faith not by sight...not simply by what we can see / notice / understand. We don’t navigate our lives by circumstances alone. Some of you are already thinking...
 3. You make it sound like circumstances don’t matter at all? Yes, they do matter. But God uses circumstances in connection with other indicators we’re going to talk about a bit later.
 4. We need to stop basing our obedience on what we see and start basing it on what God has said / Holy Spirit / godly counsel. We need to stop having circumstantial obedience.
- Too often we allow the circumstances to dictate what we do. For example: saying we’re too busy to serve / Too strapped financially to give / if I’m dishonest, I can get more money back on my taxes...or get a bigger loan...
 5. Living by faith requires us to make decisions that are right despite the circumstances believing this is the path that God blesses. Circumstances alone do not dictate God’s direction.

II. Circumstances Can Indicate A Need To Change Directions

Acts 6:1 “But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.” (NLT)

- Here was a circumstance that needed to be addressed. (explain) Circumstances can be great indicators that something needs to happen...something needs to change. Circumstances can indicate a change in direction when...
 - A. When circumstances hinder what God wants to do
 1. In the book of Acts, if this issues wasn’t addressed and solved it was going to create a terrible division in the church. It was going to hold the church back. It would have hindered the spread of the Gospel because it would have appeared that it was only for the Hebrew speaking people. This had to change!
 2. When you have circumstances in your life that are hindering God’s work or His will these circumstances are indicators that something needs to change.
 - Could be a job that requires you to sacrifice too much (can’t attend church / home group / serve / travel extensively – away from family
 - Could be a community circumstance such as alcoholism / divisiveness / unemployment = indicates there needs to be change.

- Could be church circumstances such as running out of room so that the vision is hindered from moving forward. People stop coming.
 - 3. These are not circumstances we just “put up with”. These are circumstances that indicate God has something more that we need to discover.
- Circumstances also indicate a directional change...
 - B. When circumstances hinder God’s relational priorities
 1. God’s greatest priorities are relationships. Love God and love each other. When we experience circumstances that hinder the relational priorities God has established, the direction must change. (Acts story – this issue existed)
 2. This is one of the reasons we stopped having 3 Sunday morning services. It’s not that it didn’t work. It was simply too hard on our people and violated the relational priority here at Foothills. Growth wasn’t worth not loving people.
 3. Is a paycheck worth having your family fall apart? Is your busy schedule worth the loneliness you experience? (This was the #1 response in our connections survey on what hinders involvement. Busyness hinders connections)
 - My daughter called me Monday while I was at the office; “Dad, my check engine light is on. What should I do?” Explain
 - Circumstances can be like those indicator lights on our vehicles. They tell us to check something. Circumstances can be like this too. If they are hindering God’s work / His will / His relational priorities / the light should come on and we should check the direction we’re traveling. A change in direction may be required.

III. Circumstances Combined With Other Factors Determines Direction

Matt. 7:7-8 “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” (NLT)

Col. 4:3 “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ...” (NLT)

- Doors opening are the circumstances we look for, but they are never in isolation.
 - A. God uses a combination of factors to lead us
 1. Notice that in the verses we just read, circumstances are connected with prayer. When it comes to seeing God in the circumstances, God is much more recognizable as we embrace seeing Him through the word / through godly counsel / listening to the Holy Spirit / through prayer and then the circumstances.
 2. Circumstances are so much more easy to interpret when we are employing all the areas that we have been talking about during this series. When the circumstances start lining up with how you’ve been praying / what godly people are saying / how the Holy Spirit has been prompting, what the word of God says = circumstances become a “no brainer”.

3. By the time the circumstances start lining up, it becomes very apparent what direction God is leading you in. The decision becomes pretty easy to see. Without these other factors, we just see circumstances in isolation. That's confusing.
- Why does God lead us like this?
- B. God uses a combination of factors so we can see Him
1. God wants us to see Him, experience Him, draw close to Him, have confidence in Him, trust Him. He's not trying to make this life one big mysterious adventure that is impossible to figure out.
 2. God wants us to understand that this journey called life is a relational journey with Him as the guide. All the indicators for traveling are relational. (His word / godly people / the holy spirit / prayer / even circumstances.) He wants us to hear Him and see Him so we can follow Him on the path of blessing.
 3. He wants us close to Him as we experience life. All these factors we can notice / experience and they give us that experience of God presence in our lives.
- When we started Foothills, I had to go to the Elementary School office and fill out a facility use agreement. This agreement required a janitor – Explain story
 - When you experience God like this, He becomes very real!

IV. We Must Obey God Believing He Is Orchestrating The Circumstances

II Cor. 2:12 "When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me." (NLT) Paul kept moving forward, trusting God, moving through the open doors the Lord was providing for Him. He recognized God was the one orchestrating the open doors...the circumstances. He moved in the direction He saw God.

A. Obeying God doesn't mean all the circumstances are perfect

I Cor. 16:9 "There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me." (NLT) Notice 2 sets of circumstances!

1. We need to recognize God orchestrating circumstances but not have the perspective that all opposition or difficulty will be removed completely. The direction God leads us will always requires us to live by faith and trust in Him to overcome.
2. God's not going to lead us forward in a way where we can accomplish what He wants in our own strength or by our own efforts. Difficulty doesn't indicate we're out of the will of God. It indicates just how much we need Him.
3. Often with wide open doors of opportunities, there are still great challenges to overcome. It's amazing how often we can doubt God's leading just because there are still challenges.
4. One of the best examples of this is the relationship between God and the nation of Israel as He lead them out of Egypt. (Explain) God delivered them through supernatural circumstances; delivered them from 400 years of slavery from the most powerful nation of the world / He destroyed their army at the Red

Sea...THEN, He led them into the desert. (No water) Difficulty!

5. God would use these negative circumstances to test them and grow their faith along the journey. He does the same with us!
- Therefore, when we see God in the circumstances, it is time to follow!

B. Obeying God as we see Him in the circumstances is the path of blessing

- Let me share with you the path of blessing God is taking us on.
 1. It is time for Foothills to take the next step of faith, trust, and growth. We have a set of circumstances that is hindering what God has called us to do. (Slide)
 - Out of room in our current auditorium
 - Out of classroom space for our children's ministry
 - Our of space for our growing office
 2. We have been praying and knocking – what do you want? / searching the scriptures – expand! / seeking outside godly counsel - point of the spear / listening to the Holy Spirit - time to trust me / and looking at how God may lead through the circumstances. (Recognize current situation and potential options.)
 3. We don't have enough money to purchase this building yet. (KAC) Even if we did, we couldn't access the True Value space for another 3 years (lease) Plus, we would still have all the same space issues that hinder the vision. Buying this building now doesn't solve anything.
 4. God has shown us that there is another step before we purchase this building. A step that allows us to be obedient to the vision He called us to. Following the Lord in this vision must drive this church not buying this building. The KAC money is about Kingdom Advancement not a building fund.
 5. The opportunity the Lord presented us was to purchase the adjacent Green House café building on Main St. (5200 sq. ft – 15,000 sq. ft. lot) We would move our office there / remodel current office space for children's ministry / knock out the wall behind me to expand the auditorium to accommodate another 200 chairs.
 6. We did extensive research on this building and the remodel project – did feasibility studies – determined that this would allow the entire church to move forward and temporarily meet our space issues.
 7. Now it was time to see if God was in the circumstances. The Green House café was listed at \$415,000. It was bank owned. As we prayed together as a board the only number the Lord gave us unity over was \$230,000. The realtor said they wouldn't accept it. Guess what happened...We now own this building! Do you see God?
 8. Now it is time for us trust Him and move ahead. This is still going to require faith to accomplish. We're still going to have raise another \$200,000 to complete all three projects. Remodeling a 5200 sq. ft. building is not cheap, nor is remodeling our current space to solve our space problems. (3 projects)

- Some of you are concerned about this figure. We raised more than this 7 years ago with 200 people and no money in the bank! We had to also trust him for a \$5000 a month lease. We now avg. 734!
9. Construction on our current building (happen first) could possibly begin on a month. It is our desire to have our current building remodel done by Christmas! We will be moving our office into the building where the Chamber of Commerce is.
 10. What about buying our current building? We have a three year window to raise the money. After this project is done, we refocus our efforts back on the purchase of our current sight. This step must happen first to keep advancing the Kingdom. The KAC just continues.
 - I will be sending out a church wide letter this week with more information / details and costs. Our web site will also include a page to keep you updated on progress.
 - The Lord gave me this passage for us this week for encouragement to us as a church.
Rev. 3:8 "I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close.(circumstances that He is orchestrating) You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me." (NLT) Foothills, let's not deny Him here thinking He can't do this. Lets obey Him! Let's keep walking through the open doors He creates seeing Him advance His Kingdom in the Molalla area! God is taking us on yet another adventure. Let's go!