

The background features a watercolor-style splash of colors, primarily orange, yellow, and purple, set against a light grey background. The colors are blended and spread out, creating a soft, artistic effect. A thin white rectangular border is centered on the page, framing the text.

A Wide Door

1 Corinthians 16:5-12

1 Corinthians

16:5-12

⁵ I will come to you after I pass through Macedonia—for I will be traveling through Macedonia—⁶ and perhaps I will remain with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I go. ⁷ I don't want to see you now just in passing, since I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord allows. ⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a wide door for effective ministry has opened for me—yet many oppose me. ¹⁰ If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear while with you, because he is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. ¹¹ So let no one look down on him. Send him on his way in peace so that he can come to me, because I am expecting him with the brothers. ¹² Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to come to you with the brothers, but he was not at all willing to come now. However, he will come when he has an opportunity.

What can we learn about Paul?

- Paul makes plans: “I will be traveling through Macedonia...” (5)
- Paul’s plans are open-ended: “Perhaps I will remain...” (6)
- Paul has wants and hopes: “I don’t want to see you now...I hope to spend some time....” (7)
- Paul knows that the Lord is the one who allows his plans to succeed or fail: “If the Lord allows.” (7)
- He decides what to do, based on his judgment of circumstances: “A wide door for effective ministry....” (9)
- Bad circumstances do not equal a “closed door”: “Yet many oppose me.” (9)

What can we learn about Timothy?

- Paul does not dictate Timothy's plans: "If Timothy comes..." (10)
- Timothy's plans are not definite: "If Timothy comes..." (10)
- A lack of fear ("feeling a peace") is not required for something to be God's will: "see that he has nothing to fear..." (10)
- What matters is doing the Lord's work, for both Paul and Timothy: "He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am." (10)
- Acceptance by others is not required for something to be God's will: "Let no one look down on him..." (11)
- Doing the Lord's work can be a team effort: "Send him on his way...with the brothers." (11)

What can we learn about Apollos?

- Apollos is a brother with a different call: “I strongly urged him....not at all willing...” (12)
- Apollos waits for a better opportunity: “He will come...” (12)

Note what doesn't show up in this plan-making

- I feel led...
- I sense that God is calling me to...
- I have a peace about it
- I've received confirmations that this is God's will
- I put out a fleece!
- I'm waiting on the Lord to guide
- I'm listening for that still small voice
- I need my "camels to be watered"

Three common assumptions

1. God has a personal, customized plan for my life.
2. I must discover that plan order to make the right decision.
3. God reveals that plan to me through often-subtle direction.

Other assumptions – not always expressed

- God often calls us to do things we don't want to do
- Our preferences and wants can distract us from the perfect will of God, so we must put those things to death - at least, set them aside until we know what his will is.
- If I fail to interpret his direction properly, I will lose the right to an abundant life.

A few ways the Bible *doesn't* teach us to hear God's voice

- Guidance from our gut:
 - A still small voice – it was still perfectly clear
 - “Led by the Spirit” Romans 8, Galatians 5, etc, is the leading of sanctification, and laid out in Scripture.
- Guidance from inner peace: Colossians 3, Philippians 4, and other passages on “peace” speak to a command to have peace, despite conflict or doubts.

A few ways the Bible *doesn't* teach us to hear God's voice

- Guidance from open doors (1 Cor 16 and 2 Cor 2:12-13, also Agabus)
- Guidance from wet or dry fleeces (or other signs)
 - The original fleece confirmed previous direction
 - The original fleece was clearly supernatural
 - The original fleece is an example of weak faith, of doubt, rather than of belief and obedience.
- Guidance from “confirmations” – One phrase, quoted many times (Matthew 18:15-16)

Inherent dangers with these methods:

- Not necessarily biblical
- Hijacks God's name
- Sometimes motivated by laziness
- Sometimes motivated by fear
- Allows me to avoid responsibility
- Does away with reason and wisdom
- Does away with counsel
- Causes us to question God's goodness

A Biblical pattern for decision-making

- Serve God
- Seek wisdom
- Do what you please

His will is – on a certain level - knowable

- Ephesians 1:7-10 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. He made known to us **the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.
- Colossians 1:9 We are asking that you may be filled with **the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...**
- Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect **will of God.**

His will is practical

- Ephesians 6:6 Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, **do God's will from your heart.**
- 1 Peter 2:15 For **it is God's will** that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 For **this is God's will**, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality,
- 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18 See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for **this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus.

How can we be like Paul?

- Kingdom: Commit to do the work, according to his commands – whatever it is, wherever you are, do *something*.
- Wisdom: Get into his Word, listen to his saints, and think soberly.
- Freedom: Trust the clarity of his love as you step forward in confidence.