

THE BIG IDEA: God led you where you are to lead you where you aren't.

The Take-Off

If you've spent any amount of time behind the wheel of a car, you've experienced a dead end or two.

Sometimes dead end signs can be put in some pretty funny places (pics)

But overall, it's fair to say that they can be frustrating, time consuming and confusing, especially if you didn't see them coming

But as we'll see this morning in Acts 16, they may be the best thing that can happen to you.

1. Dead ends lead somewhere

- a. Acts 16:6-10
- b. When we first read it, it's easy to just see names of places
 - But use a map and see how it changes (Map)
 - Now let's read it again and note the locations
- c. Isn't it amazing to see how God led Paul? He used dead ends to lead Paul where he wanted him to go.
- d. They couldn't go where they wanted to go
- e. They were literally squeezed by God; their options got smaller - just like a funnel
- f. When you put enough dead ends together, you get a funnel
- g. Funnels can seem like a waste of time until you try to pour oil in a car without one!
- h. Verse 6
 - Traveled the region of Phrygia and Galatia because they couldn't go into Asia
 - Greek word for "been kept by" is koluo and means "to hinder, prevent, forbid; to deny or refuse something"
 - Same word for not keeping the children from Jesus
 - Comes from the root word for "prune, correct, chastise"
 - Not a pleasant word, is it?
 - And it came from God!
- i. Verse 7
 - stopped again by the Spirit
 - another closed door
- j. Verse 8
 - Paul went to Troas
 - Not his first choice
 - Like a NC State coaching search!
 - sometimes God leads us more by the closed doors than the open ones; He guides us through hindrances
 - that should change the way we see hindrances
 - Instead of rebuking or ignoring them, maybe we should think deeply about them
- k. Verse 9
 - Troas was located in modern-day Dalyan, Turkey
 - It's name meant "penetrated" (more on that later)
 - This is where God expanded Paul's vision
 - Paul wanted to reach some cities in his region, but God was sending him to an entire continent - Europe!
- l. Verse 10
 - Paul responded immediately
 - It's good that he did, because they made the trip in 2 days (v. 11) when the return trip took them 5 days (Acts 20:6)
 - God has good timing, and it's best to trust it.
 - Verses 7 and 8 say "they" but that becomes "we" in verse 10. (more on that later, too)

2. Learning when we get there

- a. Obviously, the question is, "What does it mean for me?"
- b. Let's agree that most of us can relate to this passage of Scripture because we relate to closed doors more than open

- c. Let's also set something straight: our Americanized brand of Christianity would cause us to miss the leading of God in this way because we're taught to think positively and it is easy for us to see closed opportunities in a negative light
- d. But all of us spend time in Troas, and the sooner we learn what God is teaching us, the sooner we can get on with His plan
- e. So, let's learn some things about Troas
- f. It is a place of **TRUST**
 - After all the journeying and closed doors, Paul still slept when he got there (verse 9)
 - Don't miss that. He didn't pace the nights away, and if he had, he would have missed the vision of the man in Macedonia
- g. Troas is a place of **TRIAL**
 - It is restless and lonely (2 Cor. 2:12-13)
 - o No peace, no Titus
 - I love the vulnerability of Paul!
 - Even after getting an open door, he had no peace, and still he went where he was funneled
- h. Troas is a place of **TRANSFORMATION**
 - Paul's dream was good, but too small
 - It needed to be stretched, and that happened in Troas
 - He wanted cities, God wanted a continent
 - It was in a city whose name means "penetrated" that God finally got through to Paul and then launched him to penetrate the darkness of Europe
 - Without Troas, our New Testament would be missing:
 - o Acts
 - o 1 and 2 Corinthians
 - o Ephesians
 - o Philippians
 - o 1 and 2 Thessalonians
 - Without Troas, Paul wouldn't have met Luke and Acts would not have been recorded (that's the reason for "we" in verse 10)
 - Paul's message and ministry were transformed in Troas
- i. Troas became a place of **TREMENDOUS VALUE**
 - often when we come to hard places in our lives, we want to leave them as fast as we can
 - once we've come through hard places in our lives, we want to remember them as long as we can
 - the lessons become precious, priceless
 - yesterday at Pfeiffer's graduation I smiled watching people walk across the stage to get their diploma, but there was only one person that I really wanted to know more about - a man who shuffled slowly across to get his.
 - We love the stories of survivors, overcomers
 - The stories of our perseverance and unwavering focus become the special ones, the stories we're asked to tell over and over again.
 - Troas has a way of writing those stories into our lives, and we hold them closer and share them more passionately than any others.
 - At the end of his life and ministry, Paul didn't ask for any cloak from anywhere. He asked for the one he'd left in Troas. (2 Timothy 4:13)
 - My guess is he held it differently when he got it.
 - Perhaps he smelled it and thought back to a town beside the sea where God had totally changed the direction of his life.
 - I bet he smiled when he did.

The Landing

The Big Idea today is full of hope for all of us facing dead ends, because it reminds us that a dead end doesn't have to be an end at all.

God led you where you are to lead you where you aren't.

There is a purpose to where you are and what you're facing!!

Here are a few takeaways from Acts 16 for us:

- You are where God wants you to be
- Sometimes God leads us to the "yes" by taking us through a "no"
- Instead of wasting time and energy wondering why you are where you are, spend that time and energy learning what you can where you are
- Once you know the next step, take it

Many of you may not know that The Gathering exists today because of dead ends and funnels in mine and Wendy's lives.

We went through a good 3 years of funneling and after countless frustrating "why" prayers, we finally decided to ask God what he was saying "yes" to?

The Gathering was his answer!