

Our Ever-Present God

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[0 : 00] Well, Jim, I'm glad you waited. Thank you for that. That was good. That was good. All right. If you would open up your Bibles to the book of Acts. Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. Acts 1.15 begins by saying, in those days. And now the question is, which days? What days is Luke talking about here? He's referring to the days between the ascension of Jesus, which was 40 days after his resurrection, and the day that the Holy Spirit would come.

And to indwell the lives of believers. That's the day of Pentecost, which is 50 days after the Passover. So 10 days. He's referring to 10 days of waiting. If you remember, Jesus told his disciples that they needed to go to Jerusalem, and that when they go there, they will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on them, and then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. So they were supposed to go and to wait and not leave Jerusalem.

And so that's where they were. For 10 days, they were in a time of waiting. And now the question that I want to ask is, was God absent while they were waiting? Jesus had ascended? The Holy Spirit hadn't yet come?

The question that I'm wondering, the question that I'm wondering, that I want to ask is, was God still present when they were waiting? Was He still present? During seasons of waiting in our lives, something that's really common is the mindset or the pattern of thinking that God hasn't shown up yet.

Right? Have you ever heard anyone say that? Well, God didn't show up there for me. You know, God didn't show up when I needed Him. Or, or, I was in a really, really tight spot, and then God showed up. It reminds me of the great philosopher Forrest Gump.

[1 : 49] And, you remember when, when Lieutenant Dan on the ship, they started their shrimping business, Bubba Gump. Bubba Gump shrimp. And, they couldn't catch anything. They were terrible at it.

They were horrible. And so, Lieutenant Dan says, where's this God of yours anyways? You remember that? And then Forrest says, it was funny that he said that, because right then, God showed up.

You remember there's this massive storm? And then, Lieutenant Dan's, like, climbing up the ship, and he's screaming at God, and all those things. You remember that? Here's the thing. That is not the way that God lives. He doesn't show up and then leave.

He doesn't leave and then show back up. That's not how God works. God is always present. He is omniscient. He is in all places at all times. God doesn't leave us and leave us to our own devices until it's time for us to really call down hard until He shows up.

And then we see Him. And that's not what took place here with the apostles. But that way of thinking is really, really common. In fact, it's even common when people think about this passage. If you've heard people talk about the day of Pentecost, often what they'll say is something like, after ten days of silence, when they were wondering what to do, suddenly God showed up.

[3 : 09] Right? They'll say that about this very passage. Here's the thing. God never left the apostles. God never left the disciples, the early church. As it was beginning to form, God was still present and at work among them.

When we're in seasons of waiting, when we're in seasons of working, when we're in seasons of reaping, God is still present. Here's the thing. His absence is not what we should concern ourselves with.

We shouldn't wonder, is God here? Is God in this? We shouldn't wonder, will God show up? We shouldn't concern ourselves with God's absence. What we should concern ourselves with is, are we

listening to God through His Word and able to discern the way that He's leading us? Very different. Very different. It's not that God isn't there. It's that we aren't listening. And there's things that we can do, things in our control, that we can do in order to stay close to God through His Word, through prayer, through fellowship, so that we don't wonder, we don't say, God left. He's not here.

God hasn't left. He's always present. He doesn't have to show up whenever you really, really need Him. You always really, really need Him, right? Like, there's never a moment that we aren't sustained by His sovereign rule and His control over the entire universe.

[4 : 35] We always really, really need Him. So how do we remain aware of God's presence and follow Him obediently while we wait in what seems like silence?

And there are times, by the way, when we'll wait like the apostles, and it seems like there's silence from God. It seems like I can't hear Him. What am I supposed to do while I wait?

When will I know where to go? I mean, God didn't give Abraham a road map. He said, go to the place that I'll show you. Abraham had to take his family and leave from the land of his father in Ur of the Chaldeans.

He had to leave, and whenever God said stop, he was where he was supposed to be. Sometimes we don't have all the answers, but there's times where we'll be in seasons of waiting, and we'll wonder and we'll want to know.

And so how do we remain close to the Lord so that we can sense His presence and know where He's leading us? John Stott, he was a theologian from years past.

[5 : 32] He was talking about this passage, and he points to three things that gave the disciples clarity while they waited. One was they were connected to God by reading His Word, Scripture, okay?

The second one, and this is really good. I love this because not everybody has it. Common sense. Common sense. Did you know that God gave you a brain?

It's cool. Sometimes when people are driving, I don't think they use it. But God gave us brains. He gave us the ability to think and use logic to make decisions. He also gives us wisdom.

God wants us to use our common sense. And number three, prayer. And we'll look at these three. But through these three, and as post-Pentecost Christians, by the guiding presence of God's Holy Spirit, we can live through seasons of waiting with hope, direction, and with a sense of purpose. So the three things that we're going to look at is how the disciples were, one, during this time, they were rooted in Scripture. Number two, during this time, they reasoned together.

[6 : 38] And then finally, they relied on prayer. They were rooted in Scripture. They reasoned together. And they relied on prayer.

God wasn't silent. He wasn't absent. Christ had entered His glory in the kingdom of heaven. But God was still very much at work in the lives of those He would soon use to form His church here on earth.

And in the same way, He's actively involved in our lives as we learn to navigate our own seasons of waiting. So with that said, I do want to read for us again the passage, Acts 1, 15 through 26.

So I'll ask that you stand to honor the reading of God's Word. Amen. In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters.

The number of people who were together was about 120 and said, Brothers and sisters, it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled, that the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, foretold about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

[7 : 44] For he was one of our number and shared in this ministry. Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst, his body burst open, and his intestines spilled out.

This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called Hekeldima, that is, field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his dwelling become desolate, let no one live in it, and let someone else take his position.

Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, among these it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.

So they proposed two. Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justice, and Matthias.

Then they prayed, You, Lord, know everyone's hearts. Show which of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.

Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles. Let's pray together. Oh God, we come to you now. We ask that you would open our hearts to understand your truth.

[9 : 00] Give us eyes to see you, ears to hear you, and hearts, oh God, to humbly respond to you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You can be seated.

So the disciples were rooted in Scripture. During this time of waiting, they were obedient to Jesus' command, and they waited for him in Jerusalem.

They waited for the Father's promised Holy Spirit, and during that time, they had a few options for how they could use their time. They could spend it waiting passively, sitting back, hanging out, doing whatever they wanted, living life as normal, or they could wait actively.

They could pursue the Lord. They could seek him. And in our day, it's pretty rare that we wait actively. Most of the time, we don't spend our time in waiting, preparing for what's next, right? There's definitely times and examples that we would and that we do, but often, we don't like to be bored, so we fill our time with mindless scrolling on social media, or with watching the next TV show that we had on our list, or some people, you know, God love you, read books.

[10 : 17] You know, that's cool. Not for me. But anyways, I'm just kidding. So we don't love to be bored. We don't love waiting. And so we're very passive in our waiting.

We're not intentional with it. We don't use our time to grow as maybe we should in preparation for what might be coming next. You know, equally deadly, we let our time get filled with just frivolous endeavors, right?

Pursuing the next thing, instead of waiting and seeing where God might lead us. And so instead of preparing to enter a new field of work, or preparing for the next job that we might have, instead, we'll get disgruntled and think about how our previous employer did us wrong, and spend our time complaining and groaning about what's been done to us, instead of growing during that season of waiting in preparation for what is next.

That's passive waiting. The disciples didn't do that. And unlike what's so common among us, the disciples were very active during this time of waiting. They took that time of waiting in Jerusalem as a gift, and they sought the wisdom of God through His Word as they prepared to do what He had called them to do.

Remember, Jesus said, He told them, wait in Jerusalem, and you will receive power and be my witnesses. Like, they knew what the call was. So instead of sitting in Jerusalem, you know, I'm in the city limits, Jesus, I'm waiting, right?

[11 : 41] They stayed together. They were united in prayer, and they studied God's Word. They were rooted in Scripture. As we search God's Word for guidance and direction, we will find ourselves comforted by the reality of God's presence and His sovereign reign.

And that's exactly what happened here with the disciples. So verses 16 and 17 says, so remember, Peter stood up, says, Brothers and sisters, it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, foretold about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

Notice a couple things here. One, Scripture is God's Word. Peter didn't stand there and tell them, we know that David said this, and David was pretty good at guessing things, and so it had to be fulfilled.

No, it was absolutely necessary that Judas betrayed Jesus because the Holy Spirit divinely inspired His Word through His tool, His person, King David, and that prophetic utterance from King David was really God speaking into existence what was going to take place, which was Judas betraying Jesus.

Scripture is God's Word. That's an important thing to remember, too. As we study this, I don't want you to think we're studying the Word of Luke. Luke was the human author. Luke wrote Acts, and he wrote the Gospel of Luke.

[13 : 02] When we study Ephesians, we're not studying the Word of Paul. We're studying God's Word. The Holy Spirit of God divinely inspired every word in this sacred text, and as we read it, God is speaking to us through His very Holy Spirit.

So the disciples, as they were studying Scripture, were hearing from God. They were communicating with God. They were praying, and they were studying God's Word. Scripture is God's Word.

And then look at the second thing. Scripture has to be fulfilled. He said it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled. And why is it necessary? Because God is faithful to His Word. God will fulfill His Word. God is faithful to His promises. The disciples were still licking their wounds after what had taken place. You know, 45, 46 days before, one of their best friends, the one who kept their money, he was in charge of their money, one that they witnessed go out with them in power, granted by Jesus, into towns to preach the message of repentance and see people healed and cast out demons.

They witnessed Judas be a part of this. He shared in this ministry. Judas was with them. They were still licking their wounds because how could this person that they knew and trusted, and they knew that Jesus knew him and that Jesus trusted him, how could he turn his back on us?

[14:26] How could he turn his back on Jesus? How could he sell out for 30 pieces of silver? And then they couldn't even talk to him because one of their friends, who had made a terrible mistake, then went and committed suicide.

They couldn't even have the conversation with Judas to ask him to explain, how did that happen? Why did you do that? Imagine how heartbroken they had to be. Devastated, disgusted, angry, but heartbroken.

This is one of their friends. I'm not trying to let you feel sympathy for Judas here. Judas got his just punishment for what he had done. Read verses 18 and 19. This is not part of Peter's speech.

This is Luke giving some information. This man, talking about Judas, acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst, his body burst open, and his intestines spilled out.

This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language, that field is called a keldama, which is field of blood. You know, Matthew gives us another account of Judas. Matthew explains that he gave the money back to the priests, he threw it back at them, and then he went out to a field somewhere, the potter's field, and he committed suicide.

[15:38] And then, the way that Matthew records it is that the priests then went and bought that field, and then that field was known as the field of blood. So here's the thing. Luke and Matthew are telling us the same things.

They're just sparing details. Each of them are. Because it's not important for what they're talking about. Okay, so for Luke, what's really important is to see that Judas had a serious crime, and a very severe punishment that matched his crime.

Matthew was more interested in explaining the ins and outs of what took place. And so when it says, he acquired a field with his unrighteous wages, it was still his money. The priests refused to receive it.

So when they bought that field, the field was bought in Judas' name. So that he acquired that field. So Judas, instead of going back to the disciples, and asking if they would have a word with him so that he could explain himself, instead of repenting before the Lord and before his friends, instead of any of those things, he went and made the selfish decision to take his own life.

And so these disciples, you have to imagine, they were still just shaken, right? This is not very long before this, that they were shaken. Judas was in sin, right?

[16:46] But God knew before time began that Judas would betray Christ. In his fleshly greed, he sought money over his relationship with Christ.

To Judas, turning in Jesus was the most personally beneficial thing that he could do, and so he did. He made a sinful decision, and yet what we see in this passage is that the disciples, who were still confused, I'm sure, were comforted and encouraged by the fact that God was not surprised.

They were shocked. They were stunned that their friend would do such a thing. Can you imagine what it would have been like for them in the garden to see Judas come up and give Jesus that kiss? Like just the betrayal, the betrayal in that moment. But yet then when 40, you know, 45, 40, whatever, 46 days later, as they studied scripture, they were comforted because God wasn't surprised.

Jesus wasn't surprised. When Judas walked into the garden, Jesus wasn't surprised. God knew what was going to take place. God spoke to Peter through his word and showed him that what Judas did was not a surprise.

[18:00] It wasn't shocking to God. It was, in fact, necessary. It was necessary. God is completely sovereign and in complete control.

See, where these disciples were waiting, and it felt like silence, and it felt like Jesus isn't here, the promised Holy Spirit hasn't come, what are we supposed to do? We're aimless. Instead of getting bogged down and curious wandering, they were patient, and they sought God through his word, and God comforted the believers through his very word.

He showed them that he wasn't surprised, that he's in control. And the third thing that we see as we look at these disciples who were rooted in Scripture is that Scripture leads us in God's will.

Look at verse 20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his dwelling become desolate and let no one live in it. That's Psalm 69. He's talking about what should take place because of what Judas had done.

And then now, Psalm 109, let someone else take his position. So as they sought God through his word, God showed them how they should move forward as they waited during their time of preparation.

[19:12] Someone needed to replace Judas in the apostolic ministry of the 12. The 12 had a very specific and special calling, very specific and special commission given to them by Jesus to be his eyewitnesses.

The ones who saw him and the ones who knew his resurrected life and the ones who would proclaim that shamelessly throughout all the earth. The 12 had a very specific mission.

And as they studied God's word and they realized that God wasn't surprised, they were comforted by that. Then they saw the mission is still before us. The call is still before us to be the witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

And so they had to replace Judas. In fact, it says again that it was necessary to choose someone to replace Judas.

So you get this idea of divine necessity in two places. One, it was necessary that Judas betrayed Jesus. And it was necessary that someone replaced Judas because he abandoned his ministry.

[20:22] And by the way, this is, I want to be really clear, the idea of apostolic succession, right? That when an apostle died, someone else would take their place as an apostle. It stops here because Judas is the only apostle who was replaced in scripture.

When James dies later in Acts, they don't replace him with another. Okay? There's no apostolic continuation here. The way that the apostle's message lives on is through the preaching of God's word.

Okay? And so that's the thing. But as we are rooted in scripture like the apostles, we have to seek God while we wait through his word. We should be encouraged and strengthened by his promises and his faithfulness and trust that God will lead you in his will as you seek him through his word.

Prayerful and deliberate study of scripture must fill our life in seasons of waiting, just like it did for the apostles. And then the second thing that we saw the apostles do is they reasoned together.

They reasoned together. Verses 21 through 23 says, Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.

[21:40] So they proposed two. Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justice, and Matthias. I want to pause there to explain why I keep saying Matthias that way, because you're probably reading Matthias.

Here's the thing. I had a friend in college who spelled his name that way, and he went by Matthias. I can't say it any other way now. So there you have it. That's why if I say it weird to you, it's because I have a friend.

His name's Matthias, all right? So as they studied scripture, and they recognized the need to replace Judas, as that became clear, they had to set forth a standard by which they would choose that replacement, by how they would identify who would replace Judas.

Enter godly wisdom and discernment. This is how God calls us to make plenty of decisions, godly wisdom and discernment. We won't always have clear, biblical answers from the text on important life decisions, just so you know.

We won't always have very, very clear, practical answers, step-by-step instructions on how to do certain things. Perfect example, this is a church, we have a budget. If you can find in here, it's not in the book of Numbers, I've looked, an example of a church budget for 2025, I would love to see it, but I can't.

[22 : 54] Instead, what we have is, we have God's word, his command to be good stewards, his command to care for the poor, and care for orphans and widows, and his commands to also use his money to advance his kingdom.

And so, as we see in scripture, we then take those wise principles and hand them over to people like Mr. Bill Garvin, who can really think through numbers, and then we work through and identify the best way to apply the budget for the church, right?

That's godly wisdom being used to make important decisions. Those things happen. The disciples did not have a roadmap for how to replace Judas. They had no idea.

There's no biblical example of replacing an apostle because this is a new thing for them. So, logic provided a couple of clear qualifications.

Number one, they had to have been with Jesus throughout the entirety of his ministry. We've talked about this as we were going through the Gospel of Luke, but it's important to know when Jesus was ministering on earth, it wasn't just him and the 12, it was him and the 12 and a larger group of disciples who was with him throughout the entirety of his ministry.

[24 : 05] The 12 were specially chosen. There's no question about that. In fact, three, Peter, James, and John, were even specially chosen to have a more personal, intimate relationship with Christ. But there was a larger group of disciples at play.

And so from that group, that's the first requirement. They had to have been with Jesus the whole way through. And then number two, again, pretty important, they had to have witnessed Jesus in his resurrected life.

They had to have witnessed a resurrected Jesus. And these two things make sense. Like, logically speaking, it makes sense. These guys were called to be the witnesses of a resurrected Lord, right? They had to know that Lord first. They had to know his teaching. They had to know his ways. They had to know his words. They had to have seen him in ministry. Probably these people would have been part of the 72 when Jesus, he sent out the 12 to do ministry, and then later he sent out a group of 72 to do ministry.

So they had to actually have taken part in the ministry of Jesus. And then finally, as witnesses, they had to be willing and able to give a credible eyewitness account of what they had come to believe, which was that Jesus had truly died and truly been raised back to life.

[25 : 19] So when we're in seasons of waiting, we can hear God speak to us through his word, and we can also trust that God has given us wisdom to make sound decisions that glorify him. The disciples did just that.

There's no biblical justification for those two qualifications. They just made good sense. You see what I'm saying? And there's wisdom in trusting that God is leading them as they studied his word and they spent time in prayer.

There's wisdom in trusting that he's given them wisdom to make those decisions. They weren't acting apart from God in this decision. I've heard this passage preached and taught that Matthias was the wrong apostle.

They were supposed to wait and the apostle Paul was supposed to be the 12th apostle. Here's the thing. There's nowhere in scripture that it says that Paul was supposed to be the replacement for Judas.

Nowhere. It's an argument from silence. It's an argument really from Paul's effective ministry among the Gentiles. But in this case, what we can see and the way that Luke presents the story, it's very clear they were not separate from God in their decision making.

[26 : 22] They were trusting the wisdom that God had given them and as we are in times of waiting, right, if we're waiting for a new job, if we're waiting for a new opportunity, if we're waiting for test results to come back and it feels like we don't know what the right thing to do is, we don't know where the right place to go is, we don't know what the right job to take is or where to go to the right college, when those times come, we have to trust that God has given us brains and his word and we're able to read his word and discern where God is leading us.

Now, at the same time, we are fallible. So we can't trust ourselves apart from God, right? And the disciples, they didn't. They didn't trust God apart from God.

They had their wisdom that they came together and they presented these two guys and then, what did they do next? They prayed. Look at verse 24. They relied on prayer.

You, Lord, know everyone's hearts. Literally, it says that you are the heart knower. You know everyone's hearts. Show which of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.

Then they cast lots for them and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the 11 apostles. So true wisdom, by the way, true wisdom recognizes the fallibility of human thinking.

[27 : 43] All right? We are capable of making the wrong decision. It's important to know. The church is capable of making the wrong decision. But God is faithful and as we recognize our fallibility and rely on God who is all-knowing, is all-present, he's all-powerful, and trust him to show us who he's chosen, show us what he's chosen, where he's directed, where he's guided, we can have faith that God is going to give us clarity, that he's going to show us completely what we ought to do to best glorify him.

They prayed. There's humility here. There's reliance. There's an unwillingness to trust themselves. They didn't want to make the wrong decision. In fact, they didn't want to choose the 12th because Jesus had chosen the first 12.

They wanted him to make that decision. They wanted him to make it clear. And this reminds me a lot, by the way, of 1 Samuel chapter 16. You remember this? When Samuel is, he goes to Bethlehem and he's at Jesse's house and he's going to anoint the next king of Israel.

Remember, Samuel knew who he would have chosen. He would have, he already did it with Saul, tall and handsome. You know what I mean? That's what he was looking for. Jesse, he knew who he was going to give to be the king.

He brought all his good sons out, right? All the tall and handsome ones. But God says, 1 Samuel 16, 7, do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him.

[29 : 11] Humans do not see what the Lord sees for humans see what is visible but the Lord sees the heart. See, God is the one who knows the heart and so as the apostles were making this incredibly important decision for the 12th witness of the resurrection, they had to humbly depend on God to show them the answer.

So they prayed. They prayed. They acknowledged God's, the fact that God knows everyone's hearts and they sought Him. So when we prepare to make decisions, whether it's church budgets or personal decisions, life decisions, where you're going to work, where you're going to live, things like that, it's very prudent for us to seek God through prayer and ask for Him to give us clear, a clear answer on where and how He is leading us.

And I'm not saying that, I'm not suggesting that we should pray and say, God, if this green light changes to red before I get up there, then I'll know I need to stop doing what I'm doing.

Like, no, no, like, don't ask for signs like that, right? Like, that's kind of silly and frivolous. You know, it's like, God, if I open Your Word, malicious witnesses came forward, they question about me things I do not know.

What are you saying, Lord? Like, that's not, that's not how we should ask God to reveal to us what He's calling us to do, where He's leading us. Instead, we should humbly depend on God and ask Him to make very clear.

[30 : 37] And here's the thing, what they did was, after their time of prayer, they cast wats. And for us, that seems really, really weird, right? That's not something we do. We don't throw dice to make a decision. If I get two sixes, I'll win.

You know what I mean? That's not how we, that's not how we trust God to reveal to us. And the reason is, they were still waiting for the presence of the Holy Spirit. If you notice, this method of decision making is never used again in the New Testament.

It's pretty common in the Old Testament. It was really common in Judaism in general. But it is never used again in the New Testament. Why is that? Because, what we see next in Acts chapter 2 is that God's very presence, through the power of the Holy Spirit, indwells the believers and not only increases their wisdom, but gives them clear guidance.

And so for us, as post-Pentecost Christians, as we spend time in prayer, as we seek God through His Word, as we use common sense and wisdom that God has blessed us with, we can make sound decisions that glorify God as the Holy Spirit leads.

This is not some mystical experience. This is grounded in the truth of God's Word. If you decide that God's leading you to do something that doesn't line up with God's Word, God's not leading you to do that thing.

[31 : 50] But if after prayer and time talking with other believers and through fellowship and spending time just discerning what God is saying to you through His Word, you feel like God is leading you to do something that does line up with His Word, check with other believers, and then go into that willingly and gladly because God speaks to us through His Word.

So we all go through seasons of waiting and we all want clarity, we all want guidance. You know, we ask, what job should I pick? Where should my kids go to school? How should I lead my family? How do I navigate this new health crisis?

Whatever it is, we go through times where the answer isn't immediately before us. And in those times when the answer isn't right before us, we can trust that God is present and we can trust that God will guide us through His Word and by His Spirit as we pray and seek Him.

God desires to guide us the same way that He guides the disciples. But here's the thing, the disciples sought Him through His Word. We can say, God's not here, God didn't lead me, God didn't do that, but we never asked Him, right?

We didn't spend time in prayer, we didn't spend time seeking Him through His Word. The guidance that we desire, the direction that we desire from God comes as we eagerly and earnestly!

[33 : 12] We seek Him through His Word, through the wisdom that He's given us and through prayer. And so, there may be some of us here who are in these times of waiting. You don't know where God's leading you, what He's leading you to do.

Guess what? Sometimes we just have to wait a little bit longer, you know? Sometimes we have to wait a little bit longer. I think it was Garth Brooks who had that song, Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers. Here's the thing, God answers every prayer.

We just may not like the answer. Sometimes we wait. We have to wait. Sometimes the answer is wait, right? And that doesn't mean that He didn't answer. It means the answer is wait. So we trust God.

So as we are going through these times of waiting, like the apostles were, one, God is present. Two, God hears us. He desires for us to know Him through His Word and He desires to lead us by His Holy Spirit as we study His Word.

And here's the thing, if you are a seasoned Christian, this is really, really hard. And if you are a new believer, this is really, really hard. And if you don't know Christ at all, it's impossible. So if you don't know Christ, the first step in understanding how God might be leading you is to understand that He is leading you first to a relationship with His Son.

[34 : 24] Jesus Christ died on the cross, rose again, ascended to heaven in glory, and now He sits on the throne. He is sovereign and in complete control, and He desires a relationship with you.

As you have a relationship with Christ, God's Spirit lives within you and will lead you and guide you in all truth so that you can know for certainty where God is leading you, how God is leading you. The same thing is true for the church at large. As we as a church seek God through His Word, as we seek Him through prayer together corporately, God will lead us as a church into what He's calling us to next.

Because that's who God is. The mission that was given to the apostles is still alive. Take the message. Be a witness of Christ to the ends of the earth.

And however we get to be a part of that is a blessing and it's a joyous opportunity, but we have to seek God through His Word, through prayer, and trust the wisdom and guiding of the Holy Spirit as well.

[35 : 25] I'm going to pray for us and we'll have a closing song. But if you have questions or thoughts on how you can know God, first of all, how you can have a relationship with God, I'm going to invite you to come up and talk with me.

If you have questions about what it would look like to join the church or anything along those lines or next steps as a believer, maybe it's believer's baptism and obedience, and I'm going to trust that you would follow as God leads you in obedience.

You should do what God leads you to do. I'm going to pray for us and then we'll have a closing song. Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for who you are. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for your truth. God, I pray now that you would just transform our hearts, that we would look more like you as we leave this place, that in waiting you would show us how to discern your truth and how to learn your Word so that we can seek you and grow closer to you and follow you as you lead us.

God, we pray that we wouldn't make decisions apart from you, but individually and as a church that we would make decisions that glorify you and first come from you. Lord, we love you and praise you and it's in Jesus' name that we pray.
Amen.