

Expectant Prayer - Acts 1:12-26

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[0 : 00] I am grateful that you have come to worship the Lord with us today. And all of us in here are making some choices.

We all are making decisions in our life. Some of you may be considering adoption, others of you may be considering a job change or starting a business, returning to school, some may be considering relocating out of Spokane, whether that be for employment or school or ministry or for family reasons.

Others may be making a decision whether to make a large purchase, a major purchase, a car, a home, beginning a business. Others may be facing the prospect of beginning a relationship or getting married.

Others, God may be calling to pull up roots and move overseas onto the mission field. Still others are choosing a medical option of which to take and the prognosis may seem bleak.

All of us in here are making decisions. We all do. Every day we make thousands. And we have in the opening scene of our message today, the apostles have a decision to make.

[1 : 18] They're one man down. There's 11 apostles. Judas has betrayed Christ and he has gone out and unfortunately killed himself.

And so now they're down a man and it's now time to choose another apostle. And that's the context in which we find ourselves and the apostles are waiting.

We have seen this in our first two messages. If you're new with us today, we're in a sermon series walking through the book of Acts. The first two messages we find that Jesus has told the apostles, don't leave Jerusalem, stay there, wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to come upon you, don't go anywhere, wait.

Jesus took them to the Mount of Olives on the backside of Malthus. All of this is to Bethany and he ascended before them and they go back to Jerusalem and they're waiting.

And in this period of waiting, they have business to do. They need to find another apostle and that's our context for today's message. And so if you have God's word with you today, a copy of it, would you please turn to Acts chapter one?

[2 : 29] We're going to begin reading in verse 12 through 16. Acts chapter one verses 12 through 26 rather.

This is the word of the Lord. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of called Olivot, which was near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus and Simon, the zealot and Judas the son of James.

All of these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer to together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers. The company of persons was about all 20, 120 and said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus, who was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

Now this man, speaking of Judas, acquired a field with his reward for his wickedness and falling headlong. He burst open in the middle and his bowels gushed out, and it became known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their own language, echaldama, that is the field of blood.

[4 : 00] For it is written in the book of Psalms, May his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it, and let another take his office. So one of the men who have accompanied us

during all of this time, that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, one of these men must be with us a witness to his resurrection.

And they put forward two, Joseph, called Bar Sabbath, who is also called Justice and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen, to take the place of this ministry and the apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered among the eleven apostles. So the apostles on this day had a decision to make.

They had a decision to make as to what apostle, who was the one, who was going to fulfill the vacancy that Judas had left. And so today I want to walk through the principles that we find in this passage that the apostles used into making a decision.

Because all of us are in the same place, in the same place. And so today I want to walk through the principles that we find in this passage, that the apostles used into making a decision. Because all of us are making decisions every day. And so how is it that we are to make decisions?

[5 : 32] And how does this passage instruct us? If we will look with me, so the message today is just principles to discern God's will.

How do you know what is God's will? First, I want us to see, to make decisions in view of God's redemption. In view of God's redemptive plan.

If the reasons we are still here on earth is to advance the mission of God's, to redeem people, that is to make disciples who are transformed by the gospel for the glory of God, our very mission statement of our church, that is why we are here.

It's God's mission to redeem people. Then it makes sense that every decision we must approach with this goal in view in mind. Should I date this person? Should I marry this person?

The question is, will that person aid and compliment you in God's plan of redemption? How will that happen? Are they working in concert with God's plan of redemption?

[6 : 35] And will they aid that and compliment you in that endeavor? Should I take this job or that job? Will that job enable you to earn more, to be more generous for his purposes?

Will that job enable you to demonstrate Christ's love to individuals, to share his love with others in word and deed? How will this job, or your existing job, aid you in your ability to communicate the love of Christ to others?

Should I move? Recently I've heard chatter from a number of individuals wanting to move to Idaho for political affinity purposes. But to be more comfortable around people and to think more in alignment with them is not the basis for making the decision.

But it is, what is the right motivation to move? There can be many good motivations, but to make a decision to move to enhance or to enhance or hinder God's redemptive purposes both in my life and others.

That's a good checkpoint for a beginning point to making the decision. What decisions are you facing? How does this fit into God's redemptive plan, or does it?

[7 : 47] And the purpose, and we'll see this in a moment, of appointing an apostle is because they need another person for God's redemptive person to fulfill that office that is going to be, they are going to be empowered by the Spirit and be witnesses and take the gospel to the ends of the world.

That's the purpose. The filling of Judas' spot had huge implications. How? Jesus instituted the formal office of an apostle in order to appoint some men to be sent to proclaim the gospel with supernatural power.

That's true. Their role was crucial in the immediate advance of the gospel on earth. That was important. And notice the qualifications are mentioned in verses 21 and 22.

We'll get to that here in a moment, but the qualifications, they had to be firsthand learners of who Jesus was. They had to walk with him. They had to see his miracle. They had to hear his teaching. They had to be witnesses of the Resurrect Christ.

Because the apostles were absolutely important for the establishment of what doctrine looked like going forward for the Church of Jesus Christ. And they now, if you, we place great emphasis on them many thousands of years later for this, we read in Ephesians chapter two.

[9 : 09] So you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

Last, it's important to fulfill Judas' office because when we think about the broader Kingdom purposes, Jesus had told the 12 apostles that they had a unique role for in the coming Kingdom, the 12 apostles would judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Finding the 12th apostle was of absolute importance. And so they looked for someone to fulfill Judas' office.

Next, I want us, when we make decisions, we need to distinguish between God's revealed will and God's concealed will.

Part of God's will that is written in black and white that we have in our laps or on our phone or however you have a copy of God's word. That is God's revealed will.

[10:19] Peter knew that there was an apostolic office and he knew that this office needed to be filled that was once vacated by Judas. So God has revealed something in black and white of God's will to Judas.

In fact, if you would look with me, let me just begin in verse 12 and just summarize. In verse 12, we have them moving from the Mount of Olavot back to Jerusalem after they saw the ascended Lord. So verse 12 just tells you they transferred locations. Verse 13 gives you the 11 names of the apostles that are left. In verse 14, it tells you the manner in which they gathered.

These 11 along with 120, there were other people present, were told in verse 14 and 15. They were there in one accord. They were committed to him and his mission, every single one of them, and they devoted themselves to prayer.

What is it that will keep us from dividing ourselves amongst ourselves? What is it that will rip us apart? What is it that will cause us disunity? Well, when we are no longer in one accord as to our purpose and our commitment to Jesus, disunity can rip any church apart.

[11:36] And so let us keep focused on our mission and on him. And let it also be said of us some day that 4th Memorial Church is also in one accord.

And what is it that they were unified in? Is they committed themselves to prayer? They devoted themselves to prayer. Those are the two things that describe this early gathering of 120 people. 11 of them are the apostles. They were in one accord and devoted themselves to prayer. But how is it, you say, Scott, that they are distinguishing between God's revealed will and God's concealed will?

Notice in verse 16, Peter stands up and he addresses them. He says, Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled. The Scripture had to be fulfilled.

He knew God's revealed will. We don't have to wonder whether we should be making disciples.

[12:42] We don't have to wonder if we should be praying. We don't have to wonder if we should be living holy lives or bearing fruit, loving people who are not lovable, being faithful in our marriages, caring for widows and orphans.

We don't have to wonder about that. That is God's revealed will. That is clear in Scripture. That is what he has told us. That is what he has said. However, not all specific outworkings of God's will for specific individuals are recorded in the Scripture.

While the apostles knew that they were supposed to fill the apostolic office of one of the apostles, they didn't know the guy's name or who it was that was going to step into that role.

It was up to them to discover God's will for who that person was. That detail was concealed from them, but they were responsible for covering God's choice through prayer and wise action.

Examples of God's revealed will and concealed will. We know that marriage is sanctified by God between one man and one woman to reflect the gospel.

[13:51] That is God's revealed will. That is said, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two should become one flesh. Man, woman, marriage. We know that.

That's an aspect of marriage. But we also know that marriage should reflect the gospel. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. So marriage is between one man and one woman for life, and it is to reflect the gospel.

We know that because that's God's revealed will. That's what marriage is supposed to be about.

However, to discern who your specific spouse you are to marry, that's God's concealed will.

And that's for you to discover if you're single. It's important detail.

We know we are to work hard as unto the Lord and not be lazy. That's God's revealed will. But we don't know a job or what employer God wants us to work for or what degree to pursue in college. [14:50] That's God's concealed will. That's for you to discover. We're responsible for discovering God's concealed will, and we must work hard at making sound wise God honoring choices.

Next. So how do you do that? Well, you start, how do you make that distinction between God's revealed will and God's concealed will?

First, we must start with God's revealed will. Imagine with me the disciples, the apostles, the eleven.

It's amazing how many times Judas' name is mentioned in this passage. In my mind, it should just be mentioned once. Everyone knows who you're talking about. But it's amazing to me how many times Judas' name is brought up and in what manner it's brought up.

And it's as if you can feel this very visceral response of Peter recalling it's almost hard to imagine. [15:59] One of us betrayed the Lord with a kiss, one of us who could have ever thought it was Judas. We trusted him with the purse, with our money for ministry.

He was, it's almost hard for them to imagine. It would have been very disruptive for one of us to betray Jesus like that.

So you start with God's revealed will, feel the pain of loss that they felt. They knew him. He was their friend, their ministry colleague.

And sadly, many of you may know those who have failed in ministry who you worked alongside of. And for whatever reason, they're not there anymore.

And so Peter goes to bring comfort. And notice how he does that. Peter brings comfort, but he brings comfort in a unique way. He starts by sharing God's revealed will.

[17:08] In those days, Peter stood up from among the brothers, verse 15, in the company of all persons about 120 and said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled.

He begins with what we know. And so while it's disruptive, and he will quote two different Psalms later about God's revealed will, specifically talking about Judas.

But perhaps this one is not found in our text, but perhaps he was even thinking of Psalm 41, verse nine, even Mike, which is also a Psalm of David. He says, perhaps he says, even my close friend and whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

Perhaps he was thinking about that when he wrote as well. But regardless, he says, scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

He led them right to him. Why is this important to begin with God's revealed will? I've had the privilege of helping others with their personal finance.

[18:20] I have my undergraduate degrees in business, and so I like to deal with numbers. I've dealt with church budgets often, and I find a certain measure of joy looking at numbers.

And I help with our personal finances, and I enjoy that. Because I love helping individuals be liberated from the pressure of finances and stress and discovering a good spending plan that could help them.

But when I visit with many people who allow me to engage them with the finances, they may come to me with regard to purchasing a home or something.

And so then I begin to talk to them about their budget and their circumstances. And so I ask to see their budget, and oftentimes I will see that they are in significant debt, and they're not giving any money generously to the Lord, and they are not saving for the future.

Okay, why do you begin with God's revealed will? Because those three things God has said much about, purchasing a home, whether that's good timing or right now or whatever, that's God's concealed will, but there are three things that are in violation of God's revealed will.

[19:37] Begin with God's revealed will. So let us make obedient to that which God has already revealed made clear before we talk about the things that God has concealed and left for us to discover.

I've also had the privilege of working with young adults over the course of years, of 20 years of college ministry, young adults, which is a riot. I love that age group.

One of my first questions to a couple that begins dating and the pursuing engagement on that road is my first question. Often will be, are you sleeping together?

Because let's first talk about what God has revealed and what God has said that gift of sex is to be relegated and kept for, and that within the confines of marriage we know that to be true.

So before we talk about is this the right person or is this not the right person, let's talk about what God has already revealed. It's important to be obedient to that which God has already revealed before we get to what God has concealed.

[20 : 50] And I can't count the number of believers who I've spoken to over the course of the years who are detached from a local church and they have all kinds of objections. Church hurts, the personality of the pastor, that's my favorite one.

The preaching style, whether what age children should be sitting in the worship service, the manner in which communion is taken and on and on the list could go.

And it's hard for me to engage in those conversations because every person in Christ needs to be a part of a body of believers called the church, who is under the authority and shepherded by the elders who has a place where they minister to one another.

We need everyone who is in the body of Christ in a local church. So it's hard for me to swallow their objection with the local church when, which how old should someone sit in the worship center?

What manner are you to take communion? All of these details are concealed. There's freedom in that, but one of the things that is revealed is that every member should be a part of a local church.

[21 : 58] That's revealed. That one, I have a little hard time having those conversations so you can pray for me and pray for the next person I have a conversation with that is like that.

But I hope you illustrate this. How can you distinguish? You must distinguish between what does God reveal will before his concealed will and we start with God's revealed will.

Second, how is it that you start with God's revealed will? You trust the Bible as authority. Notice in verse 16, the scripture had to be fulfilled.

Peter is hammering this part, this point. The scripture had to be fulfilled. It is totally trustworthy.

Second, notice the second part of that, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas.

The scripture is wholly inspired. Peter references that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David spoke of and foretold about Judas.

[23 : 10] Peter attributes the Holy Spirit, moved David to write a prophecy about Judas' betrayal and his replacement of an apostle, the need for a replacement of the possible and we'll see him do that here in a moment.

This statement highlights the inspiration of scripture. God spoke it through humans, authors. And so we read in 2 Timothy, a passage many of you have memorized that all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof and correction and training in righteousness that the man of God might be complete for every good work.

We begin and we trust the Bible as authority because it is trustworthy and it is inspired by God. The Holy Spirit, a thousand years previously, moved David to write about Judas' betrayal and the need for replacement of Judas and we'll see that here in a second.

It's inspired by God. Next, we need to allow the Bible to interpret your life or our lives and our circumstances.

Often we are tempted to do quite the opposite. Let me illustrate. Someone experiences a tragedy in life. There's their life circumstance. So they believe that God doesn't love them.

[24 : 24] Do you see what happened? They're interpreting, they're allowing their life circumstances to have more authority than the Bible. Someone may have same sex attraction and that's their life circumstances.

So they believe then that they were born with the wrong sex or they need to alter their sex.

Someone has a financial reversal so they think God is against them. Someone suffers loss and they project a victimhood mentality and believe that God has it in for them.

A tsunami wipes out thousands in a tragic storm and God must be unloving or not in control. And it is the temptation that is promoted in our culture to interpret the Bible through the lens of our circumstances.

And let's assume I'm single for this illustration and let's assume I'm in a breakup. This relationship didn't work out and I think it's primarily the other person's fault and so then I think, well, God just must have created me too good and I should just be single.

We all can do it. We all can come up to conclusions and we interpret through the lens of our life and through the lens of our circumstances what we think is true about God when that which is clearly stated is quite the opposite.

[25 : 46] So look with me what Peter does. After he says the scripture must be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit moved the hand of David to write about Judas, then he, if you will, has a parenthetical statement about Judas and he describes in detail how Judas died.

For he numbered, notice why he must be replaced in verse 17. He gives two reasons. Well, he was numbered among us, the first reason, second reason and was allotted his share in this ministry. Judas was among us and he was allotted his share of ministry as one of the apostles. He was one of us. He was numbered among us so he must be replaced and we're going to get to what David wrote later.

But first Luke writing to Theophilus writes a parenthetical statement about how Judas died and this is where Luke, the medical doctor, gets a little detail that you're like, okay, that's too much information Luke.

We don't really need that. But regardless, he does. And so he says, now this man acquired a field as a reward for the wickedness. And so some theologians think, because we know Judas tossed the money that he was given as a bribe to show the authorities who Jesus was.

[27 : 12] Some either say that in other wickednesses, Judas had reached into the purse of money and bought a field or the money that Judas used to betray was purchased to buy a field.

Regardless, it says now this man acquired a field with a reward with his wickedness and falling headlong burst open in the middle and his bowels gushed out. And it became known in the habitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their own language, echaldama, the field of blood.

So then there's this parenthetical statement that tells you how Judas dies. And I know in the gospels we read that Judas went out and hung himself. And so how do you compare Judas hanging himself and with him his bowels being opened and gushing out?

Well, some write all kinds of theories on how that is. But let me just say they're both true. Some say the rope broke and on his way down, he opened himself on another branch and his gals bushed out.

And there he lie on the ground. So aren't we glad we're no longer in junior high? Okay.

[28 : 20] Then what Luke does is he then tells you what it was that the Holy Spirit moved David to write as how it applies to Judas in verse 20.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, may his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it.

That's one Psalm, 69. And then he quotes another Psalm, 109, in verse, the latter part of the verse 20, and let another take his office.

So how is this, what is Luke doing? We begin with God's revealed will. We trust the Bible as authority and we allow the Bible to interpret life in our circumstances.

So what is Luke saying? He's saying, guys, this was said of David long ago. This was said of David long ago that he would betray Christ and we would need another to fulfill his office.

[29 : 29] While this is a shocking circumstance to all of us that one of our own would betray Christ like that, this shouldn't come as such a surprise. So we're going to interpret our circumstances through the lens of God's word and let God's word speak to us as to why this happened.

And I can tell you why it happened. David spoke long ago. And in those passages, it speaks of the view of wicked, treasonous men in 69 who were enemies of God the King.

And he applies that to Judas and say that's why the judgment was applied to Judas as the way it was. He was a wicked, treasonous person toward the ultimate King, God.

And then he later in verse 20 says that's why David also wrote in Psalm 109, let another take his office. And so now, so what Peter or what Peter has done is he has led everyone to say, so now we are bringing us up to a point.

Our circumstances didn't take the Lord by surprise. We now have a decision to appoint someone else to that office as an apostle. So that is what has just happened. Lastly, we do what the Bible says.

[30 : 51] When we make a decision, we do what the Bible says. Jesus had appointed 12 to be apostles. 12 was the right to judge the 12 tribes of Israel. So Peter knows that the revealed word of

God says, and so then he moves the people to do what the Bible says.

Last or moving on. Then after we establish what it was or what it is that God's revealed word has said, then we move on to what God's concealed will, I'm sorry, what God's revealed will is.

Then we move on to what God's concealed will is, but we do that through the lens, not the lease, sorry, of God's revealed will.

So we look at this. God's word and our place in the unfolding mission should shape our decisions regarding God's concealed will, regarding what local church, what local church to join, what homes to purchase, whom to marry, what risks in life to take.

God's revealed will speaks of wisdom and principles to be applied in those circumstances. So first, what do we do? We gather all the information. Look what Peter then moves the group to do in verses 20 and 21.

[32 : 21] He gives the qualifications of who they're looking for. So now they're, no, we're going to find someone to take Judas' office, but what's the qualification of this apostle? So in verses 21 and 22, he listed.

So one of these men have to be accompanied all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. So, and beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from us, one of these men must be within a witness of the resurrection.

So we have 120 people in this upper room. Peter says, here's the qualifications. It must be someone who was in and among us often as we went along.

And this person must have had to hear what Jesus said. He must have had to witness what Jesus did. He had to know the Lord. And it began with John's baptism. And when Jesus was baptized and we heard from heaven, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

We saw the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove, and Jesus was being baptized by John ever since then until someone had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ.

[33 : 32] So who among us, 120 people in this upper room, qualifies? That's what happened in 21 and 22. But so we gather, so what is, what are they doing?

They're gathering all this information. Look to God's concealed will through the lens of what God's revealed will is. We gather all the information. What then do they do?

They seek the Lord in prayer. Verse 23, though, they first identify two men who fit those qualifications. They put forward two, Joseph called Bar-Sabbos, who was also called Joseph, who was also called Bar-Sabbos, who was also called Justice, and Matthias.

So you have Joseph and Matthias. Then what did they do? They sought the Lord in prayer. And they prayed and they said, oh Lord, you know the heart of all. Show us which one of these two you have chosen.

Show us which one of these two you have chosen. And then lastly, you trust in God's sovereignty and make a decision and you go with it.

[34 : 50] And we're going to look at the last verse. So how did they make this decision? They prayed. The prayer is mentioned in 24 and 25.

And then they cast lots for them. And the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the 11 apostles. So they sought the Lord in prayer. And then what do we do with God's concealed will?

They know the office of an apostle should be fulfilled. That's God's revealed will. They know that. What they don't know is who among the 120 should it be. And two meet the qualification.

And so then how do you decide? Here they cast lots. Casting lots is something akin to where you can narrow the field by two or make a decision.

It would be akin to us today flipping a coin and saying, heads, Matthias, tails, Joseph. And you flip a coin and it makes a decision. Or it would be casting like a die.

[35 : 48] Odd numbers, Matthias, even numbers, Joseph. And it seems arbitrary and by chance. But notice, I love this.

Notice what was said. They prayed. Verse 24, you, oh Lord, know the hearts of all. Show us which one you have chosen.

So it seems odd. It seems by chance, but we read in Proverbs concerning casting lots. The lot, we read this in Proverbs 16:33. The lot is cast into a lap, but every decision is from the Lord.

Whatever this would land on, whatever that would land on, it's the Lord. And we know, Lord, this is your person and we'll trust that. It's interesting that this is the last time that lot casting is mentioned in the Bible.

What occurs after this, of why this may not be something that we need to practice today, is in the very next passage that we'll get to next week. Don't miss out.

[36 : 54] You have the coming of the Holy Spirit. And what does the Holy Spirit do? It leads us into all truth. He leads us into all truth. Sorry. The Holy Spirit, that's one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into truth.

And so, we don't need to cast lots today. We pray and the Holy Spirit leads us into truth. The lot fell to Matthias.

This is one of the photos that I took when I was in Rwanda. And on this particular trip, I made several trips, but on this particular trip when I took this photo, it is seared into my memory because this was the last trip I made to make a decision.

And the decision for me was weighty. The decision was this, it was soon after 2008, the housing crisis happened, the market is down, the global economy is down, money has dried up, people's giving has dried up, and so, mission work around the world dried up.

And a lot of organizations were pulling out and Rwanda suffered greatly. There was the mission work dried up significantly. So there I was shortly after 2008, and in my head I had this decision, and I was thinking, how can we make the training of these pastors and this church planting movement independent from western money so that when, no matter what the economy is doing in the world, the mission work can still continue.

[38 : 31] So that was kind of the burden of my heart, and I was there and I was meeting with some rural pastors. This is on the border of Burundi, Rwanda and Burundi.

No running water, no electricity. And these pastors go to Kigali, the capital city, and there's a Bible college there. And I knew some information, for example, during the first semester, in the first week of classes at this seminary and at this Bible college, the pastors from all over Rwanda, the first week of the lessons is what is the gospel?

And 60% of pastors would get saved for the first time in Bible college. Why? Because you want to be a pastor to have some reputation and some credibility in the community or in your village, and so people become pastors not because they're saved and they want to proclaim the gospel or do anything, they want to get saved because that's a place of reputation and a place of privilege in this setting.

And so you would have these individuals, and so theological education and understanding of what the gospel is was low, and I wanted to help, and so I wanted to provide a way for these rural pastors, and there was a pastor out there and they wanted to reach more villages, and have a way to get this formal Bible education, to get some basic training that they could proclaim the gospel. So when I was there, I was meeting with those pastors, and I was silent, I was just listening, and interpreter was speaking in my ear, and we were meeting, and we were coming up with ideas, so I was asking them, what's your idea? How could we, how could you make money to send your pastor to send him to Bible college and get this training and be excited about what the Lord is doing?

[40 : 25] So there was a lot of conversations, and privately what they didn't know is I had a back burner idea that I was investigating.

And the idea was that to start a guest house, a guest house with a restaurant in Kigali, because Rwanda has a lot of foreign money.

After the genocide, there was a lot of philanthropic groups that were moving into, and so there was a lot of foreign aid flooding into Rwanda. Second, there was a lot of people who are big into the birding world.

Rwanda is the number one country if you're a birder to go to, because it has the most number of species of any African country, and especially during the migratory season, you can catch a variety of birds. Third, a lot of foreigners go there because it's one of the two countries in Africa, you can see a Highland gorilla, that in Uganda, and so people pay big money to go see the gorillas.

And so there's just tons of people, foreigners, spending a lot of money in Rwanda, and I thought, and as someone who frequented, I had a hard time finding a place to stay, and I thought, I'm going to start a guest house.

[41 : 36] And so I was crunching numbers, and man, the prospect looked great. I was like, the earning potential is so incredible. And so if you're, if I'm ever in Rwanda, you'll know what I'm doing, because I'm going to be starting this to earn money, to send pastors, to get formal training.

But the night before the decision was to be made, I was praying, and the Lord stopped me. So I was working, if you will, through this process.

What's God's revealed will? I know these things are true, but what's God's concealed will? What business do you start? How do you help? What does this look like? I don't know.

And I had read a few books, When Helping Hurts and Toxic Charity. I knew the difficulties of helping in this kind of culture, in this kind of situation.

I knew some of the pitfalls, and I was washing all of this through my mind, preparing for that day, the next day, when I would wake up. And it was, and one of the ideas the pastors had is to start a farm.

[42 : 50] And it was, the reasoning was simple, and he said, we know how to farm. That's what we know how to do. All day long, they farm.

We know how to do that. And that was the decision that was reached. I put forward some seed money to buy a plot of land. They matched some money, and they have now purchased other plots of land in other villages, and the proceeds of those lands that the church's own goes to funding those pastors.

But that decision was arduous. It was God's concealed will. There's a number of ways you could fund pastors to do this. Nationally speaking, independent of the global economy.

But that was the way it was done. And I was so thankful that the Lord arrested my thoughts, because the way I was going would have failed quickly.

And I was so thankful for the Lord. You too are making decisions today. You have something that weighs heavy on you. And I pray that we would use the principles found in this passage to make a decision.

[44 : 00] The church is now set. All 12 apostles are in place, and now they're finding themselves waiting for the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father who will empower them for ministry.

I'm grateful that we live on this side of Pentecost, where we too have a task that is unfinished to be Spirit-empowered witnesses. Let's do that this week. Would you pray with me?

Father, thank you so much for how good and kind you are. To give us your word, your revealed will, that we know in so many cases what to do.

Forgive us when we don't take you at your word, and simply do what we know that you have told us to do. Lord, may we be faithful to your revealed will.

And concerning your concealed will, thank you that you give us the privilege to discover what it is that is on your mind and heart in this particular instance or that particular instance.

[45 : 02] Thank you, Lord, for this privilege to live abiding in you, devoting ourselves to prayer, discovering your will for our lives in those concealed areas.

We thank you, Lord, for loving us so. In your name we pray, amen.