



## What does the Scripture say?

### *God Is Leading Us* Selected Texts

#### **Introduction:**

As God leads us, it's good to reflect periodically on all that He has done, is doing, and desires to do in us and through us for His glory. We see examples of this throughout Scripture. For instance, Joshua took some of his final words to reflect on God's work among His people (Joshua 24).

So as we begin a new year, we can benefit from such a review ourselves. It's helpful for us to reflect on God's work in our recent past, respond to what He is calling us to do in our present, and remind ourselves to always trust Him as we move forward. We will consider each of these three points under the headings of Christ's Commission, Challenges, and Commitment.

#### **1. Christ's Commission**

Back in 2010, our ministry staff began talking about God's direction for the future. As we considered different options for future growth, three obvious choices presented themselves. First, we could build a building. However, the thought of a multi-million dollar project for a building which would come with a long and heavy financial burden didn't seem like a prudent move. Also, we thought this move communicated something about our philosophy of outreach which didn't align with what God had been stirring in our hearts, namely, to see God's people mobilized outward into our communities rather than simply inviting our communities inside our buildings.

Second, we could begin a third worship service. However, since we had already walked down this road in the recent past, we knew the logistical challenges which came along with this move in terms of also providing a second small group option. Also, we wanted to be sensitive to the impact this move would have on families. For example, when three services were installed in the past, some families struggled to worship together because of their commitments to various areas of service and worship service attendance choices.

Third, we could plant another Church. We mention "another" because we had recently helped to plant Stillwater Baptist Church. While this option brought a lot of attractive elements along with it, there was something which was a little troubling. A typical Church plant has for its ultimate objective one main point: To see a Church birthed, nurtured, and self-supported. In other words, we felt as though this option allowed us to be a part of making disciples through Church planting, but we eventually were severed from the long-term process of being an integral part of ongoing discipleship and growth.



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Eventually, God brought us to the place where we prayerfully considered a fourth option which we know today as our multi-site approach to reaching our community. Our multi-site strategy is simply a name for the belief that we are one Church who meets in more than one location. We are God's people on mission with Him to make disciples in our community and world.

Of course, we didn't invent a multi-site approach to ministry. Our ministry staff read or heard from a couple of books on the subject.<sup>1</sup> We also eventually talked to others who were part of multi-site Churches. Interestingly, when I attended a Church in Lima, Peru while on one of our Global Impact Mission Trips in 2009 and 2010, our mission team attended an international multi-site Church campus in Lima, Peru which has its connection to a Church in Florida.

As our ministry staff discussed a multi-site approach, we grew to see how it really dovetailed well with what God was already doing among us and the passion He had placed in our hearts to live on mission with Him by making disciples. For example, our college ministry was already meeting in another building in town and basically functioning as a multi-site campus. Also, a multi-site approach would underscore our conviction that God calls His people to move out in impact rather than simply invite others to come into our buildings.

So after some time of sharing this vision with our Deacon leadership and the fellowship, we officially designated our Nations location as our first multi-site campus. Then, in just a matter of days, another opportunity presented itself to begin a third campus on River Road in Hammond. And, after a few months, we took a step of faith to follow God's lead in embracing our third multi-site campus. Immediately, we saw God open some doors, and He's used this campus to allow us to be a part of His Kingdom work. Now, our third campus is officially meeting on a weekly basis.

All of this shows us that God is continually leading us to obey Christ's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Jesus said in **Matthew 28:19-20**, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>20</sup> *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" We are God's people on mission with Him in our community and beyond. The back of our parking lot signs

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<sup>1</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), and Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *Multi-Site Church Road Map: Exploring the New Normal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).



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remind us constantly that we are living on our mission field. Just as we go to other countries to share the Gospel, we desire to go throughout our communities to share the Gospel as well, and our multi-site campuses give us a good opportunity to obey Christ's commission.

### 2. Challenges

Challenges always accompany obedience. Walking by faith isn't for the faint of heart. When God called Moses to lead the Exodus, he encountered a stubborn Pharaoh and a Red Sea. When God called Joshua to lead the Conquest, he and the people encountered a flooded Jordan and the walls of Jericho. When Christ commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses, they spread and grew through persecution.

We too have faced and will continue to face challenges as we follow God's lead. The road has not been easy nor will it be easy. Yet, God is in control, and He will make provision for our every need as we follow Him through the challenges.

In fact, the challenges present a challenge. Here's what we mean: Whenever God's people faced a challenge, it presented to them an opportunity to see God use them for His glory and honor. So, in a very real sense, the obstacles were really opportunities! For example, God used a stubborn Pharaoh and Red Sea to reveal to us His plan about the Passover and His power to deliver which both point to Christ who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And so it is with us. We have faced and will continue to face challenges as we follow God's lead. There are logistical challenges with our multi-site campuses; there are facility needs with our multi-site campuses; there are service opportunities with our multi-site campuses. But all of these areas which initially appear as obstacles are actually opportunities.

The main opportunity is for us to see these challenges as a challenge to be the Body of Christ. Paul says in **Ephesians 4:11-13**, "*It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*"

Our ministry staff simply cannot shoulder the load for all the ministry needs of our campuses, but this isn't God's desire or design anyway. God's desire and design for the Body of Christ is to use each person who's been born again and filled and gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve in and through the Church. And our multi-site campuses provide service opportunities.



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Of course, our ministry staff is seeing people respond to God's leadership to be a part of service. Our youth and parents are responding to needs at the J.W. Davis campus, and God is positioning people to lead at the River Road campus. Different people are helping with outreach opportunities through the Nations Campus.

Yet, there are still available opportunities for service. As God moves in the hearts of His people, we understand His challenge to respond to His call, prepare ourselves to serve, and embrace the opportunities He's placing before us.

### 3. Commitment

Following God's lead is a marathon, though, not a sprint. Many people begin well, but they don't finish well. Scores of people hear Christ's commission, face the challenges of walking obediently by faith for a season of time, and then eventually fade away.

Anyone in ministry leadership has faced the encouraging signs of initial excitement when something new begins, and everyone in ministry leadership has also battled the discouraging news of waning support throughout the ranks once challenges begin to set in.

Once again, we see this is how God led His people in the past. For example, the same Israelites who stood on the edge of the Red Sea and saw the bodies of dead Egyptians on the shore were the same Israelites who next grumbled against Moses when they wanted water to drink. Challenges surface either resolve or retreat in people. Many people are excited about the beginning of a journey, but they are not truly committed because they chose the sidelines when they encounter the challenges of the journey. The key to really following God's lead is endurance by the power of the Holy Spirit rather than emotions based on futile human wisdom and strength.

Even Jesus faced this issue of the lack of commitment among those in the crowd who "followed" Him. In John 6, Christ issued a strong call for people to be completely committed to following Him. However, Jesus knew some were "following" Him simply because they ate the food He miraculously provided. Many of the people heard Jesus' message and struggled because they said it was a "hard teaching" to accept. Finally, so many people turned away from Him that Jesus asked His twelve disciples about their commitment. On this occasion, Peter gave a solid answer on behalf of the Twelve in **John 6:68b-69**: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*"

We all need to take to heart Paul's passionate commitment to follow Christ faithfully. For example, in Philippians 1, he mentions how some people were trying to cause trouble for him, but he explained his take on this situation in **Philippians 1:12-21**: "*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the*



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*gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. <sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

Also, Paul encouraged Timothy to endure whatever challenges he faced when he wrote in **2 Timothy 2:1-3**, "*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. <sup>3</sup> Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."*

We all wrestle with challenges and the discouragement that comes along with them. However, God's grace is all-sufficient. We look to Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who endured the cross, and by God's divine power which has given us everything we need for life and godliness, we press on toward the prize before us so that we can run the race set out before us with endurance.

### **Conclusion:**

As we continue to follow God's lead, He is at work among us. He is drawing people to Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit so that they can experience His salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as they respond by His grace in repentance and faith. He is also calling His people to serve Him, and as we respond to Him in obedience, we are living on mission with Him for His glory and honor as we seek to make disciples of all nations. God is leading us!