

The Upper Room (Part 3): Roll Out

Introduction

The Text

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶ “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. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

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’; and “‘Let another take his office.’

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15–26)

Part 3

- A. This is now our third week focusing in on these last verses of [Acts 1](#), and it shall be our last time with them. That means, Lord willing, next week we’ll be in [Acts 2](#) where the Spirit is poured out and everything just erupts. It’s going to be exciting!
- B. But for now, remember, these disciples are here still in that “upper room” (v. 13)—waiting in that somewhat awkward space between the ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
 - 1. It was about a week in total that they spent in and out of this room. And in our text for this morning we are given really the only substantial account of what went on during this week. I’m sure much more happened than we are told here, but this is what Luke thought it especially important that we know.
- C. And I’m trying to bring out the significance in all this for us by drawing our attention to four things in particular: (1) What They Wanted; (2) Why They Wanted It; (3) How They Got It; and (4) Who They Chose.
 - 1. Last time, we considered the first two.
 - a. What did they want? They wanted a replacement for Judas—a twelfth apostle.

- b. Why did they want it? Well, certainly they wanted a twelfth apostle because many hands make for less work. But we also saw that there is symbolic value to the number twelve. The twelve apostles of the lamb were meant to correspond with the twelve tribes of Israel and in that we are to see the striking unity that subsists in the plan and people of God, with Jesus and his cross at the center of all the action.
2. But now, this morning, with the first two behind us, we are ready to consider the last two. How did they go about getting this twelfth apostle? And who was it that they actually chose?

(3) How They Got It

Discerning the Will of God

- A. I wonder if you've ever had an important decision to make and you didn't know where to start or how to go about it. You want God's will for your life, but sometimes you wonder what that is and if you'll ever really know.
 1. Maybe you're working through some of that right now . . .
 - a. Should I pursue this person or not?
 - b. Should we live here or there?
 - c. Should I stay at this job or look to make a change?
 - d. Should I engage with this ministry or that one?
 - e. Should I sign up for the All Church Campout or should I stay home?
 - i. Well, for that last one the answer is clear (just do it!), but a lot of times we don't know. We wish that God would just tell us. We want to do his "will" but we get tripped up in the process of trying to discern it.
- B. And what's beautiful about this scene here with these disciples in the upper room is that they show us a way forward in it. They lay out some steps for us, it seems to me. Four steps to be exact.
 1. And so I want to show you these four one at a time and I'll try to apply what we see to us personally as we go. (Just so you don't worry, I anticipate spending the majority of our time on this first step because there's quite a bit more to untangle and make sense of.)

Step #1: Scripture

Two Opening Assertions

- A. The first thing I want you to see is that Scripture is underneath and guiding all of this for Peter and these disciples. This really is their starting point as they're going about getting this twelfth apostle.
 1. God's Word is the sure foundation beneath their feet.
 2. But more than that, it's the lamp unto their feet as well. [Ps. 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."](#)

- B. This is why Peter here begins by making two very impressive assertions concerning both the surety and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

ASSERTION #1: THE SCRIPTURE HAD TO BE FULFILLED

- A. First, he says there in [v. 16](#) that “[the Scripture had to be fulfilled . . .](#)”
- B. Now, perhaps, at first, this may just be something you skip right over. But now that I’ve slowed you down a bit, you see it, don’t you?
 - 1. It’s not that the Scripture “may be” fulfilled, nor is it that it will “likely be” fulfilled.
 - 2. Oh no, Peter says it “[ha\[s\] to be](#)” fulfilled. It “must be” fulfilled. It’s a certainty.
- C. Listen, there are so many other places you may look in life for guidance or help, but they can’t give you a guarantee like this. The best they can do is offer mere suggestions: here’s what you can try and it may prove fruitful, it may work out for you—it may help you get that relationship, or lose those pounds, or secure that career path, or whatever. But it might not. There’s no real guarantee.
- D. Only the Scriptures can be relied upon with the full weight of your life—like a rock you can build your house upon. Only the Scriptures can pierce through the dark horizon and show you the way forward one step at a time. Only the Scriptures “[ha\[ve\] to be](#)” fulfilled.
 - 1. Because only the Scriptures contain for us the very words of God—and God does not, he cannot, lie.
 - a. The author of Hebrews makes this connection for us in [Heb. 6](#) where he writes: “[\[I\]t is impossible for God to lie . . .](#)” ([v. 18](#)). And, therefore, in his Word we have “[a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul](#)” ([v. 19](#)).
- E. Don’t you want that when you’re life feels disorienting and out of control? When you open your Bible, you may as well be dropping an anchor. There’s a surety to it. You can rely on it. It will hold in the storm.

ASSERTION #2: THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE . . . BY THE MOUTH OF DAVID

- A. But then, secondly, look at what Peter goes on to say as [v. 16](#) continues: “[Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David . . .](#)”
- B. We might at first object to what I said previously—that God is speaking to us in the Bible, that these are his words.
 - 1. Because, while there are places where God himself directly addresses us—“Thus sayeth the Lord” moments as we might think of them—there are plenty of places where that is simply not the case.
 - 2. When you open and read, on the surface at least, it’s Abraham talking, or Moses talking, or, as he mentions here, it’s David talking.
- C. So are these God’s words or are they David’s?

1. Well, the answer Peter gives us here is: Yes! That's a false dichotomy. It's not an either/or here. It's a both/and.
 - a. They are God's words, but they are also David's. These words were inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they roll off the tongue of David. The Holy Spirit speaks, the mouth of David opens.

D. This is what Scripture is.

1. On the one hand, it's not merely a divine thing—as if it all just floats down to us out of heaven with little parachutes or something. “Oh wonderful, here's the book of James, here comes the Torah.” No!
2. But on the other hand, neither is it merely a human thing—as if we just imagined it or dreamed it all up on our own. No!
 - a. Scripture is both thoroughly divine and human at one and the same time. The seed is scattered from heaven, but it takes root and bears fruit here on earth. It comes to us from the mind and will of God but through the agency of men.
 - i. It's as Peter would write later in [2 Peter 1:21](#): “[N]o prophecy [of Scripture] was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” It's man, but it's God. It's God, but it's man.

- E. So these disciples, as they're trying to discern what's happening with them and what God would want them to be doing, they rightly start with God's Word.

“Concerning Judas”?!

- A. And when they do, they come to discover a very important connection between what they find there and what is happening with them in the present moment.

1. So Peter carries on in [v. 16](#): “[Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas . . .](#)”

- a. And you say, “Judas? He shows up in the OT? David talks about him?” Well, yes and no.

- B. Down in [Acts 1:20](#), Peter cites first from [Ps. 69:25](#) and then from [Ps. 109:8](#). Look at it again: “[For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’ \[Ps. 69:25\]; and ‘Let another take his office’ \[Ps. 109:8\].](#)”

1. The first verse is given to make sense of what's happened with Judas. He's betrayed, he's gone to his own place, he's inherited the Field of Blood, the burial ground as we saw last time. His camp is desolate. No one's living in it. The curse of God is upon him.

2. The second verse is given to answer the question: So what do we do next? What happens now, with Judas gone? “Let another take his office.” We need to replace him.
- C. All this seems legitimate enough at first glance, but, honestly, when you go back and look at these two verses in context, they seem to be, on the surface at least, just the words of David as he’s crying out about the opposition and persecution he was facing in his own day.
1. It’s not clear in the slightest that we’re dealing with prophecy of some sort or that David is writing of the Messiah here and all that would go down with Judas.
 - a. We think of [Isa. 53](#) or other places where there’s explicit prophecy, and that’s one thing.
 - b. But here, David is just struggling with his own stuff it would seem.
- D. So is Peter just pulling all this out of his hat, like some sort of apostolic magician—stretching the Scriptures to make it say what he wants?
1. We’ve all probably seen those Christians, maybe we’ve even been one of them ourselves, where you go grab a verse, any verse from the Bible will do, and you kind of massage it and do some hermeneutical wand-waving, and presto, you can make it say whatever you want.
 - a. “You see, I knew God wanted us to get married. Look! [Ps. 37:4](#) says ‘[God] will give you the desires of your heart.’ Well, I desire you. Let’s do this!” Ah, I’m not sure that’s what that verse means. In the context he’s talking about finding your ultimate delight in God. You missed the point.
 - i. Is that the sort of thing Peter’s doing here?
- E. Well, obviously I don’t think so. I’ll give you a couple reasons why . . .

REASON #1: JESUS TAUGHT PETER’S HERMENEUTICS CLASS

- A. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, and if you go to any Bible college or seminary and you’ll have to take a class or two on this at least.
1. And here’s what you have to remember: Peter learned how to interpret Scripture from Jesus himself. Jesus taught Peter’s hermeneutics class.
 - a. This is what it seems Jesus had essentially devoted himself to doing with his apostles in particular during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension.
- B. We got a little window into this back in [Luke 24:44-48](#), if you remember. The eleven are huddled together for fear of the Jews, and suddenly the resurrected Jesus appears to them there. And what does he do? Well, he helps them see how all the Scriptures were pointing to him and his work on the cross: “⁴⁴ Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that

repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.”

1. Whatever Jesus showed them during these “lectures” (if you want to call them that), it transformed their understanding of the OT. And suddenly they saw it: not only is he at the center of it all, he’s on every page!
 - a. This will become evident as we watch how they preach Jesus from the OT all throughout the book of Acts.

REASON #2: KING DAVID WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST

- A. That Jesus is on every page of the Bible is one thing. But just how Jesus is on every page of the Bible is quite another, and it differs from instance to instance.
 1. It’s not always just [Isa. 53](#) prophecy.
 2. Sometimes, as is the case with David and these psalms here I think, there is what scholars refer to as “typology.”
- B. The best way to understand typology is to think of an old typewriter.
 1. On the typewriter you have the original, the real thing of each letter. And then, when you press the key and the hammer of that real letter strikes the paper through the ink ribbon, it leaves an image of the original letter on the paper.
 2. This image is called a “type.” It’s not the original, the real thing. It’s a type, a shadow of sorts.
- C. And David from the OT, quite clearly, was a type of Christ. He was a foreshadow in that sense. The hammer of the real thing, struck through the ink ribbon, to the paper, and there was David.
 1. Looking like Jesus in many ways, anticipating his story.
 2. But not quite the original, not the real thing, the eternal thing, the true King and Lord of all.
- D. I wonder if you’ve noticed how the narrative arc of David’s life remarkably overlaps and, therefore, anticipates that of Jesus’ life . . .
 1. David was born there in Bethlehem in Judah.
 2. He gets his rise from humble beginnings. When God rejects Saul as king over Israel, he sends Samuel to Jesse’s house where he’s chosen a replacement. And, of all Jesse’s boys, it’s the youngest that was selected. He wasn’t even there when Samuel was going through. He was out in the field watching sheep. He was nothing significant to see at first glance.
 3. And at that point God has Samuel anoint him with oil and the Spirit of God rushes on him and empowers him for what’s coming next. (It’s not unlike what happens with Jesus and John the Baptist with the waters and the Spirit falling on him there.)
 4. And what comes next? It’s the famous story of David and Goliath, where this little one, stands in the gap for God’s people, fights in their place, and takes down the giant, the enemy.

5. But, nevertheless, he's persecuted, he's hated, by the powers that be—chased around by Saul. He has opportunities to kill Saul at various points, but he won't do it, he entrusts that judgment to God and instead has mercy on his enemy.
 6. And then, when Saul finally does die in battle with the Philistines, David is brought in and now formally, publicly anointed as king. And he takes Jerusalem from the Jebusites and ascends to the throne there.
 - a. Of course David was still a jacked up dude. He wasn't Jesus. He needs Jesus.
 - b. But he still foreshadow and anticipates Jesus, he still is a type of Jesus.
 - i. This is one of the ways God is pointing to Jesus all over the Scriptures.
- E. And so in [Pss. 69](#) and [109](#) what we have in both cases is David as this innocent, righteous sufferer. He's being persecuted, he's being oppressed, unjustly. And he calls out for God to make it right, to get justice from his enemies.
1. So in the one case, he calls for their camp to be left desolate.
 2. And in the other case, after the enemy has been removed by God, he asks that another take his place of oversight.
 - a. So you see David's experience and story here is ultimately a foreshadowing of that which takes place with Jesus and Judas.
- F. [Ps. 69](#) in particular, was likely featured in Jesus' hermeneutics class with his boys.
1. This psalm is quoted on five separate occasions in the NT with reference to Jesus ([Acts 1:20](#); [John 2:17](#); [15:25](#); [Rom. 11:9–10](#); [15:3](#)).
 2. And with one of these occasions, it's Jesus himself who's quoting from it, saying it's being fulfilled in him ([John 15:25](#)).
 - a. So he's well aware of this interpretive move and he approves of it. Indeed, he's the one who taught it to them.

Where Do You Look First?

- A. In all this, the principle for us is very simple, are you ready for it? When you're looking for guidance, look first to the Word of God. This is the first step.
1. But it's not the only step . . .

Step #2: Prayer

- A. It starts with Scripture, but then they give themselves to prayer.
1. Look at what happens down in [vv. 23-25](#): ²³And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

- B. What I appreciate about this is it brings things into balance for us.
1. Some of us love to do Bible study, right? We're good with the intellect thing. We could parse out the Scriptures all day, read theology and all that.
 - a. But, if we're honest, we often forget to pray. We don't do this heart relationship thing with God, where we express our needs and our dependence and our feelings. That makes us uncomfortable. It feels too vulnerable, too squishy.
 2. But then others of us trend in precisely the opposite direction. We struggle to read our Bibles. It's boring, it feels lifeless.
 - a. But we can pray and journal about our feelings and where we need God and all this for hours.
- C. But what we see here is we need both working together. Both cylinders have to be firing or we won't be very effective at discerning God's will and walking in it.
1. So the intellect type, they tend to put everything in a box. It's just mechanics.
 2. But the affection type, they can get out of bounds and go with their feelings instead of what Scripture actually says.
 3. We need both Scripture and prayer as we see here. Sure it might be best to start with Scripture. But it better flow into and be enveloped with prayer.
- D. And I love the first things they pray there: *"You, Lord, who know the hearts of all . . ."* (v. 24).
1. The word *"Lord"* here is a reference to Jesus as King and Lord of all.
 - a. It's the Greek word *kurios*. It's the word used elsewhere to refer to God. In the LXX, it's the word used in place of YHWH. Think of that! Jesus is YHWH!
 2. And the second little bit there, there's a single word in the Greek there that literally means: *"heart-knower."*
 - a. And this too is used of God elsewhere (cf. [Acts 15:8](#)). He sees through the appearance of things. He knows all.
- E. And I say I love this because it captures, not only the present glory of our crucified, resurrected, and ascended king, it also gets at the proper posture of prayer.
1. We don't stand over and bark orders at him. We come under and take our orders from him. We don't inform him, he informs us. Yes, prayer, in one sense is certainly about being heard by God. But in an even deeper sense, I think, it's about learning to hear him.
 2. If we want to truly discern God's direction in our own lives, we have to be humble and submitted like this, not coming with our own agenda—"You better say what I want you to say, or else."

- a. No! You come saying, whatever you want me to do, wherever you call me to go, however you want me to be, that's what I want. Just show me. "⁹ Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9–10).
 - i. You come in with this posture, Jesus can, Jesus will, work with that!

Step #3: Community

- A. This third step here isn't explicitly communicated in our text, but it's implied all the way through.
 - 1. Peter's not pursuing God's direction on this alone, right? He's not just calling the shots and that's it. "God spoke to me personally, privately, that's good enough."
 - 2. No, he's doing it in community.
- B. Discerning God's direction for our lives is a community project.
 - 1. So we read in v. 23 that "[they put forward two, Joseph . . . and Matthias.](#)"
 - 2. And we read in v. 24 that "[they prayed](#)" all together in this upper room.
 - a. This reminds that there's quite a group here involved in this as we saw in previous weeks back in [Acts 1:13-14](#).
- C. And this has to be said for us, especially in view of how fragmented and isolated we're all prone to be in our culture. American individualism, it's what we're known for.
 - 1. So many are just happy to do the "just-me-and-Jesus" thing, where we don't really think we need others meddling in our Christian walk, and we don't want them there. "I read my Bible, I pray, I go. I don't want your opinion."
- D. But the Bible says foolishness festers when we isolate ourselves and wisdom is found when we open the door to others.
 - 1. A thousand proverbs tumble out at this point, don't they? I'll give you just three of them.
 - a. [Prov. 11:14](#): "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."
 - b. [Prov. 15:22](#): "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."
 - c. [Prov. 18:1](#): "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."
- E. I told you last week, I've been reading in Ephesians for my devotions, and last week I read [Eph. 4](#).
 - 1. And in that chapter he talks about how we need each other if we're going to grow strong and not give way to the schemes and deception and "false advertising" of the devil.

- a. If we're not using our gifts, if we're not living in community, then we are easy targets. We're like a lamb that's slipped off from the fold. The wolfpack will have no problem encircling and having their way with it.
- F. So here's where you not only read only and pray on your own, you invite others in. "I'm thinking God's leading me here, what do you think?"
- 1. I'm not saying everyone needs to be involved in this as you try to discern God's direction for you and things, but you do need an inner circle of some sort—an inner circle of wise counsel, people who really know and love Jesus and who really know and love you, love you, and they'll call you out if necessary.
 - a. Do you have this?

Step #4: Lot?

- A. Now, with this fourth step things get particularly interesting, because it's changed a bit for us in our day. But let me back up and explain. Look at what they go on to do in [v. 26](#). After praying, we're told that ["they cast lots for them . . ."](#)
- B. And you say: "What is this? Is this something akin to a quick game of rock, paper, scissors? Is this something like what we had when we were kids with those magic 8 balls—where you ask a question, you shake them, and you get your answer?"
- 1. Well, not exactly, but, if I'm honest, it does feel a little bit like that.
 - 2. But Biblically, we know that casting lots was a legitimate means of discerning God's will sanctioned in the Old Testament.
 - a. It was used on the Day of Atonement to determine which animal would be offered in one way or another ([Lev. 16:8](#)).
 - b. It was used to divide up the promised land between the various tribes ([Num. 26:55](#)).
 - c. It was used to select people for special duties in the temple and things ([1 Chron 24:7](#); [25:8](#); [Luke 1:9](#)).

What We Don't and Do Know

- A. We don't know exactly how they did it.
- 1. In the case of Joseph and Matthias here, the thought is that they likely took two pieces of stone or wood and wrote the name of one man on one and the name of the other man on the other. And then they put it in a receptacle of some sort, prayed, and pulled out one.
 - a. Like drawing your name from a hat. Like some sort spiritual game of bingo. It does feel a little like that, doesn't it?
- B. We don't know how exactly they did it, but we do know at least two things . . .

1. First, we know God used it to disclose his will to his people. [Prov. 16:33](#): “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” God is sovereign. He can reveal his will to his people however he chooses.
 2. But then here’s the second thing we know: we know that, after this scene in [Acts 1](#), casting lots as a means of discerning God’s will it’s never mentioned again. This is it. This is the last time in Scripture that we see it. And that, brothers and sisters, is not by accident.
- C. Because you know what’s coming next—in the very next verse, in fact? The day of Pentecost. [Acts 2:1ff.](#): “¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (vv. 1-4).
1. And Jesus had said what about this day and this Spirit? “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” ([John 16:13](#)).
 2. So Peter declares later in [Acts 2:16-18](#), trying to make sense of all this for the crowds: “¹⁶ [T]his is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.’”
- D. Listen, God is now able to reveal his will to you in more personal and more intimate ways than ever before. And it’s not just for a select few to know God in this way. It’s for any who would be united to Christ by grace through faith.
1. Because of the gospel, because of Jesus’ work on the cross, God doesn’t have to dwell out there somewhere, revealing his will to us from a distance—from the top of mount Sinai, through the casting of lots, etc.
 2. Now he can come and dwell in our hearts by faith, now he’s coming in and he can reveal things to us personally, through intimate relationship.
 - a. It’s the difference between receiving a telegraph and receiving a warm hug. It’s amazing.
 - i. No longer do we need the lot because now we have the Spirit!
- E. This is why when the church is later making a similar decision, it would seem, concerning the mission of the church and who to send, we don’t read that they cast lots to determine the matter.
1. No. Here’s what we read now, [Acts 13:2](#): “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”
 - a. Isn’t that something? We shift from the more mechanical to the personal. We’re not casting lots, we’re listening for the Holy Spirit.

“Impressions”

- A. And so for us now, when it comes to discerning God’s will for us in making certain decisions and things, I would include this as a fourth step. Listening for the Spirit.
1. We’re talking here about what’s sometimes referred to as “impressions.”
 - a. As you read Scripture, and as you pray, and as you do it in community with others, sometimes the Holy Spirit will put things on your heart, incline you in one way or another.
- B. Now, to be clear, I put this last on the list, Step #4, because I do think it’s the one that’s the most precarious.
1. We’re not apostles. We’re not always sure what God is saying to us.
 - a. We don’t esteem our sense of it as highly as Scripture by any stretch.
 - b. And certainly we test it by way of our community and get counsel from others. “I feel like God is leading me this way, do you see that?”
 - i. So it comes last on the list and it’s subordinated to all that’s come before.
 - ii. But, in its place, it is still important—that we be open, that we look for his personal guidance in this way. We can sense things that the Spirit may be calling us to. And that matters.
- C. Renowned biblical scholar J.I. Packer has some very helpful words for us on all this.
1. He strikes the appropriate balance, I think, between uncharitable rejection of impressions on the one hand and uncritical acceptance of them on the other hand.
 - a. We don’t just want to discard wholesale this idea that the Spirit can lead us personally. But neither do we want to assume that every little passing idea or feeling is the Spirit impressing his will on us.
- D. Listen to what Packer has to say to us here: “Direct communications from God take the form of impressions, and impressions can come even to the most devoted and prayerful people from such murky sources as wishful thinking, fear, obsessional neurosis, schizophrenia, hormonal imbalance, depression, side effects of medication, and satanic delusion, as well as from God. Impressions need to be suspected before they are sanctioned and tested before they are trusted. . . . Bible-based wisdom must judge them. . . . Impressions . . . belong to Christian living. When we say we have a “vision” or “burden” about something, we are referring to an impression. When our concern is biblically proper, we are right to regard our impression as a nudge from the Holy Spirit. Nehemiah speaks of what “God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem” (Neh. 2:12 RSV), and by prayer, persuasion, and push, Nehemiah got the job done. Paul and Silas “attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (Acts 16:7 RSV)—that is, an inner impression restrained them. God, as they soon discovered, was leading them to Greece. Paul’s “mind could not

rest” while evangelizing Troas, because Titus had not come (2 Cor. 2:13). So Paul left, construing his restlessness as God prompting him to go in search of Titus rather than continue the Troas mission. These are biblical examples of saints pulled or pressed by God in particular directions. This is an experience that most Christians know.

My point is not that the Spirit of God gives no direct impressions, but rather that impressions must be rigorously tested by biblical wisdom—the corporate wisdom of the believing community as well as personal wisdom. If this is not done, impressions that are rooted in egoism, pride, headstrong unrealism, the fancy that irrationality glorifies God, a sense that some human being is infallible, or similar misconceptions will be allowed to masquerade as Spirit-given. Only impressions verified as biblically appropriate and practically wise should be recognized as from God. People who receive impressions about what they should believe or do should question such impressions until they have been thoroughly tested. . . .

The radios of my youth would crackle with atmospherics, making clear reception impossible. All forms of self-centeredness and self-indulgence, from surface-level indiscipline and lawlessness to the subtlety of grandiose elitism or the irreverence of not obeying the guidance one has received already, will act as atmospherics in the heart, making recognition of God’s will harder than it should be and one’s testing of impressions less thorough and exact. But those who are being “led by the Spirit” into humble holiness will also be “led by the Spirit” in evaluating their impressions, and so they will increasingly be able to distinguish the Spirit’s nudges from impure and improper desire. “He . . . teaches the humble his way” (Ps. 25:9 RSV). Blessed, then, we may say, are the pure in heart. They shall know the will of God.

- E. So there you have it. Four steps for discerning the will of God in your own life. Set in order: Scripture, Prayer, Community, and (in place of Lot now) Impression.
 - 1. I commend these to you as you come to face your own forks in the road and important decisions to make. It’s how these disciples here seem to have done it. It’s how we should do it as well.

(4) Who They Chose

- A. Now we come at last to consider who they chose. And, obviously, I really don’t have time to say much on this. But there was just one thing on my heart, I’ll close with.
 - 1. So they put forward a guy named Joseph and a guy named Matthias.
 - 2. And then they pray: “Lord you know the hearts, show who you’ve chosen.”
 - 3. And then v. 26 again we read: “**And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**”
- B. And you know here’s what I found myself thinking: What would it be like to be Joseph?
 - 1. You know, we live in a culture these days where everyone’s so easily offended and you can’t really have winners or losers, because the ego is so fragile and they can’t handle it, so you give everyone a participation trophy and call everyone a “winner” in their own way.
 - 2. But here, in a sense, Joseph just loses, right? God didn’t choose him for this. He didn’t make the cut. He didn’t make the team.

- a. How would you feel? Wouldn't you be wondering why? What was in my heart? Is something wrong with me? Do you still love me? Do you have a purpose for me?
- C. And here's what's so amazing: we never hear of this guy making a fuss, throwing a pity party, creating division, starting an uprising. None of that. Matthias is chosen, Joseph accepts it, and things just roll on.
 - 1. And I love it, because, you know, when you've truly been changed by grace you don't need a position, you don't need recognition, because you have salvation.
 - a. You already have a position in Christ—you're seated with him in the heavenly places Paul says.
 - b. You already have recognition before the Father in Christ—your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, he knows you, he loves you.
 - i. You don't need a spot with the twelve. If that's not what God has for you, okay, I'm just amazed I get to be here at all. I'm just happy to serve. Isn't that it?
- D. “[A] day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Ps. 84:10).
 - 1. Just the fact that I get to be here at all, that's enough for me. That Jesus has died for my sin, washed me, loves me. Everything else is just icing. If he wants to take a place at the lead, great. If he wants me to stay back and mop the floor, what a privilege.
- E. Don't you want to be like that?! That's what the gospel does. Let's draw near the cross together now and receive this kind of grace from him now.