

LIFE GROUP GUIDE: TNC#7 - "EARS"

This Life Group guide on how God guides us is a little different from usual. The three sections – connect in, connect up, connect out – have been merged to create a single workshop evening. It's intensely practical and will really help disciple the people in your group.

- Can somebody please read **Acts 16:6-10**?
- When have you received clear guidance from God? How did you receive it?
[Be sensitive to non-Christians and new Christians in the group. Make sure that this starter doesn't make them feel second-rate for their lack of experience of God. Led well, it should whet their appetite for more of him!]
- What do you need God to guide you about right now?
[Take time to tease this out of people, even if they seem a bit reticent and unsure. People will learn through your Bible study far more if you are able to show them beforehand just how relevant and important it is to their lives.]
- Can somebody please therefore read **Acts 16:6-10**?
- In the message that Phil preached from these verses, he outlined four key ways in which God guides us: **1) Common sense** (Paul went to Turkey, where he had grown up and had lots of contacts, and he attempted to go to the two districts which had the largest cities) **2) Open and shut doors** (Paul explains what is meant in v6-8 in 1Cor 16:8-9 & 2Cor 2:12) **3) The Spirit of God** (who is active in the simplicity of v6-8 and also in the supernatural vision of v9. He speaks to us through the Bible, through a sense of inner peace about a decision, through prophecy, through dreams, etc) **4) Friends who know God** (Luke was part of Paul's team and says in v10 that "*we concluded*". Guidance is therefore handled best as a community project). Phil also pointed out that the Greek word for "concluded" in v10 means literally "to knit together". God normally guides us in all four ways and expects us to knit them together.
- So let's get really practical. Take a piece of paper and divide it into four sections, making each of these four ways that God guides us the headers for the four sections. Now take one of the areas in which a group member said they need guidance and start writing things down together as a group under each of the four headings. Offer them a workshop on guidance. What does common sense say they should do? What open and shut doors point to God's will on the matter? What has the Spirit of God been saying to them? What is he saying now to the people in the room? What other wisdom can the other group members offer them? Knit those four things together and then invite the person to look at the completed sheet of paper and summarise how God is guiding them.
- Now do the same for somebody else in the group. If you have time, do it for a third person. By being this practical, you are training people to hear God guide them each day.
- Leave yourself enough time to divide a sheet of paper into four sections to tackle a big group question: "*How is God guiding us to reach our community and social networks with the Gospel?*" What do each of these four headings reveal about how God wants to guide you as a group into the most effective way of loving Jesus and living his mission together?
- End with a time of prayer for one another, based on your evening's discussion. If you have time, conclude by spending time worshipping the God who guides his people.