



We returned to our mini-series in Acts 1 and 2 this week and looked at the episode where the apostles replaced Judas. This episode is all about the process of the apostles praying together to discern God's will to make a wise decision. Including God and even others in the choices people make in life is quite counter-culture but this passage shows us that prayerful dependence on God helps us trust his ways and follow his wisdom.

Seek God's Guidance

The apostles have just been given their mission by Jesus to take the gospel into all the world before he ascended into Heaven. This task is huge so as they waited for the Holy Spirit to come they went away and prayed together. The apostles and other believers didn't set out and begin their task independently of God or one another or without firstly seeking God in prayer. When it comes to fulfilling the purposes of God for the church prayer must be at the forefront of all that we do.

Trust God's ways

As the believers prayed together they understood more about God and his ways, including God's control over and purposes through Judas' betrayal. Judas' actions were prophesied about in the Psalms and all that was said about him came true; including his death. For those first hand witnesses Judas was a loose cannon but from God's perspective his actions were part of what led to Jesus to the cross, where he died for the sins of the world.

Follow God's Wisdom

One of the prophecies about Judas was that he must be replaced. The apostles were the foundation of the church so they chose two men who were brought to God in prayer asking the Lord Jesus to show them which one he wanted to be the 12th apostle. The Lord Jesus knows the hearts of all people and he knows the best path for his people. Through prayer, the Bible and the Holy Spirit's witness among his people we can make wise decisions knowing the Lord is with us.

Some suggested questions to dig deeper and to discuss for application...

What criteria do people in our culture use when making decisions?
Who might people go to for advice and guidance?

Describe the scene in verse 12-14, who were the different groups of people that made up the believers? Contrast this list of apostles with the list in Luke 6:12-16? Was it a surprise to see Jesus' brother listed here? (Mark 3:12; 1 Cor 15:7)

What does this scene tell us about what was important for the believers?
How important is prayer and especially corporate prayer to you and to the church? What does this look like for MRC?

Read Psalms 69 and 109 and discuss how these psalms of David point forward to Jesus and note 69:25 and 109:8 which are quoted by Peter
There are two accounts of Judas' death can you harmonise them to see what happened? (Matthew 27:1-10; Acts 1:18-19)
How did the apostles' study/knowledge of the scriptures deepen their understanding of God's sovereignty and his eternal purposes?

Have there been times when it's been hard to trust God's control?
Share examples where time with God deepened your understanding of his purposes? How can we encourage one another in this area?

How did the believers choose a new apostle? How common was casting lots if the Bible? (Lev 16:8; Josh 18:6-10; Neh 10:34; Mark 15:24; Prov 16:33) Why don't Christians make decisions in this way anymore?
Discuss some wise Biblical principles for choosing new leaders?
How does the Holy Spirit help us and provide for us?