

When God Speaks: Discerning the Voice of God Part 2

by Shane Idleman

Discerning God's voice requires obedience, faith, and perseverance, and it is essential for spiritual maturity and growth.

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Scripture: Genesis 22:3, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 16:3, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 7:7, Luke 14:26, Romans 12:2, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:22, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Discerning God's Voice"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical need to discern the voice of God amidst the many distractions and competing voices in our lives. He highlights that true clarity comes from pressing into God through prayer, worship, and obedience, even when His will challenges our comfort and desires. Using the example of Abraham's faith and obedience in sacrificing Isaac, he illustrates that God's will often requires us to surrender what we love most, trusting that He will provide. Idleman encourages believers to seek godly counsel, remain immersed in Scripture, and act in faith, as true faith is demonstrated through action. Ultimately, he calls for humility and a willingness to put God on the throne of our lives, as pride can hinder our relationship with Him.

Transcript

And I want to talk to you this morning about an important topic that we are going to need to hear. We're going to need to really press in like never before. When God speaks, when God speaks, discerning the voice of God, part two.

So if you weren't here last week, you need to listen, go back on YouTube and listen to get caught up. Because this is an important time. There's so many voices.

Aren't there competing for our attention on where to invest money? Where to, even if we have any money, where to work? Should we move? Should we marry someone? Should we downsize? You fill in the blank. That hearing that voice of God. And I've noticed, and I'm sure many of you have, is the more time we spend pressing in, seeking Him, repenting, getting our hearts right, prayer meetings, worship mornings, the more His voice becomes clear.

It actually becomes louder. You turn up the volume on hearing the voice of God because you're pressing in. And it's when we don't.

Most Christians that are confused is because they're spending too much time doing this or this. What's the news say? Now there's monkey pox. Did you know that? Biden is worried about this new virus.

Monkey pox. Is there an election coming up or something? Those darn melon ballots. Shane, don't get political.

I'm not. I'm getting biblical. It's the truth.

It's the truth. We're in interesting times right now. We are in very interesting times right now.

Elon Musk just switched political parties. I emailed a few people, said, this guy's toast. They're not going to allow that.

The woke culture is going to, and he is being, his stock dropped 44%. He's being attacked. He's tweeted out things that, hey, if I end up dead, it's not me.

See, this is huge. This is huge. And pastors are silent.

I don't want to talk about that kind of stuff. That kind of stuff is what matters. People are hungry for that kind of stuff.

You point them to the cross with relevant things that are going on. So that's my tirades over. But I saw that come, didn't you? As soon as he announced, boy, oh boy, he's going to have everyone against him.

Hollywood, the president, the current administration on all areas. Just the woke culture, liberal churches. I mean, it's going to be, pray for that guy.

I think he needs the Lord. And I was reminded, again, studying, and I told you last week, God's will isn't always what we want. Because as believers, we think God's will must be this sweet spot where everything is flowing.

Everything is going good. Man, if I can just get in the center of God's will. It's challenging, actually, in God's will.

Because your flesh is protesting. The enemy is coming after you. The world is influencing you.

And being in God's will is you're doing things that God wants you to do. And that always brings spiritual upheaval. And that was a big wake-up call for me when I first came back to the Lord.

I'm like, oh, back in God's will. Now I had tremendous peace, thank God, but it was not what I thought. It was not the beach in Cancun that I thought would happen.

It was very challenging. But thank God we are anchored to the rock. And though the waves beat against that boat, we are anchored to Jesus Christ.

Last week also briefly, faith must be tested. Your faith will be tested. It will be tried.

It will be challenged. And as a pastor, I've seen it many times. I mean, all of us can talk the right talk.

Correct? Say the right thing. Things are going good. But it's actually when things go haywire or go the opposite direction.

I thought this, but now what's happening here? This is not what I expected. That's where real faith is tested. And I wish I could report to you that most people finish well.

Most people get upset at God. This is not what I was praying for. This is not what I was planning on.

And their faith falters because it was built on this idea of God's going to work everything out according to my will, the way I want it done. And I've seen it. So many people, they get bitter.

They get upset at church because really God is showing them what is in their heart. And we were in Genesis 22, this incredible chapter where Abraham, I think it's 22 verse 3, we left off. So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Now last week, again, to get you caught up, God told Abraham to sacrifice his son. And of course, that doesn't make sense. We don't understand that.

But as in the case of Abraham, in the case of Job, thank God, God gave us the hardest examples. Then we can't say, well, they didn't have it as hard as me in the Bible. Well, Job had it pretty hard.

I haven't met anybody who comes close to what Job experienced or what David went through with Saul or that God gives us these examples for us to follow and be encouraged. And one of those is Abraham. And God said, take your son, this son of the promise, this impossible thing that happened to give birth at 100 years old, and his wife was 90.

Now give this up that I gave you. It's incredible, this miracle. Now give it up and put it on the altar.

And a lot of sermons have been preached on that topic. There's wonderful principles in that as well, putting that dream on the altar and giving it back to God. And I often tell couples who are thinking about getting married, you know, what do you think God's will is? And we're a little confused, and you know, we don't quite understand what's going on.

And how do we know exactly, perfectly what God's will is? And often I tell them, you won't know until the day you say, I do. Because you're putting that relationship on the altar. Lord, I'm giving this up to you.

And then once you say, I do, you're locked and loaded. Now you can't go back and change your mind. So that's why this idea of marriage is so important.

It's the second most important decision you'll ever make. But putting those things on the altar. So many people, they have godly ambition for something.

God has given us ambition to do things for Him. And that's why sometimes, you know, I don't mind putting the messages on the radio and promoting it, getting it out there as long as our hearts are right. And we want God to get it out there.

And God gives us that desire for a reason. If not, we just sit at home all day and do nothing. And having that godly ambition, that godly desire, but also putting that on the altar.

Saying, Lord, if you just have me help in children's ministry, or nursery, or special needs, if you just have me be an usher and clean the parking lot, I'll put all these ideas on the altar, and I'm sacrificing it to you. And God says, oh, that's faith I can use. I often think, even in my own life, how much more could God use us if we completely laid down our agendas, and what our wants and our desires, and if we don't get our way, we get in a bad mood.

Anybody relate to that? Or just me? Every head should be shaking in this room. And so that is important understanding God's will. But this last verse here, and arose and went to the place of which God had told Him.

He didn't try to manipulate, or He didn't try to circumvent. He went to exactly where God told Him. And of course, the main thing that jumps out is obedience is essential when you're trying to determine God's will, or walking God's will.

The amazing thing about God's will is sometimes, even in myself, we make it harder than it actually is. A lot of things are crystal clear in God's Word. Do you know the Bible says, His will is that you should worship Him.

His will is that you should pray. His will is that you should make disciples. His will is that you should live a holy life before Him.

His will is that all come to salvation. And there's clear things. And you live in those principles.

But Shane, what about the things that are gray area? Well, again, God's Word offers a lot of principles. It won't tell you the name of person you're supposed to marry, but it will offer principles. It doesn't tell you where you should work exactly, but it will offer principles.

And I'm amazed, especially how many men compromise this area. And I believe unequally yoked applies to business partnerships as well. Absolutely.

The context of Paul is light and darkness, and what fellowship has bell with God, and what fellowship has light with darkness. And so business relationships, marriage relationships, any type of relationship where you're linked together, but you're unequally yoked, it's preventing you from doing God's work. But His Word gives us clarity on these issues.

So we might not know the exact answer, we know the direction in which to walk. And then that's when we start to compromise is when we run into trouble. So obedience to God's Word despite feelings.

Lord, I'm having a real challenging time right now. What am I supposed to do? I know the Bible says forgive, but... Well, until you get past that first point, until you obey that first point, it's hard to get clear direction until you begin to obey that first thing. Because we often, we know God wants us to do this, but then we're like, well, not right now.

Lord, show me something else. And you can hang out there with massive frustration if you don't obey the initial thing He told you to do. How many people have we seen at this altar over the years who just crying because God finally set them free, and they feel this breakthrough, and they finally let something go, or they finally obeyed, and that thing that's been... Because God's not like, okay, well, I guess you're not going to do this.

I guess I better change course. Remember last week, God doesn't say, let's make a deal. He says, this is the deal.

And I've seen people go their whole life disobeying what God has called them to do. And it's very sad. Most follow the wrong voice because they live in deception.

Did you know, this is the pastor, I realize this a lot. Did you know that with all the people here today, you can actually leave this service and live in deception, even though you heard what I'm saying? You might say, how is that possible? Because James said, be doers of the Word, and not just hearers, because if you're just a hearer of the Word, you actually live your life, you make choices, the wrong choices, and you think they're the right choices, and you live in deception. Know of any Christians living in deception? Oh my, my, my.

All of us have maybe camped out there for a little while. We know it, but we're not going to obey it. And then we get prideful, and we start to make decisions that aren't God-honoring, aren't lining up with His Word.

We think, well, look, I'm getting away with it. God's patience. No, His patience is not His approval.

And we begin to experience this deception. And the interesting thing about deception is, it's hard to spot when you have it. Others can spot it pretty easily.

But it's us, it's our hearts that really can't see that deception. And what's interesting, you can see this quite frequently, and when someone is lovingly confronted, are they thankful? Let that sink in. Lovingly confronted, are they thankful? And man, thank you for caring for me.

And I didn't realize that. You're right. Thank you for pointing that out.

Nope. It's quite the opposite. Living in deception.

And maybe this will apply to some of you here or those listening. If there's a constant attitude of criticism, if there's a constant critical spirit in your heart, it's a good sign often that we're living in deception. I've been there before many times.

When we're constantly nitpicking others. When we're constantly saying, I don't know about this. And we have a critical spirit.

And a critical spirit, it's hard to hear from God. Because you know you need to change. You know there's areas in your life, but you're not open to those changes.

And you become critical and condescending to others. That's a sure sign of not hearing from God. Because when we're hearing from God and doing His will, don't we become more gentle and loving and understanding? Doesn't humility permeate from our hearts and our lives? Absolutely.

And spiritual maturity comes from humility and obedience. They grow through difficulties rather than run from them. All these people we look at, especially if you read Hebrews, the race of faith and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the heroes of our faith.

The interesting thing is that they became spiritually mature by obeying God. And I see this all the time as well. Those who are actually spiritually mature, you've heard me say this before, are those who are

obeying God's Word.

Because we don't mature spiritually, here's this important, chronologically by our age. I know some people who have been a believer for about three years and they are way more mature than those who have been believers for 30 years. How is that possible? Because they stay stuck in that area of disobedience.

Often, I want to be careful here, please understand my heart, and this is not always the case, but often, and I probably have seen it more than, pastors have seen this more than anybody, have you ever heard that phrase, church hopping? Let me try this church. Let me try this church. Often, often, those people are not very mature.

Now there's times and places to switch and to move. And the pandemic brought out a lot of people out from different churches for good reasons. And they are mature people.

They say, man, the truth is not here anymore, there's cowardliness, Romans 13, all these kinds, and that's not what I'm talking about. But I've seen it, I mean, especially when it first started and people come and, oh, I read your articles and I hear, man, you just, you love the truth. Man, you're just a truth guy.

I tell my wife, watch out, critical heart. Six months, they're gone. Come to find out they're putting down the other church and then the other church before that, and the other church before that.

And they're not the problem. But see, those people from hopping to different churches rarely grow in their faith. Why? Why is that? Because they're running from the challenge rather than confronting it.

I mean, just, I hate being so honest, but I would have left this church a hundred times if I wasn't the pastor. Maybe you too, yeah, Morgan too. Sheep bite.

We've had to have meetings and things and problems and you just, you know, as the lead pastor, it's everything's your fault. Everything's my fault. I don't even know something happened, it's my fault.

And this kind of stuff and this kind of stuff. And so, man, I would have been out of here. I got, I worked there, I can't leave.

Dang it. But I'll tell you, it's grown us more than anything else. It's having those hard conversations, difficult conversations, and then you grow stronger from it.

You have tighter relationships because you both went to battle together. I mean, if the person's willing, you know what I mean? There's some people that are just, you know, negative Nellies and judgmental Jerrys and not much you can do about that. But for the most part, that's, I thank God for allowing us to lead because that's how we've grown a lot spiritually.

You have hard conversations, you grow from your experiences, you become a better person. I mean, if you listen to my preaching 10 years ago, man, a couple of people have been here a while said, well, you've changed a lot. Not in the, not in changing truth, but just, just, you know, you kind of think you know it all and you're bolder and a little bit more arrogant until you get hurt and broken and humbled.

And it's like, oh man. So the message hasn't changed, but my heart is a lot more tender. For example, who told me this? Somebody told me, you used to say this.

You remember like, oh, you're going way back. You know, I'm preaching. I'm like, if you don't like what I'm saying, there's the door.

Don't let it kick you on the way out or hit you on the way out. The difference is now I feel it. I just don't say it.

Right. The filter, the filter of the heart, the filter of the heart, and just a, you know, just a more, and, and, and that, that, that you gotta have that. But it, but it just, it breaks.

You remember one, one girl, she was probably 18 and struggle with same sex attraction said the way you, you preached about that makes me feel so bad and there's no hope. I'm like, oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. How can I help in that? What can I do better? And so I've learned, okay, come out against the agenda, but encourage the person struggling and see finding that balance.

Cause we're, man, you look at the perversion going on in Hollywood and the media and what they're trying to pass in California. There's a righteous indignation. There's a fire, a fire that's brewing.

And so how do you, how do you, how do you put out that fire? But I'll put out the fire in others. And it's a very challenging process, but just be encouraged. It does.

I would, if I would, whether you're listening, wherever you're at, I wouldn't run from fellow believers. I would, um, I would embrace what God is doing. Let God, if you're going somewhere else, uh, nationally, wherever it is, just make sure God is leading.

And he does do that. Absolutely does that often. But for the most part, that's how we grow is to go through those challenges and have those difficult conversations.

And you know what else is good about that is you don't have, you no longer have a root of bitterness, or you're no longer holding in this hurt because you've talked about it. It's, it's over. It's done with.

And that's how mature believers handle different situations. And then verse six and seven. So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son.

Now they're not yet on the altar. Isaac is helping him carry this burnt offer, this wood for the offering. And he took the fire in his hand.

They didn't have things that, that could light the fire easily. It was, they would get the fire started and then carry that with them. And he had a knife and the two of them went together.

And now I'm going to paraphrase the next verse. Dad, I see the fire and I see the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham responded, my son, God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering. I mean, I can only imagine what Abraham is going through.

I mean, we read this like, okay, next verse, next chapter. But can you imagine like, I've got, is, is God really calling me to do this? Would you question yourself? I would. I would.

Is God really, I can't make, I can't make a mistake here. Lord, is that really your voice? I can't, I love my son. And you can just, the sweat probably coming down and just, but you can also see Lord, you'll provide, I'm trusting you.

What is all this about? And all these emotions going through his mind. And it's a good reminder that God's will often involves divine intervention. God's will often involves divine intervention from finances to open doors or closed doors.

As you're trusting God and seeking God often, let Him maneuver the game of chess. Let Him open the door for that job or that situation. It's good to press in and do things.

Like I tell people, if you're trying to get a job, put out some applications. Don't just sit at home watching Netflix. You might not get a job.

And so we have to step out in faith and trust God and do these things. But ultimately, how many of us have stories that if God didn't do it, it was absolutely impossible. If God didn't do this at this time, with this situation, with this set, with this circumstance, all this is impossible because He's the master chess player.

And often praying for His will doesn't happen without that happening. And Abraham pondered God's will in his heart. Pondered God's will in his heart.

He didn't go, well, you know, you're the sacrifice right at the beginning. He pondered, and that's, I think that's important. Boy, have I learned this lesson the hard way.

Do you know not everyone's excited about what God puts on your heart? Just try it sometime. I've learned now to just, many times, I'm just going to pray through. We also see this with Nehemiah.

He pondered what God put in his heart about rebuilding the wall. Mary pondered in her heart having the Messiah. Joseph probably should have pondered in his heart that he was the favorite son.

Maybe not, though, of course, God used all that. If that story's amazing too, your brothers try to kill you. Instead, they sell you into slavery.

You end up becoming second to Pharaoh, but first going to prison because Potter's wife accused you. And I mean, God, you see Him in all of that. And so we have to remember that it's not advantageous to tell people what God's will is all the time.

Because they don't always agree with you. Now I'm going to get into it in just a little bit. Seeking godly counsel is very important.

But when God gives you something, just ponder it for a while. Because what happens, you start to share it with people. And do they encourage you? Some do.

My mom did a lot. But not everyone. It's just, well, you know, I don't know.

I don't know about that. Are you sure that was God? No, that's pretty expensive. I don't know.

I don't see you doing that. I don't know. That doesn't really line up with what I think.

And again, it's good to seek godly counsel, but make sure to ponder something in your heart, because people aren't going to see what God is doing in your life. God's doing something in your life. So you can't say you feel or see that exact same thing, because God might be calling you to do something different.

And most people sometimes have a bias. They don't want to see others excel. Or they don't want them to step out in ministry when they're feeling convicted.

Has that ever happened to you? It's just interesting. People, you have to do what God has called you to do. And I've kind of been putting this in check for five minutes, so I just want to make sure I word it correctly.

One of my biggest prayers is, did you want me to say that or did I say that on my own? But something that discouraged me greatly when I started the church, I met with a few pastors. And it's a well-known pastor in town, I won't mention names. But his exact words were, Shane, if you do decide to pastor, I don't think you should be writing books.

You can't do that in pastor. You have to do one or the other. And so, man, I struggle.

But what if God told me to do that? How do you know that's not part of what He's called me to do? And it was a big struggle for quite a while. Not to mention this guy reads John MacArthur's books and John Piper. Pastors who write books.

But I guess that's a bigger calling. But as long as it doesn't take away from your main responsibility. And God makes that happen.

But see, not everyone shared that joy. Not everyone agreed with it. So I'm like, oh, okay, well, thank you.

And then I didn't for a while. I didn't pursue that. Another area, that's why I just did this Saturday, yesterday, and you can watch on YouTube, I talked about health and our physical bodies and how the physical parallels with the spiritual.

When I first began to be a pastor, and that's actually before I became a pastor, my first book was on that. So I would travel to churches and different places and talk about physical health and how that relationship with God is so important. And people would be discouraging me.

They would say, you know, you shouldn't talk about that stuff. Look at Paul said, exercise isn't important. That doesn't, those things don't matter.

Why are you talking about that? My gosh, yeah, maybe, boy, oh boy, God, I feel you want wanting me to do this. And I just, how long was I quiet for years, five, six, seven years, didn't mention anything. Because I let the influence of others get to me.

And then I start realizing, you know, I have to say something because how we take care of this plays a big, the reason people don't come to church, they don't feel good. The reason they're not, they're still sick, because they're not taking care of the body. The reason they aren't productive fathers and, and having energy is because they, they let their body go.

The reason pastors aren't doing hospital homes and, and visiting people, and they don't have a lot of energies because they're not to see the physical effects of spiritual. And so if we can help both, we can be more productive for God. Correct? So even, even on Facebook, the negative Nellies, you shouldn't be talking about that stuff.

Who cares if you're fasting? Holy smokes. Let me bow down to this naysayer in Nebraska or wherever they're at. How do you know what God told me to do? As long as it, as long as it lines up with His Word and helping people, we can have classes on marriage and finances and stewardship, but don't talk about this sacred cow.

And then I began to see, oh, conviction. Okay. I got it.

Because what I would do, don't tell anybody. Okay. Facebook will hear.

But like when they make these comments, you know, I'm like, okay, who's this guy? Go to his profile. Oh, he's in fast food, McDonald's parking lot. No wonder he doesn't like what I'm saying.

Or he's maybe they're very overweight and convicted. And so see, I began to see the conviction that I want to help. I don't want to hurt, but because their conviction was spewing hatred out of their mouth, it was allowing, it was causing me to back away.

And also God will keep showing me and confirming it. I can't even, I could tell you so many ways, but Paul says, he doesn't say bodily exercise is not important. Don't even focus on it.

What's the whole context of the verse theologians. It does profit you. You better discipline your body.

You better take care of it, but it doesn't come above spiritual health and spiritual exercises. Why, why doesn't, why do we rarely see that every time I would hurt it? Don't talk. Don't you, Paul, don't you know, the Bible says, don't, don't talk about those things.

It doesn't even profit us like, well, hold on. Let's read scripture in context. Actually, if you want to get really convicting, Paul is a big guy on self-discipline.

I discipline my body and I bring it into subjection, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. Don't allow the flesh to control you. You crucify the flesh.

You put to deeds the lust of the flesh. You tell it what to do. It doesn't tell you what to do with fortitude and strength and perseverance in much travailing and fasting.

I pursue God. That's Paul. And what the church doesn't like, they call legalism.

What the church doesn't like, they call legalism. So anyway, another rant is over, back on track. Believe, yeah, it might happen a couple more times.

So ponder God's will in your heart. Believe God until the end. This is a big, this is, this is, if you, if you don't take much away from this morning, take this.

Trust God and believe God all the way till the end. Can you imagine Abraham saying nope and turning away from what God called him to do? Many times we don't see, and I see this, this makes me sad as a pastor. So many people, they're up here, they're, they're praying for, I mean, you fill in the blank, this big prayer request, right? You fill in the blank.

And oh God, please. And please God. And, and oh, would you God do this? And then as soon as it's going the other direction, I'm not coming back to church.

God didn't answer my prayer in my time. Things are not getting better. They're getting worse.

No, no, no, no, no. That's the time to press in. That, that's when real faith is being tested.

That's when real faith says like, Job, though you slay me, yet will I trust you. Where can I go to flee the presence of God? I will serve him all the days of my life. Lord, even if you kill me, even if I lose a child,

even if this doesn't work out, even if my marriage ends in divorce, I will trust you.

I will follow you till the end. I will finish strong. God says, now that is a faith I can be, I am pleased by.

And that's what Abraham did. He took it all the way to the end. He took it all the way to the end.

God will prepare a sacrifice. God will answer. Even he waited so much to the end where you can see the dagger and you can see he's probably, Lord, is it, and he gave, Abraham, stay your hand, stay your hand.

God has seen your faith. He has heard your cry. Check out behind you.

That lamb is caught in the thicket. God will always come on time. Let me tell you, it's not on your time.

It's on God's time. But often it doesn't work out like we think sometimes. Because I want what's comfortable and convenient, doesn't hurt my ego too much, isn't humiliating.

God, don't keep humbling me. Hurry up and answer my prayer. And God often used the most extreme examples of obedience, again, to give us hope and trust in Him.

And then verse 9 and 10, then they came to the place of which God had told him. You know, I don't think the Bible, I don't think any word is by accident. Last week, this week, God told him.

He went to the place God told him. He did what God told him. Are there areas that God is convicting you? And wants you to obey in this area? Maybe it's getting wrong of a critical heart.

Maybe it's getting wrong getting rid of a prideful heart. Did you know that that can creep in very easily? In my heart too. Those things can creep right in if we're not on guard in this area.

And Abraham built an altar there. So here he is. Here's the place.

I'm building an altar. This has got to be the most strenuous ordeal ever recorded in the Bible, other than the cross, I believe. Or the man who prayed a stupid prayer and told God whatever comes out of his house, he'll give us a sacrifice if God will let him win in battle.

And here comes his daughter walking out of the house. And so, you know, theologians are divided on whether that was he actually sacrificed her or she had to remain a virgin. But anyway, let me get back here.

We'll get to that at some point when I get to that chapter. And so they went to where God told him he built this, this altar, he placed the wood in order, and he bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. Most speculate Isaac could have took out Abraham.

You're not going to put some 16, 17-year-old kid on the altar. And Abraham's 100? What just a step of obedience. And I don't want to speak into this.

I read some commentaries and you're like, I don't know about that. You're pulling there. And that's what I always want to do with God's Word.

I want to say, here's a possibility. Here's what I think. And we really don't know, other than what Scripture says, that Isaac willingly gave his life.

Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord, what Abraham had to do, he didn't have God's Word like we do. Thank God for God's Word.

Psalms 119. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. So stop thinking that God's Word is always a headlight to see the next valley.

Or remember those lights that they used to have that shine? Often it's for my next step. My next step. My next step.

My next step. And it's a light to my path. I can see I'm taking the right course.

And it's often day to day choices. God's will is hard. Like I said earlier, faith must be tested.

And then verse 11, but the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him. For now I know, now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. And I think in our own lives, what is so important? What is so dear that we will not lay down? Do you know how many people do not follow God because of comfort, convenience, finances? They don't want to lay down certain things, not realizing that God can multiply everything or at least the peace of knowing His will.

Faith must be backed by action. We see that here. Faith must be backed by action.

True faith, discerning God's will. There is action. What's that old saying? Pray as if it's all up to God, but live as if it's all up to me.

People might say, oh, I don't know about that. I've thought about that for many years. That's a really good point.

Because if all we do is pray and don't do anything, not much will happen. Because prayer often is infused with action. That's where you see the results.

I don't remember who it was exactly, but one of the founders of America during the Continental Congress, and he was saying, he was pleading, yes, men, pray, pray, pray, but by the love of God, would you act? Also, Edmund Burke said the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. So do you think what's going on in our nation? Just only prayer? Is God ever going to tell you to act? Like I saw some of the negative stuff when Sean Foyt, you know, he's been protesting Disney and stuff. I'm like, I wish more people would do that.

You shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be protesting. Just be at home and stay in prayer.

Well, sometimes you got to get out of your house and go to be the voice of truth. Can you imagine if 10,000 Christians showed up in Orlando at Disney's office or headquarters? Because what action does, it's not that the action is necessarily going to do anything, it's the prayer and the faith that's by action, and you're standing up for something worth fighting for. You're saying, not on my watch.

Can you imagine if just this group of people went to the next school board meeting? Let's be honest. Why is this line of people I can't get? Because you're not going to teach that perverted garbage in our schools anymore. You think that might send a signal? Absolutely.

Who told you God just to pray and don't do anything? You know what that really is? It's cowardliness. It's comfort. I'll just sit at home and pray.

Now, sometimes we should do that. Sometimes we don't. Protesting isn't going to change things.

Prayer is. What about all those people who say it doesn't matter, I'm not going to vote. Well, if a couple million people say that, yeah, but Shane doesn't matter anymore because the things are rigged.

Well, I don't know. We got to take action. Of course, we know that there's a lot of shenanigans.

But there has to be an action. And that's what many of the churches did after COVID became crystal clear on the agenda. We said, hey, we've got to take a stand.

We see this. We got to do something. Faith backed by action.

Isn't it interesting? I've talked to the four or five pastors. We've got actually, I'm going to, me and Morgan were invited to, or no, is it just me? That's a different one. We're both invited.

She can't go to this one, but we're going to go down to a thing in San Diego with Charlie Kirk and pastors are invited. But one, I got a letter from this group who they're going to honor pastors who stayed open. Francis Chan is going to speak.

It's down in San Diego. And they just want to honor that. And almost without a variance at all.

And those churches grew. Numbers, but finances too. Could it be God was bringing hungry people to hear His truth and the blessings of God? Other churches, budget cuts.

We got to get rid of this. We got to get rid of staff. We got to stop doing this.

Those are the churches that capitulated. So to me, that does speak volumes. As long as the heart is right.

What I think hurt the most is so many people thought that the churches who stayed open had a renegade spirit of rebellion. No, we have a broken heart of desperation. Don't confuse the two.

Big difference. Big difference. I mean, I can't even tell you.

I can't even tell you how it felt to come in here and be separated six feet and wear masks. And it's like, I told my wife, I can't keep doing this. I cannot keep doing this.

Now, it's one thing to be cautious and concerned and do what you can. Clean things. Well, yeah, of course.

But there's a fine line there between fear and faith. Faith doesn't mean you chuck all the rules out the door. You don't care.

We've always said, if you're sick, stay home, wash your hands, stay clean, gentle. I mean, do what you can. But when you start to realize that a piece of cloth just barely hanging out is what you're putting on, and you're going to force that and push that and manipulate, because, I mean, if you want to at least do it right, I've said before, wear the N95, wear gloves and don't touch anything and stay away from things.

Don't go to events. Am I just being honest? If you really want to do it the right way, I'm all for it. If you want to do it the right way, but don't be touching things.

I go to Walmart and a thousand people came before me or Costco, put on your mask. I just touched this thing that a thousand people touched. Well, help me understand the insanity here.

And that plexiglass isn't going to do a lot. And so, but see, I'm not being, listen, I'm not poking fun. I'm saying as a pastor, as a leader, when do you call things out? When do you discern the times? When do you lead the people in the right direction? When do you say for the love of God, we got to begin worshiping God again and chasing Him with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength.

And I've studied virology and germs, and I know how it works. And there's some things you got to be careful about, for sure. But why is everybody touting that stuff and nothing about natural immunity? DeSantis in Florida wants to bring antibodies.

No, no, no. Biden says, no, no, no. Only this Pfizer approved experimental thing is what we're going to do.

Come on, guys. Pfizer's stock is the highest. Wake up.

God has given us a brain and wisdom for a reason. And I don't think it's over yet with the election. I don't know.

I'm just saying. I'm just saying there's agendas at work. There's ulterior motives at work.

So it's not just all these people. Bill Gates with a great heart and World Health Organization that we might actually vote our sovereignty over to them. I hope you know that.

I think it's in a week or two, the Biden administration might vote and give them the World Health Organization, give them the sovereignty of America in the area of health and crisis. When they call it a global emergency, if we surrender our sovereignty, we will have to follow the World Health Organization guidelines. This is not conspiracy theory.

Michelle Bachman came out and said it. You can read it for yourself. Why do we stay quiet on these things? It reminds me of the quiet churches who actually sang louder as the trains went by taking people to the gas chambers in Germany.

Did you know that? Here comes the train. Let's sing Amazing Grace louder. I agree, Hayden.

Faith must be backed by action. But you know what? It is hard. I'll tell you.

Because we don't want to start a revolutionary war. We don't want to be all about our AR-15 ammunition. I'm going to show you a real revolution.

I mean, that's not the right heart. There's got to be grace and humility, but there's got to be people hearing from God. See, when you're hearing from God, you'll know what action to take.

You'll know what direction. Can you imagine if a thousand people showed up at Planned Parenthood in Palmdale, which many of you have never been, where they're killing innocent children. Faith must be backed by action.

They had a rally in Sacramento. The stuff they are voting on, it would make your stomach turn. The perversion that they're trying to teach into schools.

Can you imagine? I know it's far. I got it. It's difficult.

I can't be at everything too. But the point is, when God calls us to action, we need to respond. And often, God's will involves giving up what we love.

Boy, oh boy, we need to get this one, don't we? Give up what we love. Sometimes God will give you that back. Sometimes He won't.

Sometimes He'll give you more. But what happens is if we don't give up what we love, we begin to love that more than we love God's will. Of course, Luke, many of us know, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, such a person cannot be my disciple.

And so many people have a problem with this. But it's actually, if you look up in the Greek and you do a word study on hate, it means prefer less than. So it's very true.

Unless you prefer Jesus over others, you cannot follow Him. Amen? I thank God my wife loves Jesus more than me. I'm just telling you.

Thank God. Can you imagine the other way? Ooh, we'd be in trouble. Because then Jesus is put on the back burner.

He's not Lord and Savior. He's a good idea, a good concept. We prefer Jesus Christ above all other things.

Yes, I will follow Him more than I will follow my children. I love my relationship with Him more than I love my relationship with my family. Because that is the foundation on which you build a healthy family.

Because of my love for Christ, now I love others. So I'm not going to leave you hanging there. Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked.

And there behind him was a ram caught in the thicket. Here's his big knife. He's like, I don't think he was going to quick to do it.

He was probably like, Lord, is anything going on here? And so, hey, Abraham, stay your hand, hold your hand. And he looked and there was a ram caught in the thicket. And I love what he called the name of that place.

Sometimes you got to name something in your home. Sometimes you got to name your prayer closet. This is where God met me one morning when I was hopeless.

This is the hill I drove to where I almost took my life. That is the church when I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is a place and you say that is where God will provide.

And God will provide. How do you know Him as provider if there is no need? How do you know Him as healer if there is no sickness? How do you know Him as a comforter if there is no pain? How do you know Him as deliverer if there is no bondage? Sometimes you got to go through hell to expect heaven. Don't let

the enemy of your heart change you.

The enemy of your soul change you. But of course, the question comes up, what about when God doesn't provide? Shane, I hear you, but I'm not experiencing it. Just remember, waiting time is not wasted time.

Joseph endured years of hardship. David ran from his enemy. At age 85, Caleb finally said, give me this mountain that I asked for 45 years ago.

And there are some things that God never answers. Some prayers He has to answer until the day I die. All my kids know Him.

We even prayed, we don't want children unless they're going to know you and serve you. Those things, they're worth fighting for. But there might come some things I never see what I've been praying for.

But I'm going to serve God until the day I take my last breath. There might be pain, there might be anguish, but you hold on to the Savior. And I don't want to brush through these, but I think they're important because here's a few keys you can take home.

I'm going to close with these, so I'm going to go quickly. This is really where I wanted to get, but it's taking me an hour. So those rabbit trails, I'm telling you, but those rabbit trails where everybody seems to get fed from.

It's like your notes are okay, but man, that rabbit trail, that spoke to exactly where I was at. Keys to discerning the voice of God. Again, we're going to go quickly.

Be immersed in the Word. I'm amazed at how many people are not immersed in the Word. It's almost like jumping into a pool.

Now I'm wet. Same thing with God's Word. So you know the character and the nature of God.

You can see the verses up there. Surrender provides direction. The next point, surrender provides direction.

Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established. Is it possible you're not having the right thoughts? You're not ensuring what to do because your works aren't yet committed to the Lord? And I believe as the enemy plants fiery darts, can't God also plant darts as well? Absolutely. He guides the humble, and that's one thing I should say.

Rabbit trail, here we go. One of the things I've been praying about for a while is sharing my fasting journey and calling the nation to it as well. More people jumped in than I thought, but not everyone was happy with me doing that.

You need to keep that private. And I normally did. Many of you never know when I'm fasting, but I felt God committing this to Him gave me a lot of peace.

Like, hey, it's time to call the nation to some prayer and humility. It's time to lead the way in this area. My thoughts were, I would have never came up with that on my own.

I said, hey, let me just tell everybody. Because what I was worried about is failure. How long are you going? I don't know.

I don't know. Don't ask me again. I don't know how long I'm going.

But I want to tell you because I might fail. And so God was working in my heart to make it public and to tell people, and many have been blessed by it, people in different states, even different countries, that finally broke their alcohol addiction, finally broke their nicotine addiction, finally started feeling this freedom in Christ, all because I shared what God was doing in my own life. See, commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts.

Where do you think my books come from? Not me. He's already dealing with me writing a book. I said, I don't want to write another book.

I'm not going to write another book. I need to be motivated. These thoughts that He keeps planting in my heart.

He'll do the same thing for you. There's a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Did you know you can give God a sacrifice today? A sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Maybe some of you need to hear this last one. Did you know it's hard to direct a rebellious child? Even a three-year-old. I told my wife last night, what is wrong with that three-year-old? Holy smokes.

You would think we were pulling her legs off of her. And we put her in her crib trying to go, what? What is going on? She wants more string cheese. She wants more string cheese.

I said, you go to bed. You be quiet. You're not getting more string cheese.

Or what about when you try to drag them? My goodness, they feel like a hundred pounds. And so is God dragging you? Is God trying to drag you? It's hard. He might, but sometimes He doesn't.

He says, you want it, you got it. Rebellious child, go play, go fight. But it's easy to direct a submitted child.

I see it too. When a child wants to be picked up, Daddy, here I am. Or if they're fighting you, kicking you, some of you have to stop fighting God.

Humble yourself this morning for the love of God. You are not always right. This critical spirit that is coming into the church, nationally, this critical, always right spirit, judgmental spirit.

And then another point, don't discard godly counsel. I could preach a whole sermon on this. Without counsel, the plans aren't always, without counsel, purposes are disappointed.

But in the multitude of counsel, there is safety. This has always amazed me. Me and Pastor Abraham talk about often, I'm running to godly counsel, like elders.

What do you think we should do about this? Core team, what do you think about it? A lot of people are like, nope. I'll tell you after I make the decision. I'll tell you, but we don't want to seek godly counsel anymore.

And you know, nine times out of 10, it's because I don't want to hear what they have to, I know what they're going to say. I've already made up my mind. I don't need to hear what you're going to say.

And that's why we don't seek godly counsel, correct? There's some areas we don't because we've already made up our mind, we know. But thank God for godly counsel. It makes you, I haven't thought about that

before.

That's a good point. And it's actually God's will that we seek godly counsel. And then finally, wait and worship.

Wait and worship. If you're having a hard time discerning God's will, you need to hear His voice. Wait and worship.

Wait and worship. Waiting is the true test of both attitude and action. And to be honest with you, this is exactly why we open the church early every Sunday morning.

Come and wait and worship. Come and get before God. Oh, I don't feel like it.

No, you don't feel like it. Your flesh will never feel like it. I don't hear much.

No, you won't. It might take a little time. But there's pressing in, there's seeking God with all of our heart, all of our strength.

The verse many of you know, those who wait upon the Lord will waste their time. What do they actually do? Physical strength. Is he talking about physical? You're going to come out, you're going to look like the rock.

Guys, those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their internal spiritual strength. They shall be encouraged in the Lord. Why is waiting so important? Because waiting tells a selfish person like me to shut my mouth and listen to God.

Waiting. Lord, I'm just going to wait because we're self-assertive. Doesn't our culture teach the opposite? Self-made man.

Self-made millionaire. Self-made. Pushing self.

Selfies. I should take one. That's a good opportunity.

I missed my opportunity. You got to love your wife because I would have no pictures if it wasn't for. Okay.

All right, church. Okay. Now, how am I going to end on a serious note? I can't believe I just took a selfie in church.

Levy, we should edit that in to the sermon. Anyway, last closing point here. A lady by the name of Kimberly Henderson posted something on social media.

Man, this really, I've seen it before, I think, but she said this, I would have pulled Joseph out. I would have pulled Joseph out of that pit, out of that prison, out of that pain. I would have pulled David out, out of Saul's spear-throwing presence, out of the caves that he hid in, out of the pain of rejection.

I would have pulled Esther out, out of being snatched from her only family, out of being placed in a position she never asked for. And I would have pulled Jesus off that cross, off the road that led to suffering and pain. And, oh, my friend, I want to pull you out as well.

I want to change your path. I want to stop your pain. But remember, those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up like wings, like eagles. They shall run and not faint. They shall fly and not get weary.

Lord will lift them up. Oh, I want to pull you out of the hard situation. If your pride is being challenged, humble yourself this morning.

If there is pain of rejection, humble yourself this morning. Things are not going your way. Humble yourself this morning.

Humble ourselves before Almighty God. And then finally, I'm going to close with something Kimberly Henderson said when it comes to difficulties and challenges. This is so true.

I would have pulled Joseph out of the pit, out of that prison, out of that pain. I would have pulled David out, out of Saul's spear-throwing presence, out of the caves he was hidden in. I would have pulled out Esther.

Get her away from that wicked king and all these ulterior motives. I would have pulled Jesus off the cross. Jesus, get off the cross, off the road that led to suffering and pain.

And, oh, my friend, I want to pull you out as well, and I want to change your path. I want to stop your pain. But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

If God is wanting you to go through it, don't have someone pull you out of it. Sometimes that pain, it has a purpose. Sometimes that waiting time is not wasted time.

And God will see you through as long as we seek Him with all of our heart and all of our strength. I read this last week, and I want to read it again. C.H. Spurgeon said, men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne.

Men will allow God to be everywhere. Isn't that true? Oh, there's a God. Hollywood, there's a God out there, and God's here.

God's in the trees. God's this God. Unless you're an atheist.

But they'll allow Him to be anywhere, everywhere, except on His throne. Because that requires obedience and repentance and removing you from the throne and putting God up on that throne. And this can apply to two groups of people this morning.

The first group, you haven't put God on the throne. You're too busy calling the shots. You're the shot caller.

You're the decision maker. And you'll squeeze God in a couple days, a month. But that has to change.

If you truly want to hear the voice of God, be directed by God, persevere, be filled with the Spirit, you've got to surrender to God being on the throne. Lord, what do You want from my life? I might not live where I want to live. I might not do what I want to do.

I might not experience what I have planned for my life, but Lord, I want to do what You want me to do. And make that decision this morning to surrender your life to God. And then, of course, the other group of people, it has to do with unbelievers.

The reason a person is an unbeliever is because they are in rebellion against God. Correct? The Bible says that the carnal mind is enmity to God, at war with God. They don't want there to be a God.

And so I want to just encourage you this morning, if you're listening, or even if you're here this morning, being a good person isn't good enough. Going to church isn't good. Nothing we can do is good except put Christ on the throne.

Repent of our sin. Lord, I'm a sinner. I have no way I can stand before You.

I have nothing to say, nothing to do. I repent of my sin. I bow my knee and I put You on the throne.

And I want to be saved, God. I need You. And You humble Yourself.

Do you know what keeps people out of heaven? One powerful word that begins with P. Pride. Pride. I don't want there to be a God.

I used to study some of the atheists like Voltaire and these famous atheists. Why are they so mad at God if there's no God? Or even now, right? Hawkins. Stephen Hawkins.

Or the other one, I don't remember what the other famous one is. Anyone throw a name out there? Okay. I know I can see them, but I can't.

But anyway, they're so mad because it has to do with this area of God on the throne. I don't want there to be a God on the throne. I am God.

My intellect is God. And they're so mad. There can't be a God.

And they shake their angry fists because they know there's a God. And they don't want to bow to that God because of pride. Pride is damning.

Pride is deadly. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. And due time, He will exalt you.

You exalt yourself and He will base you. God said, I will bring back what was driven away to the prophet Ezekiel. I will bind up the broken.

I will strengthen the sick. But the proud, the fat, the arrogant, I will feed in judgment. Thus saith the Lord.

Pride and arrogance must die this morning if anything of God is to live in you.

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