

The Hand of God

by Billy Ingram

To have the hand of God upon your life, you must prepare your heart, make it a priority, and seek the law of the Lord.

Duration: 1:01:50

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, 2 Chronicles 15:2, Proverbs 8:17, John 5:39, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Provision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes a powerful spiritual experience where the spirit of God swept through an auditorium, causing intense emotions and a desire for repentance. The preacher emphasizes the importance of sharing the gospel and urges young people to actively spread the message of Jesus' love and salvation. He also highlights the need for personal prayer and intercession for the salvation of others. The sermon concludes with a challenge to obey God's truth and deal with any areas of rebellion in one's life.

Transcript

Ezra chapter 7 tonight. Ezra chapter number 7. It has been a real excitement to hear the singing. I have appreciated both numbers from the ladies and from the men.

Thank you so very much for the time you put into that and for the heart. It was a wonderful blessing. It was worth coming just to hear the music.

I almost feel bad getting up and even preaching after all the good singing, but I'll get over in just a few moments. Ezra chapter number 7. Thank you so much, Brother Vaughn, for allowing me this privilege. It has been a privilege.

It has been a refreshment to my own soul. I'm thankful to God for what He has done. This is my crowd.

I feel like we're at home and I'm going to hate leaving tomorrow. Ezra chapter number 7. Would you stand with me, please? Ezra chapter number 7. Look, if you would, at the end of verse number 9. The end of verse 9. Ezra chapter 7 and verse number 9. The Bible says, according to the good hand of his God upon him. Verse number 10.

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Thank you. May be seated.

The book of Ezra is the story of two groups of Jews who returned from Babylon in captivity to their homeland. The first group of Jews went under the leadership of a man by the name of Zerubbabel. He led these group of people into their homeland in order that they may rebuild the temple, build the temple.

They were working on the walls of the building in order that they may instill temple worship. They were met with opposition but successfully completed the temple. About 57 to 70 years later, God laid it upon the second man's heart.

His name was Ezra. He led the second group, a smaller group, back into their homeland, not to build the walls of the temple but in order to rebuild the will of the people. The first group went in.

They became despondent, cold, and backslidden. Though they were serious and concerned about the things of God, they had allowed things to stagnate their spiritual walk and growth. And so Ezra went in with a heart for revival.

It is interesting to me, however, that three times in this passage in chapter number 7, verse number 6, verse number 9, and verse number 28, the Bible says that God's hand was upon Ezra. The hand of God in the Old Testament, I believe, is synonymous with the Holy Spirit of God in the New Testament. When the Bible says in Ephesians 5, 18, but be filled, be controlled with the power of the Holy Spirit, we are saying the same thing in Ezra chapter number 7 when it says to have God's hand upon your life.

We are talking about the definite and direct hand of God. The power of God is God's hand upon your life. More than I want to live, I want God's hand to be upon my life.

More than I want my next meal, I want God's hand to be upon my life. More than I want my next breath, I want the hand of God to be upon my life. Names in the Bible mean something.

Daniel's name means God is my judge. Ezekiel's name means God is my strength. But Ezra's name means to aid or to help.

I believe it was this man Ezra's desire to be of help to his fellow men. I trust you're here these few days at this prayer event so you can go home and be of help to your family members. Be of help to your local church.

Be of help to those in the neighborhood who are lost without Jesus Christ. But you can not, you will not be of help to anyone without the hand of God upon your life. The book of Zechariah tells us it's not by our might, it's not by our power, but it is by God's spirit.

It's God's hand upon your life from time to time. You'll hear men of God get up and preach and ladies get up and speak and you'll sense something different about these individuals. Many of you have been to several prayer advances.

You've heard some of the best speakers and some of the best preachers. They'll honor just to be able to stand here at this pulpit. And you'll sense something different at times.

I believe that the outstanding difference between just a speaker and a man of God is the hand of God upon his life. His name was Herbert Brown. He approached the great European evangelist James Stuart on one occasion.

James Stuart had a singing evangelist who traveled with him. A man who led the music like Brother Joel has been doing. And James Stuart recognized the need of revival and recognized the giver of revival.

And so he was praying for a praying evangelist to travel with him. And God laid it upon a man's heart by the name of Herbert Brown to travel with James Stuart. He went to Brother Stuart one time after a service.

He said, God has called me to leave my painting job and to travel with you and be your praying intercessor. James Stuart immediate response was no, that's a mistake. James Stuart argued with God and said, God, he cannot travel with me.

This man cannot speak a full sentence without stuttering, stammering and spitting on everybody. God, he'll be an embarrassment. He cannot travel.

And God dealt with James Stuart about the fact that he wasn't concerned about the cause of Christ. He was concerned about the cause of James Stuart. James Stuart confessed his pride, got right with God and said, all right, Brother Brown, you can travel with me.

James Stuart said the first time they went to prayer, this stammering, stuttering, spitting individual. Herbert Brown stuttered so profusely that he even pumped his leg when he talked because he was shell shocked in the war. So not only does he have a verbal speech impediment, but he even has a physical impediment that when he spoke, his whole body was involved in that.

And James Stuart said, I don't know what we're going to do, but you can go ahead and travel with me. They went to prayer. Brother Stuart said the first time he heard Herbert Brown pray, he prayed for hours and never one time stuttered before the throne of grace.

He who had no speaking liberty had praying liberty because he had the hand of God upon his life. On one occasion, Stuart was preaching to the open crowd as he oftentimes would do. He says, I always felt at ease.

I felt that God was going to do something when I saw Herbert Brown in the congregation. He was off to the side sometimes, and sometimes he'd be down at the platform and there he'd be praying, his hat off, his eyes closed, sometimes his head lifted towards heaven. On one occasion, Stuart was preaching where a college was nearby.

A group of atheists approached the service and after that service was over, the atheistic leader came to Stuart and he said, now listen, this is not your territory and we advise that you will not continue this meeting another night. You come back tomorrow night, you'll find some opposition. You may find yourself receiving bodily harm.

We advise you do not continue. Brother Stuart talked with Herbert Brown and said, what do we do? Herbert Brown said, Brother Stuart, God is greater than any sin and he's greater than the sinner. You preach, I'll pray, God will deliver.

Brother Stuart said, all right, we'll do it. He got up the next night to preach and several who were gathered together there in the open crowd, he saw Brother Brown off to the side, his hat off, eyes closed, head lifted towards heaven, praying. He noticed the atheists who begin to gather around the back, begin to press towards the back of the crowd and he noticed one of the leaders begin to make his way towards the front, interweaving, weaving back and forth within the crowd.

He made it to the front of the pulpit and as he came up the steps, he reared back his fist to strike James Stuart and when he did, God paralyzed him. He was frozen. He couldn't move.

He was held there by God in that paralytic state and when God deemed it appropriate, he released him from that paralyzed state. The atheistic leader retreated back into the crowd and all the atheists that night heard the gospel and many got saved. Brother Brown said later, see Brother Stuart, God is greater than any sin.

He's bigger than any sinner. You preach, I'll pray, God will deliver. He did so, why? Because Herbert Brown had the hand of God upon his life.

Her name was Helen. She contracted an illness and died at the age of 22 but when she would go to the university, she went the long way. She didn't go the normal route.

She went the way that was most crowded and busy with people so that she could pass out gospel tracts as she went about. When she would slip into preacher's meetings or religious meetings like this, it was said that many times preachers would turn to one another and say to each other, Helen has slipped into the building. We can sense the presence of God and turn around and found out Helen just came into the auditorium.

On the occasion that she died, it was said that all over, not just Europe, but all over the world, missionaries, preachers and evangelists mourned her death because they lost a tremendous prayer warrior and intercessor. One preacher missed the funeral but he went to the place where she had been buried and as he went to the place, he found a caretaker and said, could you tell us where Helen is buried? The caretaker said, preacher, this is a large cemetery. You see all the bodies who are buried here.

There's no way I could find the person you're talking about without doing some homework and checking. The preacher just began to reminisce about how Helen had been mightily used of God. The caretaker said, I think I know who you may be talking about.

Let's walk this way. Went over to the site that the caretaker thought he may be referring to and sure enough, there was the grave, freshly dug grave in the corpse of where Helen was lying. The caretaker said, preacher, I'm not a saved man.

I'm not even a God-fearing man, but when I was burying that body, something happened that had never happened to me before. I sensed an awareness of God as I had never sensed it before. Now you say, preacher, how does that happen? I have no idea, but I'll tell you this, when she died at the age of 22, she died with the hand of God upon her life.

His name was Donald. He was recognized as one of the great intercessors that Duncan Campbell would call upon in time of need. The praying men as they were called.

And Donald was one of those young men, whenever it was time to pray for revival, Donald was one of those men that would convene together and get a hold of the throne of grace because souls and lives were hanging in the balance. On one occasion, the great evangelist, Duncan Campbell, walked into a barn where Donald was praying. Donald was there praying.

He saw the great evangelist walk in. He said, excuse me, Mr. Campbell, I'm having an audience with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Please excuse me, went back to praying.

On another occasion, Duncan Campbell was preaching and he recognized there was a lack of liberty in his preaching and he felt the difficulty. So he noticed that Donald was in the service and he said he could see and he was burdened as he noticed Donald being nearer to the Lord than even he was. He stopped his address and he looked at Donald and he said, Donald, would you please go before the throne of grace and pray? Donald stood to his feet and in his prayer, he made reference to the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, the passage that he had been reading that morning in his devotion and he said in his prayer, oh God, I seem to be gazing through the door and I see the lamb in the midst of the throne with the keys of death and hell about his girdle.

He began to sob. Then he said with his eyes toward heaven, he cried, oh God, there is power. Let it loose.

And with the force of a hurricane, it was said that the spirit of God swept through that auditorium. On one side, it appeared to be as a battlefield where many were prostrate over their seats weeping and sighing while on the other side of the building, people with a rigid posture were showing in their face and in their emotions the aspect that God had come and that their desire to get right with God because God had moved in. Oh, by the way, Donald was only 15 years old because he had the hand of God upon his life.

One of the greatest books you will get a hold of. In regards to prayer, there's many, I say that about so many, but on the back table, John Hyde. John Hyde, it was said that when the medical doctors examined him, his heart had literally moved from the left side of his body to the right side of his body because of being under such strenuous burden in his intercession for souls.

Remember, it was John Hyde who in 1901 asked God to give him one soul a day. At the end of one year, he had seen an average of one soul come to Jesus Christ every day. In 1902, he asked God to give him two souls a day.

In 1910, he asked God to give him four souls a day, and God did so. J. Wilbur Chapman, the American evangelist, was preaching on one occasion, heard that the praying evangelist John Hyde had come into the area. He asked if John Hyde could come and meet with him at his hotel.

John Hyde came to the hotel room. He slipped the key into the door. He turned the key, walked into the room, and there he fell to his knees, and for five minutes, Brother Chapman said he didn't say a word.

He said, I could hear my heartbeat. I could hear his. He says, then I sensed tears coming down his face.

Then the praying Hyde said two words. He said, O God. Five more minutes went by and nothing else was spoken.

He said, but then I sensed his hand go around my shoulder, and he led us before the throne of grace, and he prayed as if he and God were on intimate terms. He said, when we went to the service that night, I preached that night, and I saw God doing that service that night, what I had never seen before in my ministry. Why? Because John Hyde had the hand of God upon his life.

Do you have the hand of God upon your life? I want you to see three things out of this verse, number 10, tonight. Three things about God's hand upon your life. Would you note with me, first of all, the preparation for having God's hand upon your life.

The preparation. Number two, I want you to see the priority for having God's hand upon your life, and number three, the purpose for having God's hand. Number one, the preparation for having God's hand.

Note verse number 10, the Bible says, for Ezra had, what's the next word? Let's try it one more time. For Ezra had, he prepared his, the next word? The Bible teaches us that Ezra prepared his heart to have the hand of God. Listen, young person, if you want to be under the definite, dominant, direct control of Almighty God, you're going to have to continue doing that which you have set out to do here at this conference, and that is prepare your heart.

See, putting verses into your brain is not a matter of preparing your brain, but you're putting it into your mind so that it could be transferred to your heart because it's a matter of the heart, Daniel 1.8. The Bible says, but Daniel purposed in his, the Bible says in Proverbs 4 and verse number 23, but keep or protect your, because out of it are the issues of life, and here the Bible tells us that Ezra prepared his heart. See, no athlete will enter into the Olympics and go into an event without first preparing for years, if not a lifetime, for a short segment of some activity or event, and no child of God will ever have the hand of God, the power of God, the full blessing of God, the definite, dominant, direct control of Almighty God within and upon their lives until they first come to a point where they prepare their heart. No farmer goes out and expects to have a harvest reaped without first preparing that soil.

No painter goes out and expects to paint a house or a building without first preparing the surface, and no child of God will ever have the hand of God without first preparing their heart. I believe the bravest words in all the Bible are found in Psalm 139 when David says, search me, O God, and know my heart. We don't pray that too often because we don't want God to search us.

We don't want God to know our hearts, and we don't want Him to show us because it takes work to prepare our hearts. I'm thankful that I don't have to search my own heart, but I have to cooperate with the Spirit of the living God who does the searching, but it does take work. We have to prepare our hearts.

I believe every child of God in here, every single child of God has forgiveness of sin and eternal life, but I don't believe every child of God has the hand of God upon their life. Are you willing to continually prepare your heart? Are you willing to lay before the Lord and wait for Him to finish searching, to finish showing? Not only must you prepare your heart, but would you notice number two, the priority for having God's hand upon your life? If you don't want God's hand upon your life, you can bank on the fact you won't have it. It must be a priority.

It must become a priority to your life. The Bible tells us in verse number 10 that Ezra made it a priority in his life by doing two things. Look, if you would, please, again, verse number 10, for Ezra had prepared his heart, number one, to seek the law of the Lord, and number two, to do it.

Two ways in which Ezra made it a priority in his life. Listen, you with me? Let's do this. Let's sit up real good and tall.

Can we do that? I'll tell you this. I say it to young people. I'll go ahead and say it tonight.

If I put you to sleep, teenager or adult, for that matter, it's only fair that I wake you up, okay? I just want to be fair with you. Stay with me. Stay with me.

Stay with me. If you want to have God's hand upon your life, you have got to make it a priority. Again, talking about the hand of God, we're talking about the spirit of God being in control because where God's hand is, that is where He too Himself is present.

In order to have God's hand upon your life, there's two things, at least in this verse, that we must do, and these are two things that I think have been reoccurring in the messages and in the theme of this advance. Number one, the Bible tells us that Ezra sought the law of the Lord. He sought the law of the Lord.

In other words, this Bible meant something to him. Is your Bible dead or is it alive? What does the word of God mean to you? The Bible teaches us that he sought the law of the Lord. That's what the Bible tells us in Job 23 and verse 12.

Job says, for I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Psalm 1 too, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law that they meditate day and night. Psalm 19 and verse number 10, but more to be desired are they than gold, yea, the much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, than the honeycomb.

Psalm 119 verse 97. Oh, how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day.

Matthew 4, 4, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. John 5, 39, search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of me. Acts 17 and verse 11.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica and that they received the word with all readiness of mind and search the scriptures daily. Whether those things were so. Second Timothy 2, 15, study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But listen to me young person, I do not believe that Ezra was seeking the word of God simply so that he could receive a ribbon, a medal or a star for how many verses he memorized. He was seeking the word of God so that he could know the God of this book. It's a tragedy when people go off to a Bible school and they come out knowing less about God than what they knew in their youth group because it has only become objective.

They are completely entirely eliminate the subjective. The reason why you want to know what the Bible says is so that you can know the God who wrote this book. That's why the Bible tells us in second Chronicles in chapter 7 verse number 14.

If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves pray and yeah and it goes on to say then I'll hear, then I'll heal, then I'll forgive. Second Chronicles 15 in verse number 2. If you seek him he will be found of you but if you forsake him he will forsake you. Second Chronicles 15 verse number 12.

And they entered into a covenant with the Lord God of their fathers to seek him with all of their heart and with all of their soul. The Bible says in Proverbs 8 17. I will love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me.

Matthew 6 33. You know it, you finish it. But seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

The Bible says in Hosea 10 in verse 12. Sow yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord. Jeremiah 29 in verse 13.

And he will be found of you when you seek him with all of your heart. Colossians chapter 3 in verse number 1. If ye then be risen with Christ. Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affections on things above not on things on the earth for you're dead. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Verse 4. When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall you also appear with him in glory.

Listen, you must seek the word of God so that you can know the God of this book. See if you go home and place this book on the shelf and you never never open until you get back to church youth group. It's going to be hard for you to know the word the God of this word.

Not only not only do we find that Ezra was seeking the word of God. Remember he was a scribe by the way. It was his responsibility to copy the Bible.

But he was also one who was concerned and consumed I believe with the God of this Bible. Remember George Mueller? Remember the man who started the orphanages and was a man of faith? The man who set the children down and had no food on the table or in the cupboards but he thanked God for the food that they were about to eat? The night came to the door, the food came to the door. Remember that man? Are you aware that they said George Mueller upon the time of his death he had read his Bible through 200 times? 100 of those times he read it through upon his knees.

He wanted to know the God of that book and I think he knew it was said of H.A. Ironside. He was in a preacher's conference. They had a discussion, a panel discussion for the preachers there at the conference.

They asked the preachers what did you read for your devotions? And they went through and different preachers said different things. They read for their devotions that morning at this preaching conference. They came to Ironside and Ironside didn't say anything.

They repeated the question. They said, Dr. Ironside what did you read for your devotions this morning at the conference? He said, I read the book of Isaiah. Isaiah? 66 chapters? I would have thought he had been working on his message for the conference.

But he was more concerned about knowing the God of that book. The reason why he was at that conference. No wonder God used a man like H.A. Ironside.

Listen young person, if you're ever going to know the God in whom you're praying to, you have got to be a man, a lady of the Word of God. Not just a man or lady of intellectual knowledge but a man or lady of the God of this Word. If you're going to have the hand of God upon your life, you have to make it a priority.

It has to mean something to you. You have to desire it. You have to long for it.

Two ladies, Peggy and Christine Smith in their 80s were burdened about revival in their own community. Burdened about the condition of the youth and they took to God a promise that God had made. Isaiah 44 and verse number three, the verse says, I will pour water upon he who is and floods upon a dry ground.

Listen, do you thirst for God? We sing the song as the deer. Do you thirst for God? Many of us have never been thirsty physically. You say I was thirsty last night.

Most of us have never been thirsty in our life. We've never gotten to the point where our tongue has swelled to three times its normal size. Where it's become cracked because we have longed for water.

We've had nothing to drink. Most of us have never gotten to that point and most of the time I come across Christian teenagers who are good but have never come to the point in their life where they are desperate

for God to pour out his water. But the Bible says, I will pour water upon he who is thirsty and floods upon a dry ground.

We are living in the midst of a dry, barren ground. But the problem isn't the dry, barren ground. The problem is the lack of thirsty Christians walking upon that dry, barren ground.

But God says, young person, if you thirst, he'll pour the water. It's a promise. If you want the hand of God to be upon your life, you're going to have to desire, you're going to have to want it.

You may be here at this conference and you still, you don't want to get right. You don't want to pray. Listen, would you be willing to do this teenager? You don't want to pray, you don't want to get right.

But would you be willing to ask God to make you willing? Would you even at least be willing to ask God and admit to God he knows? Would you be willing to admit to him and say, God, my heart's cold. I don't even want to get right. I don't want to go home and change.

I don't want to pray. But God, I am willing for you to make me willing to get right. Will you desire God that much? He desired to have the hand of God upon his life.

It was a priority to him to have God's hand upon his life. He sought the word of God, but number two, it was a priority to him, not only seeking the word of God and seeking the God of the word, but number two, he was also willing to submit to it. Notice if you would please the middle of verse 10 for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to what are the next two words? Now you thought Nike came up with it first, didn't you? Ezra just did not copy the Bible.

He didn't just read the Bible so he could be able to get up and teach a Sunday school lesson or get up and help with the junior church. He didn't do this so he could share something at family devotions. He read the Bible so he could know the God of the Bible in order that he may obey what that God told him to do.

Many of you have been confronted with Bible truth here. Are you willing to obey that truth? I believe this. I have a bunch, whatever that means.

We have a large group. We have more than enough teenagers in this room. If you'll but obey the truth, you already know can impact and change this entire world because we're not talking about you.

We're talking about the hand of almighty God. Listen, I don't think you need to, you need more truth. You know enough truth.

If you will just obey the truth you already know. You don't have to have a Bible college degree to have God's hand upon your life. You just need to obey the truth.

You already know what is it that God is dealing with you about. General Chuck Yeager was the first American war hero to ever break the sound barrier. He was flying his F-86 Sabre fighter jet.

He was trying to diagnose why it was that four American pilots lost their lives. He took the plane up about 150 feet over a buddy's fishing cabin and he turned the plane upside down and the plane froze. He was able to get it out of that frozen state, took it up about 15,000 feet and he did the same thing once again.

It froze because of his flying expertise. He was able to get it out of that position. He landed the plane.

He now knew why they had died but he did not know how it occurred. So they called in technicians from all over. They began to dismantle the plane.

They traced the problem. They traced it, Brother Joel, to one single bolt that was inserted incorrectly. They traced the man who inserted that bolt and they went to him with the blueprints and said the blueprints say to put it in this way but you put it in the other way.

Why did you do this? And here was his reply. I quote, because it seemed better to do it this way, end of quote. Four men lost their lives because another man thought it seemed better to do it this way and yet many of us have been confronted with the blueprint of God Almighty and yet we're still thinking in our minds and hearts it seems better though to do it this way.

What truth has God confronted you with that you have yet to obey? This morning in the morning session God dealt with some of you this morning about another area of rebellion. Have you still yet to deal with that issue? What area are you failing to submit and obey God in regards to? We talked about parents. We talked about authority.

Listen, it is a serious issue to get right with your God-ordained authority. It is a serious issue. By the way, young men, you want to know what that young lady is going to be like if you were to marry her.

You see how she treats her dad. Young ladies, you want to know what that potential husband will be like when you marry him. You see how he treats his mom and if you know anything that they do in their life that would dishonor their parents and they do behind their parents, you mark it down.

They'll do the same thing to you. It is a serious issue. Not only that which you do in regards to your God-ordained authority, but how about media? God's dealt with some of you about the things you listen to, the things you watch.

I heard a preacher say some time ago that in his home he has a two cuss word policy. They hear two cuss words, they turn the television off. I thought that seemed pretty good until I came across God's standard.

Psalms 101 verse 3, David wrote, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse number 3, but fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be one time, not one time named among you as become the saints. Yet some of you will sit before a television set and you'll begin to watch those things and you'll see those things which God says not one time should it ever sit before you.

Someone says, well preacher we're always going to be bombarded by the filth of this world, but you don't have to turn it on and ask for it to pollute your mind. Some of you in your automobiles at home, you have music that would not honor and glorify God and you know that. You sit before those things, you put on the headset, you listen to those things and as Brother Palmer pointed out, some of you have televisions in your room, some of you have go to the internet.

You think your parents will ever find out, you think your parents will never know. Listen young person, if you want the hand of God upon your life, you're going to have to seek what God wants you to do and then you're going to have to submit to it and do it. What area are you still holding back from Almighty God? Some of you young men, you're still defeated in your brain and until you go home and you, first getting right here, but going home and dealing with those things that are polluting your brain, it's not going to help.

Matthew chapter 5, Jesus said that a man commits adultery when he looks upon a woman and he lusts after her. He's committed adultery with her already in his heart. It is a big deal.

It is a big deal about what you watch. It is a big deal about where you go. It is a big deal where you spend your free time.

It is a big deal what you look at when you stand in that checkout line. It is a big deal. It is a big deal, young ladies, what magazines you look at.

I was in North Carolina in a Christian school and a young lady came to me. She said, God dealt with me about the magazines that I read. She had a whole stack of 17 magazines and YM and a whole bunch of other things.

She said, my parents would never let me do anything that's in that magazine. I can't wear what they wear. I can't do what they do.

But when I read them, I fantasize about another life. Good Christian girl. But she said, I am hindered from being used of God because of this.

So what are you going to do about it? She said, I can't get rid of it. I've got so much money involved, so much money. I have every magazine, a copy of every 17 magazines I can get a hold of.

Friday night testimony time came and I saw her make her way to their microphone. Before they give a testimony, they have to go to our team captains and tell them first so they can kind of help with this. And I saw her come and I thought, I don't know if she needs to be coming to the microphone.

She's not gotten right. She has nothing that will be of any help to anyone here tonight is what I was thinking. She got up and she said, uh, the preacher preached early in the week and I refuse to get right with God in this area.

She said, but tonight it's all over tonight. Clean hands, pure heart. She turned around and grabbed a big old hefty garbage bag.

She turned around and we have a picture of it as she dumps those magazines into the fire because she wanted God's hand to be upon her life. Listen, young ladies, it does matter what you wear. Some of you get away from the youth group and you go as far away, you go down to the mall, you go down to some activity, you put on some immodest outfit.

It does make a difference. In fact, are you aware that Proverbs chapter seven, verse number 10 tells of the attire of the harlot, but are you aware that the Bible does not tell us what the attire of the harlot is because every young man knows what it is. The truth is, young lady, you will help a lost man look at you and not be distracted by thinking lustful thoughts, or you will cause him to look at you and help him die and go to hell.

That's what the harlot does in Proverbs seven. It's a preacher. I don't like what you said.

Listen, I'm not preaching for return meetings or for, for love offering. I'm preaching for revival. I'm preaching to help you.

Some of you, you've been confronted with these same truths and the word modesty is in the Bible. I didn't make it up. You say, I don't like it.

That may be the reason God's hand is not upon your life. What area is it that God has dealt with you about the will of God for your life? Listen, it is a valid question to ask. Who does God want me to marry? Where does God want me to go? What school, what occupation? That's a fair question.

Where God, who God, when? It's fair. Can I help you tonight? Please say yes. I'm going to do it anyway.

All right. How can you know who to marry, where to go, what to do? You know, I found one of the easiest ways to keep people awake in the, after big meals and after a long day is either telling a good story. I can't do that.

Or number two, controversy. I can't do that. And so I know you're kind of wondering what I'm going to say.

It won't be controversial, however, but, but, uh, but listen to me. I think I could be of help. Would you take your Bibles and go to Acts chapter number nine, Acts chapter number nine, hold your place in Ezra seven and go to Acts nine, Acts chapter number nine.

Remember the man called Saul, the one who persecuted Christians. He was on his way to persecute Christians on the road to Damascus. God shone a great light and God himself met with Saul.

Saul is here now. Graveling in the dirt. He says in verse number four, Jesus says, Saul, Saul, why persecute us without me? The verse number five, he, Saul said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecute us.

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Verse number six. And he saw trembling and astonished said, Lord, what would thou have me to do? Isn't that a fair question? Well, isn't it? Isn't it fair to say, God, what do you want me to do? It's interesting too, however, that he asked the right person.

He didn't fill out some, uh, uh, a, some questionnaire. It wasn't the guidance counselor in the school, but he asked the Lord, Lord, what will thou have me to do? What was the answer? Well, notice what the Bible says in verse number six, Jesus said, arise, Saul, and become the great apostle Paul, one of the greatest missionary preachers who ever lived. In fact, maybe one of the greatest Christians who ever lived.

And Paul, I want you to write half the new Testament and possibly maybe even the book of Hebrews. Paul, that's what I want you to do. That's what I want you to be.

Paul, will you do that? Is that what God says? Well, is it? No, it's not. Notice if you would please. Verse number six, Jesus said, arise and go into the city and it should be told thee what thou must do.

You know why? Because God was trying to get Saul to understand right off the bat, the moment he got saved, that the way to know the will of God is to depend upon God. See, oftentimes we'll hear some messages on the will of God. It has 15 points and they're all alliterated.

And we have not one clue after the service, what it meant. And God says, Saul, let me make it easy. You want to know the will of God for your life? Here it is.

You want to know what to do? You want to know who to marry? You want to know where to go? You want to know what I want you to be? Here it is. Get up and go to town. Get up and go to town and it'll be told you what you should do then.

What did Saul do? What did he do? He got up and went to town. Makes sense, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Well, oftentimes here's what we do. God, what is it you want me to do? God, I would love to serve you in full-time Christian service if I could be a youth pastor that makes about \$39,000 a year, if that's all right.

God, I'll be a missionary as long as you don't send me to Africa. Why we pick on Africa? I don't know. I don't know.

Maybe it's because we're afraid we can't order a Big Mac over there. If you want one, you have to shoot one over there. I don't know.

I don't know why it is we think that. God, what do you want me to do? I'll do it. But then we fail to keep depending upon that God to tell us and we just wonder.

And we begin to ask other people and we begin to see other people making the same decisions and we just think, well, we can do the same thing. But here it is. Here it is.

Two words. Two words. If you want to know what God wants you to do, here it is.

Be willing to do anything. Willing to do anything. That's absolute surrender.

Willing to do anything, anything. And number two, be obedient in everything. Everything he tells you to do, you do it.

John 2, 5, Mary says, whatever he, Jesus, saith unto you, do it. Be willing to do anything. Number two, be obedient in everything.

Another words, here it is. If you want to know the will of God, ladies, if you want to know what man he wants you to marry, guys, if you want to know what wonderful babe he wants you to marry, here it is. It's this easy.

Take out the trash. Make up your bed. Brush your teeth.

Whatever your mom and dad tell you to do, do it. You don't do what mom and dad tell you to do, you'll never know what God wants you to do. You can do what 5,000 other Christian teenagers are doing and no one else may look down upon you, but we're not talking about what 5,000 other teenagers are wanting for your life.

We're asking tonight, do you want the hand of God to be upon your life? Many times we say, well, I just don't understand. Yeah, and you never will until you're willing to do anything and obedient in everything. The principle is found all throughout the Bible.

In Proverbs 6, it talks about my son and it talks about obeying the law of thy mother, law of thy father, the commandment of thy mother. Bind them continually about thy neck, the law of thy father, commandment of thy mother. For it, law of thy father and commandment of thy mother, will guide thee.

It will be a light unto thy path. Why? When you obey the law of your father, the commandment of your mother. The Bible says if you commit your works unto the Lord, your thoughts will be established.

In other words, you're willing to do anything, you're obedient in everything, then it'll make sense. Are you aware that you cannot teach a rebel anything? Someone comes to me and says, preacher, I just don't see

where the Bible says I have to be separated. You never will because you're not willing to obey God in anything and willing to do anything and obedient in everything.

For example, some teenager comes in and says, dad, he's 16 years old, says, dad, can I have the keys to the car tonight? Dad says no. What's the next normal, typical response? The answer, the next response from the teenage 16 year old is why not? But are you aware that is not the problem? You don't really care to know why. And by the way, is it fair to want to know why? Is it fair to want to know why? Well, sure, it's fair.

And here's two ways you can go about authority. Young person, you can go about dealing with authority by arguing or appealing. But for some teenage 16 year old say, dad, why not? Well, that's not the issue.

And here's the reason why. 16 year old goes in, dad, can I have the keys to the car? Dad says, sure, son. How many teenage boys are going to come back? Dad, tell me why.

Why, dad, why, why, why do you want me? Dad, what's up your sleeve, dad? Why do you want me to have the keys tonight? Come on, dad, tell me, tell me, tell me, tell me. It's not the issue, is it? You know what the problem is? He's a rebel. He's not willing to do anything and he's not obedient in every area.

Young person, I'm for you because God's for you. God wants to rest his hand upon your life tonight. He wants to definitely direct you with his dominant power tonight.

If you'll but surrender to him, seek him, him alone and submit to him in every single way. What area is it tonight that you're still holding back from God because you're afraid to trust him? How can you be afraid to trust him? You know the verse, oh, taste and see that the Lord is. Do you believe he's good? Then why don't you obey him? It's easy to say, it's another thing to depend.

Ezra chapter seven, go back to Ezra chapter seven. He had the hand of God upon his life because he prepared his heart. It was a priority in his life.

He sought the word of God to know the God of the word and he submitted to it. He didn't pick and choose. He submitted to God.

God saves all of you. He doesn't save part of you and he doesn't use part of you. He uses all of you or doesn't use you at all.

See, God is not you. I've said it before. Say it again.

God does not use a ninety nine percent surrendered Christian. He never has. He never will.

But thank God he desires to use you. He desires to bless you. Dr. Bob Jones, senior, used to say that God used Balaam's donkey.

He can use you and me. Amen. Hey, I take great consolation in that, but he will never use part of me.

He's not in this bargaining business, but not only do we see the preparation for God's hand, the priority for God's hand upon your life, but number three, the purpose for God's hand upon your life. Would you notice at the end of verse number 10, for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. The reason why Ezra had the hand of God upon his life was so that he could take the word of God with force and power, be able to declare the truth to those who are in

need.

The word goat is the idea or the word teaches the idea to go. They had this stick with a sharp pointy edge on it. And when they would come across some stubborn animal who seemed to have little initiative to do what they were told to do, they take that stick and cram it down behind his ear.

And all of a sudden they had motivation and gumption to do what he was told to do. And many times people need the forceful, powerful declaration of the word of God. It's not your thoughts or mine upon God's word, about God's word that changes lives.

It's the spirit of God and the word of God that changes lives. But we need the hand of God upon our life. We need to be able to stand and declare the gospel depending upon its power.

Listen, young person, do you have God's hand upon your life? How long has it been since you've told somebody the good news that Jesus saves? When was the last time you went out down your neighborhood and you begin to tell people the wonderful message that Jesus loves them, Jesus died for them, and that He will save them if they'll but receive Him? How long has it been since you wept over one lost soul, one member of your family who needs to be saved before it's eternally too late? When was the last time you got upon your face and you refused to get up until you knew there's a transaction with God about that neighbor who is dying without Christ? God doesn't save you so that you can just simply have Bible studies. I believe we could have a better Bible study in heaven. God did not save us so we could have a praise and worship service.

I'm confident we could sing a whole lot better in heaven. God saved us so that we could be His witness here upon earth. I take great delight in the counseling room when I conduct the war meetings, the evangelistic rallies for teenagers.

They come out of the counseling room, I take great delight in telling a teenager for the first time in his life that he heard that Jesus Christ loved him, died for him, and could save him. He walks out of there and I can put my hand into his and tell him the reason he was saved tonight was not just so he could have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but that he could stay the remaining days of his life here upon earth telling others how they too can know that Jesus loved them, Jesus died for them, and is willing to save them. Has it gotten old to you? That's why you need the hand of God upon your life.

It's amazing to me how we get so complacent. We begin to make excuses why we cannot reach people. I grew up in the Bible Belt and people now say in the Bible Belt you can't go door to door and tell people about Jesus because everybody in the Bible Belt thinks they're saved.

They're gospel hardened they tell me. They're not gospel hardened. They're gospel ignorant.

You go to New England, they say preacher's too hard here. This is formal New England, but Jesus said the fields are wide unto harvest. Matthew 9, the harvest truly is plenteous.

It's the laborers that are the problem. I was just out west recently and someone said out west here preacher, this is a tough, tough territory. Well preacher, this is so hard out here.

People are free thinkers. They're independent. They don't want to be bothered.

You can't reach people out here like you do in other places. Listen, Jesus said the harvest truly is plenteous, but it's the laborers that are few. When you say that it is too hard to reach people here, what you're saying is God, you're a liar.

But he says the harvest truly is plenteous. Tomorrow morning, I'm going to speak on how to make a decision stick. I'll give you just a tad bit of information.

It goes right along with this point to help you young person. If you want to be helped, when you go home, would you take up this challenge regardless of what your church may or may not do? Would you at least endeavor to take up this challenge? Would you go at least one day a week until God kills you or no longer allows you to do this? Would you go and knock on doors one day a week at least? See preacher, what's so spiritual about that? Well, for one, it's the great commission telling people the good news, but number two, it is thrusting you out into the deep to where you would be uncomfortable and you have to say, God, I can't do this. You've got to help me.

Now I find many times when I'm on a doorstep and I am leading someone, teaching someone in the area of soul winning that I am making sure God's hand is upon my life. I am filled with his spirit. I need an anointing from on high because I can't do it.

There is nothing that makes sense to me about going up to somebody, knocking on their door and telling them lost without Christ on their way to hell. But it is the great commission, a witness. A witness is a simply one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

Has it gotten old to you? D.L. Moody was witnessing to a man one time, made the man upset. The man told Moody, you mind your own business. Moody said, I am minding my own business.

R.A. Torrey was in one of his meetings after the service was over. He went into the counseling room and a man was sitting there and said, Mr. Torrey, could you please help? I've been talking with this person for almost an hour and they don't seem to understand the gospel. Torrey sat down with that person and in less than five minutes, that person accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.

The man said, Mr. Torrey, I'm perplexed. I don't understand. I dealt with them for an entire hour almost and I went through the same gospel message that you preached and that you handed out.

Why is it that I spent almost an hour and you in less than five minutes? And Torrey said, you want to know? The reason is because I'm filled with the spirit and you are not. Listen, friends, the reason why some of you have never led a soul to the Lord is because you don't have God's hand upon your life. You're not surrendered to the hand and will of God.

You don't have God's power upon your life. You get God's hand and power upon your life. You allow the Holy Spirit of God to control you.

He who lives in you to control you. It is only natural that you be burdened about souls. That's why he's here.

September 11th, 2001. How many of you remember where you were that day? September 11th, 2001. You'll never forget that day.

My wife and I were in Wisconsin. She was teaching in a school at that time as I was working on a master's degree. We heard the story like many of you.

We began to try to find ways to find out more information. At the end of the day, we were exhausted and drained. My wife had been teaching and instead of going home and her fixing a meal, we decided to go to her favorite restaurant and to get her favorite meal.

We went to Brookfield, Wisconsin there and we got, went to the Outback restaurant. And there my wife was able to get her favorite meal. I think she could eat it three times a day.

It's simply an appetizer. It's cheese fries. We split it, we share it, and that's our meal.

It's light on the wallet, not too good on the stomach, but it is light on the wallet. And we thought we'd do that. So we went over that day.

My wife was simply saying to me, can you imagine what it'll be like when the rapture takes place? And here this one isolated event in one part of the country has affected the entire world and people are in utter chaos. I remember at Baptist College of Ministry, their students went out that night, went to gas station after gas station where cars were lined up, passing out gospel tracts and witnessing to people. My wife said, could you imagine what it'll be like at the rapture when chaos takes place all over the world, people left behind.

We got to the restaurant, we sat down and we began to order. My wife looked over my shoulder. She said, you'll never guess who's here.

I said, who? She said, guess. I said, tell me who? She said, you guess. I said, you tell me.

She said, guess. I said, just tell me. She said, it's George and Barbara Bush.

I turned around and it's George and Barbara Bush, the former president of the United States. I looked around, saw secret service agents everywhere. I saw the guys in the blue pants, the Oxford blue shirts or khaki pants, Oxford blue shirts and the blue Navy coats, the coil in the air, some conspicuous and some not so conspicuous.

The black blazers outside the whole nine yards. This is neat. We watched, we sat there and looked, they were at a booth by themselves eating agents all around.

Fascinating. My wife looked at me, she said, you know what you need to do? I said, what? She said, you need to go give them a gospel track. I said, we really don't know where the president is.

The vice president, they won't tell us where he is. And here's the former president of the United States, the current president's dad. I don't think so.

She says, you have to. I said, no, I don't. She said, yes, you do.

I said, no, I don't. She said, you do. I said, why do I? My wife said, because that's what you do.

Well, I'm the head of my household. No one tells me what to do. I looked at my wife.

I said, I've got an idea. She said, what's that? I said, I'm going to give him a gospel track. She said, okay.

I stood up and was at the top of the aisle. And here I am, and they're sitting over to my left. And I began to walk down that aisle.

Have you ever had one of those moments where the room starts spinning, the lights start flashing and your stomach starts getting queasy? I was moving, but I felt like it was all so slow. I got to where they were sitting. I didn't know what to do.

I just kept walking. I thought I'll go to the bathroom. I got to the end of the aisle.

There was no bathroom. It was on the other side of the restaurant and said it was two secret service agents looking right back at me. I quickly turned around and I was coming back down the other way.

And this time they're sitting on my right. I had one of those flashbacks back to kindergarten. I remember my teacher asking me a math question.

I didn't know the answer. I got nervous and scared. I wet my pants.

I thought it's going to happen right here in the Outback restaurant. I was scared to death. I thought right here, I'm going to get tackled in the middle of the aisle.

They're going to tackle me. They're going to send me off to some prison no one knows about. And my wife won't tell anybody.

I watched too many movies up until that point. I thought I've got to do something. I've got to do it fast.

I went to the nearest secret service agent right across the aisle from where they were sitting. I leaned over his shoulder. I said, sir, I just wondered if I could meet him.

He said, just do it before his food comes. I turned around. Here I'm facing George and Barbara Bush.

You know, I look back many times and wonder if he really was a secret service agent or if he was just some guy eating in the restaurant. Nonetheless, he was a big guy with the blue coat and whatever. And so I thought he was.

I went up to the table and at that time my wife joined me and I got down and I said, sir, I just wanted to get a chance to meet you. My wife and I have prayed for you for a number of years. I shook their hand.

I said, sir, I'd like to ask you a question. I asked the question and I grimaced because I knew I blew it, but God was in it. I never asked the question this way, never do because it genders too much confusion, but God was in it.

Here's what I asked. I said, sir, I'd like to ask you a question. I wonder if you consider yourself to be a born again Christian.

And I thought blew it. I blew it. But God was in it.

Here was his reply. He said, yes, I consider myself to be a Christian, but no, I do not consider myself to be born again like my son. My son can tell you a definite time in his life where he put his faith and trust in Jesus.

For me, it seems like it's a process, not an event. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe you can explain it.

Now, listen, friend, listen, if I could do it over, I would do it different. All I could think about was what the big guy with the gun said, keep it fast before the food comes. And I'm watching out of the corner of my eye.

I said, Mr. President, the Bible tells us that it is not a process. It is an event. I had a gospel track.

In fact, it's all I had. I reached into my pocket very slowly. I pulled out a gospel track and I handed him this gospel track.

And I said, I'll tell you how you can know for sure your sins are forgiven. You have eternal life. He said, I will read it.

He then said, would you please pray for my son? People think my son is trying to mix the church and the state together, but he is not. He's trying to do what was right. We saw the fatherly side come out and I said, yes, sir, we'll pray for him.

My wife and I went back to our seat, sat down. My wife looked up at me and she said, you know what? You need to go back and get their autograph. I said, I'll not do it.

I'll not do it. My wife took another gospel track, walked back over to the table and got George and Barbara Bush's signature. Listen, sometime ago, my wife and I came across Dr. Walter Wilson's book and just what the doctor ordered.

Dr. Wilson would get up in the morning and ask God to lead him to the souls whom he would have prepared. And Dr. Wilson would ask God to bring about divine appointments within his life. We've oftentimes wondered after that, did he ever read that track? Not too long ago, Barbara Bush came out with a book entitled Reflections.

A friend of mine, Jim Van Gelderen was going down the road and he was at a stop and he picked up Newsweek magazine. He called me, Bill. He said, Bill, you've made it into Newsweek.

The incident that took place in Outback was mentioned in Newsweek magazine. We went to Target. We picked up the book and in the back of the book, Barbara Bush mentions the young preacher and his wife who came over to their table in the Outback restaurant.

You know, we got to the thing that we have on our side is this. They'll never forget that day. They'll never forget where they were.

We didn't go there looking for them, but God was. I don't know that I'll ever meet another president in my lifetime, but I am convinced every day of my life, God divinely sets lost dying souls before my path who desperately need to hear, God loves you. Jesus died for you.

The hand of God must be upon your life. Heads bowed and eyes closed. Every head bowed and every eye closed.

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