

Lead Me, Lord

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in all decisions, both moral and non-moral, as exemplified by David's inquiry before attacking Caela.

Duration: 27:26

Scripture: Psalm 32:8, Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 16:9, Matthew 7:7-8, James 1:5

Topics: "Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in every decision we make. He uses the example of how he carefully watches over his four-year-old grandson, making sure he eats the right things and goes to the right places. Similarly, God is intimately involved in our lives and wants us to seek His guidance in all aspects. The speaker encourages the audience to pray and ask God for His plan and direction before making any decisions, big or small. He concludes by praying for the congregation to be led by the Holy Spirit and to make decisions in alignment with God's will.

Transcript

I want to ask you, what would you have done if you were in this man's situation? Listen, David heard that the Philistines were attacking the town of Caela, and they were stealing the newly harvested grains. So he asked the Lord, shall I go and attack the Philistines? Yes, the Lord answered, attack them and save Caela. But David's men said to him, we have enough to be afraid of here in Judah.

It will be much worse if we go to Caela and attack the Philistine forces. So David consulted the Lord again. And the Lord said to him, go and attack Caela, because I will give you victory over the Philistines.

Last verse, listen. So David and his men went to Caela and attacked the Philistines. They killed many of them and took their livestock.

And so it was that David saved the town. You know, in 2014, you and I are gonna come to what life usually defines as forks in the road. Do you go left or you to go right? Now, the Bible tells us the answer to all moral questions.

So you never ask the Lord, you up in the balcony, you never ask the Lord, should I steal that money from the bank? You never have to pray about that. Should I get angry and blow up at that person? No. Should I hold prejudice against people who are other than me, whatever color you are? That's already given to us

in the word of God.

The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine that we have, but there's a lot of other questions in life that are so important. When I was graduating high school at Erasmus Hall, I had the chance and was recruited by certain schools, colleges, because I was an all-city basketball player. But I had skipped a grade, so I was younger than everyone.

So someone came alongside at one of the schools and said, we want you to come to our school, but we want you to go to prep school for a year so you catch up with your grade and you'll get stronger and you'll get older. I had a decision to make. Could I find an answer in the Bible for that? Should you go to prep school and take a year off? If you could just take the child out, thank you.

Or should you go right into college? There's all kinds of decisions like that. You meet someone, you fall in love with them, you feel that God wants you to marry them, but you're not sure. Is there a verse in the Bible that says marry this one? All the Bible says about marrying someone is that you're to marry a believer.

That's all the Bible says. Don't marry an unbeliever. But which believer doesn't say? Do you think that's an important decision? Oh, I would say so.

Someone has a job, they get an offer from another job. That other job looks good, but does God want you to switch that job? You won't find an answer in the Bible. You investigate, you do the best you can, but you don't know what's around the bend.

Pastor Elliot, who we just ordained, how did he know to leave his job and go in the ministry? Is there a verse for all of us that says leave your job and go in the ministry? No, there's no. These are called important decisions that are non-moral decisions. And you know what happens to most Christians? They just flippantly, even believers who read their Bible, they just flippantly decide, I'll do this, I'll go that.

I'll go left, I'll go right. Let's think about this for a while. What do you think, Bobby? And then whatever the answer is, they just go and do it with no thought of the repercussions or what God's plan is for their life.

We like to be independent. We wanna do what we wanna do. So David, in this part of 1 Samuel, I want you to read it when you go home tonight.

Just remember 1 Samuel 23, say that out loud. 1 Samuel 23, just open it, very short chapter. So here's what happens.

He's on the run, King Saul's trying to kill him. He's hiding in the deserts of Judah in the south. And then he hears that this town, Keilah, K-E-I-L-A-H, is being attacked.

It's a small town, has a defensive wall, but the Philistines are surrounding it and not only trying to knock it off and beat it down and conquer it, they're coming at the time where all the people's hard work will be lost. They're coming at the harvest of the wheat. So they'll not only destroy the town, but they'll steal all the harvest.

And David has this thing in him to protect the underdog and to fight for the guy who's being hurt. So David hears about it and he goes, he's on the run now, he's got about 600 men with him. They're on the run, Saul's trying to kill him with the whole army of Israel.

And David hears about it and he says, man, that's horrible for those people. So he inquires of the Lord. He did that through a priest that traveled with him.

We won't go into that. The main thing, not how he found the answer, that he wanted an answer and he said this to the Lord. Listen, Lord, should I go to Keilah and attack the Philistines? Should I do that? And the Lord said, yes, go.

He went to his men and he said, men, let's go. We're going to Keilah to attack the Philistines. And the men went, have you lost your mind? We got Saul and the entire army of Israel chasing us and now you want to attack the Philistines on top of that? No way.

So David went back to God and he said, God, I ran this by the men, didn't come out too good. Are you sure you want me to attack Keilah and save the people? And God says, do it and I'll make you victorious. See, there was no verse that David could go to in the book of the law, the writings of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

That had already been written, but there's no verse in there anywhere in that where to go to attack Keilah. Keilah's not mentioned in the books of the law. But David knew that God is alive and that God had a plan for his life.

And he wanted to know, is this little thing I have in my heart of you or is it something I shouldn't do? Now notice what David could have said. He said, wait a minute, I'm the anointed of God. Samuel the prophet anointed me when I was just a young man.

I've already killed Goliath. I know God is with me and even though Saul is angry with me and going insane with jealousy against me, I can go because I'm God's anointed. I can, no, he knew that even though you're a Christian and even though God's hand is in your life, you can't do what you wanna do because God doesn't guarantee any of us success in anything we wanna do.

That's what the false teachers and preachers do. Just follow your destiny and God will pay the bills. That's not the way life works.

Listen to me, listen to me. David, much closer to God than probably all of us would ever hope to be. He went to God and he said, now God, should I attack Kayla? Is this part of your plan for my life? How would life change if Jason and I and all of us here and in the group that sang for us, what if all of us before we made decisions in 2014 said, God, there's no moral question here.

It's not steal or not steal, lie or not lie. I'm asking you, God, is this your plan for my life? Is this move, changing schools, changing a major? Just everything. Listen, if God knows the number of hairs on our head, you don't think he's interested in these decisions? Well, of course he is.

I was in Florida for the holiday and I was with my extended family and my little four-year-old grandson, Levi, was just up in my office. I took care of him a little bit and he would be running around and near a pool or near the mall. I never took, I remember being a parent myself.

This is my grandson, four years old. I got my eye on him everywhere. Every decision, what he was gonna eat while he was with me.

Everything, I was interested in everything. That's Levi, are you kidding? I love him. I don't want him eating the wrong thing, going the wrong place because he doesn't know what's around the bend.

He's only four and that's how God was with David and how God is with us. He said, you have limited understanding but I know all things. So check it out with me.

Check it out with me. I'm so glad I'm speaking about this this moment because there are some people here, you're about to make some decision you haven't even prayed about, haven't even asked God. Shall I go and attack Kayla? Nor could he have said the opposite thing.

Well, wait a minute. It's like the guys said. We're in enough trouble already.

How can I go and try to save some other people and be a hero? I got enough just to keep my own life going with everyone chasing after me. No, he could have reasoned that out and said, no, I won't go. Or he could have said, like I said before, no, I'm God's anointed.

I can do whatever I want because God will be with me. No, no, no. He stopped and he said, God, talk to me.

This opportunity has come. Now, should I do it or not? Think of all the decisions that we've made in our lives but that's water under the bridge. Think of all the things that are gonna happen in 2014 where we're gonna need to ask God, God, is this you? I meet pastors.

I met someone in the last couple of years who's so unhappy where he is and I said, how did you get to pastor this church? I don't know, they offered me a job. Did you pray? No, they offered me a job and it's a nice city and there's less traffic than where I came from and they have a nice parsonage. And I said, that's why you came? You came because of a building where you would live? That's how you were thinking? Was this God's plan for your life? He said, pastor, to be honest with you, I never even asked.

Oh yeah, go to school, not go to school, pursue law degree, be a police officer, be a school teacher. You don't think God's interested in that? Or you just think you can do anything you want and God will just bless? I do not find that in the Bible. First thing we learn is that when these decisions come to us this year, we can go to God and he will answer.

Well, how will he answer us? Now, that's not so easy to say. But if we ask God, he will somehow direct our steps. Lean not upon your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge the Lord and he will direct your steps.

Don't be stepping out, you and I, this year and just doing whatever impulse tells us to do or whatever our friends pressure us to do. Let's say, no, there's a plan for my life. If God sent his son and he died for me, he obviously loves me so much, he's got a plan and he wants to lead me in that plan.

How many are with me so far? Say amen. All right, lesson number one. God is interested in the decisions you make about every area of your life, every area of your life.

Number two, you don't have to be embarrassed when you're not sure to go back to God and ask him again. When he went to the men, and David was a man of God, it must have thrown him off because the men said, no way, Jose, we're not going anywhere to fight any Philistines, we got enough problems. So what did David do? He went back, he said, God, did I miss it then? Did I hear this? God, please show me.

Do I go and attack Calah? Do I try to save the town? And will you be with me? And God, sure enough, answers it. What's that lesson for us today? The best men and women of God who have ever lived have asked God's direction, and sometimes they're not sure, and maybe you're here today, and you have asked the Lord for direction, but you're not sure, wait, because God works for those. Isaiah 64, verse seven, he works for those who wait for him.

Listen, he works for those who wait for him. You know why God sometimes delays answers and give direction? It's because he wants to see if we're just asking superficially, and then we're gonna do our own thing, or if we really wanna know his will. You know who's the greatest example of this who ever lived? Jesus.

Jesus never knew where he was going, because the Father sent him. In fact, he didn't even know what people he would heal. The Father showed him.

He said, don't condemn me for what I do. I only do the things the Father shows me. I can't do anything on my own, but don't you know the most power comes in your life when you're not doing your own thing, but you're asking God to show you what he wants you to do? That's when the Holy Spirit really leads and guides and anoints.

When the Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years, if you would've walked up to Joshua, who was Moses' assistant, and said, how long are you guys gonna be camped here? They would've said, we don't know. What do you mean you don't know? What's your itinerary? Who's your travel agent? What kind of thing you got going here? No, we don't know. What do you mean you don't know? No, look.

See that cloud? It's a pillar of cloud during the day, and at night, it's fire. When that pillar moves, we move. When that pillar stays, we stay.

But don't you get tired sometimes being here? Yeah, we do get used to it, but we know that that cloud knows better than us what we should be doing. So wherever the cloud leads us, we follow it, because they knew that when you follow God's cloud, there's an umbrella of protection and provision that as long as you're under God's cloud, he will provide. I don't care how it looks.

He will provide for you. Can we put our hands together and say amen? And when you're not sure, you can go back and say to God, and look, all of us face those kinds of decisions. And then the enemy wants us to trivialize them and just do whatever.

There's a new teaching now among some Christian teachers. Shame on them. They're teaching young people in a university that I speak at sometimes.

Hey, listen, if you like the girl, just marry her, or you wanna go and be a doctor, just be a doctor. Stop with the praying and everything. God doesn't care.

I refute that. God cares about everything. How many are with me? Say amen.

God cares about everything, and he wants to lead us, and when you're not sure, you can go back to him and not be embarrassed and say, God, I'm not sure. Someone not sure here tonight? Just wait on the Lord. Be of good cheer.

He will direct your paths. The classic story about that is my late friend, John Garlock, a great Bible teacher. He was getting older, and he would be traveling around the world as a outstanding Bible teacher and preacher.

He was an unusual man, but he gave his heart to the world. He grew up in Africa. He was a missionary.

He was a kid there. He was a missionary there, and now as an older man, his wife died, he remarried, and now someone came to him and said, we want you to go to Tibet and Mongolia on this trip. Will you do it? He said, well, wait.

I gotta pray. It's like I get invitations every month, many invitations, will you come here and preach, or would you come over here or not? Will you do this? So what should I do, brothers and sisters? Should I just say no to all of them, or should I say yes to all of them, or should I ask God, God, which ones are part of your plan for my life? I got an invitation recently to go to Hong Kong to speak to hundreds of underground church leaders. I prayed about that and felt God say, go, go.

So hopefully, God willing, in this next year, I will fly all the way over there to be with these precious men, half of whom have been in prison, and try to be a blessing to them. So Brother Garlock didn't know whether he should go on this trip, so he said, Lord, should I do it or not do it? Should I do it or not do it? He was praying for days, no answer. No answer, now the people are pressing him.

Hey, listen, are you gonna do the trip or not do the trip? Are you gonna go or not go? It's Tibet, Mongolia, we got a lot to set up. Are you gonna do it or not do it? So he's praying, he lived in Dallas at the time. He's praying, praying, and he's riding in the car, and he says, Lord, I'm desperate.

You have to show me, do I do it or not do it? And he rode up to a red light, and he looked out, and the car in front of him had on the bumper, just do it. And as he read it, the Lord just spoke to him and said, there's your answer. You say, that's crazy.

No, God's ways are not our ways. How many believe God can lead us any way he wants, show us what to do? Here's the clincher. David goes to Calah, and the whole town is saved, and children don't lose their parents, all because one man said to God, should I go to Calah and attack the Philistine? It all happened because he was humble enough, but full of enough faith to say, God, if you want me to do something, it's gonna work out good.

But I don't wanna do anything unless you lead me, because I'm nobody in myself. That's the terrible thing about that terrible prosperity and faith, teaching people, buying cars, confessing Mercedes, not praying about it, and then the car gets repossessed. Just horrible things that have happened over the last couple of decades, with people not asking God, just think, I can do anything because I'm one of the king's kids.

No, we need more humility than that. Don't you agree? So now, David goes and saves him, and they're all high-fiving in Calah. They're doing the bump and everything, just David, give me a D, give me an A, David is our guy.

The whole town is going crazy. But listen, Saul finds out that he's in Calah. And Saul says, ah, when he was hiding in caves and in the wilderness, I couldn't get him.

But now he's made a mistake. He went into a walled city, I'll surround it and kill him. And David hears that Saul's on his way.

So David goes to God and says, God, I've heard that Saul is coming, but you can't go by what you hear. God, is he really coming? Boy, did David trust God. He wouldn't go by messengers.

He had to get confirmation from God. Is he really gonna come? And God says, he's coming. And then he said, will the people of Calah give me up to save their own skin, or will they stand with me and defend me? And God said, they're gonna give you up in a New York City minute.

Not exactly that in the text, but you get the idea. The people won't stand with you. They act like they're loyal to you because you saved their neck, but they're gonna turn on you when it comes, push comes to shove.

And the Bible says David got his men and at night slipped right out of town. And when Saul heard that he had left, he didn't even bother attacking the town. Because God shows us who we can really trust.

There are friends that seem like friends. There are people that seem one way to us, but if you'll pray about it, God can give you a warning and a check and say, no, no, that looks good, but it's not good. You can't tell a book by its, no, you can't always.

So here God not only led him, confirmed it when he wasn't sure, but then after the victory, God said, be careful because who you think seems so friendly, they're gonna let you down. Oh, how wonderful it is to be led by God. This is why Jesus came and said, I am the good shepherd.

Shepherds not only protect and feed, lead the sheep into where there's good grass, but the shepherd always goes before the sheep to lead them where to go. This year, this coming year, the end of this last few days of 2013 and 2014, my prayer is for all of us, let's be led by the good shepherd. Let's be led by the Holy Spirit.

God brought you here today and you're about to make a decision. Don't you think that's quite a coincidence that God would lay this on my heart to talk about the very thing you're confronting? It's not a moral decision, but it's gonna affect your life big time. You better know that God is leading you and he will show you because he loves you.

You don't have to plead with him and beg him. You just have to say, God, I wanna know your will because God's plan is the master plan. It's the plan with blessing and glory connected to it.

Let's pray. Oh yes, we know to follow God by loving one another. We know to follow God, to live moral lives, to be holy, not to harm our bodies.

We know that, we don't have to ask God about that. Not to hate, to steal, to cheat, to lie, but there's a lot of other decisions in life. And if you're here today and you say, Pastor, that story from 1 Samuel 23 has spoken to me.

I want to know God's will in a certain area of my life. I see now, for some of us, I see now I wasn't even praying, wasn't even asking him, wasn't even asking him and yet the Holy Spirit was sent to lead me and guide me and here I am making one decision after another without consulting with my Lord. If you want the Lord to direct your steps and you need his understanding and wisdom on this thing you're facing, just quietly stand up where you're sitting right now.

Just stand up right in your seat and say, that was for me. I wanna inquire of the Lord today. I wanna ask God, lead me, Lord.

Lead me, Lord. Lead me, Lord. Every eye closed, lead me, Lord.

If you're standing, quickly come out of your seat and stand up here. I want to just say a prayer over you before, as we conclude, no one else moving. Don't anyone else move, please.

We'll close in a moment. But everyone who's standing, just come and stand here. Lord, this is a good time of the year, end of this year.

We look back on 2013, we say thank you for all your mercy, for all your goodness. But Lord, a new year is coming upon us. Gonna have a lot of decisions that need to be made and my friends, my brothers and sisters have come forward, Lord, because they're not sure.

Go left or go right, go right or go left. It's complicated. Too great for our minds.

We're so limited in our understanding, Lord. So I bring them all to you and I pray, lead them, Lord. If you led David back in 1 Samuel 23, how much more will you lead those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, your son? We want to do your will.

We want to be led. Teach us how to listen. Give us patience to wait so if you don't answer right away, we won't panic and make a decision that we're gonna regret.

Give us faith, give us sensitivity, give us humility to ask you to be led. Forgive us for our pride and all the times we've just done stuff, just made decisions like we owned our lives and yet we call you Lord Jesus. Well, if you're the Lord Jesus, that means you're Lord of our lives and you have a right to tell us and you're not a dictator that wants to hurt us, but you're the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

So take away confusion and take away anxiety and nervousness. We're gonna sleep like babies tonight. We're gonna sleep like babies tonight because God is on our side and Jesus is gonna lead us.

We surrender our will, what even our family tries to impose upon us, how friends pressure us. We turn away from all of that and we say, Master, lead us, Master, lead us, show us. When we're not sure, confirm it to us.

And Lord, if we ever are approached and get into a situation that is much more dangerous than it seems, warn us, Lord, warn us. Teach us to pray about everything, Lord, and to be anxious for nothing, but to trust you. And we just thank you that you love us and you're gonna lead us and you're gonna guide us.

Lift up, those in here in the front, lift up both your hands. In the name of Jesus, we ask you now, Lord, to lead them starting this moment, this very night. Give them a dream, a vision, speak to their heart.

Let something happen, God, that they'll know the Lord is leading me. Let it be so, Lord. In quiet ways or loud ways, ways we expect and ways past our understanding, we give it to you.

In Jesus' name. And all the people said. Let's put our hands together and thank the Lord that he's gonna lead us.

All right, everybody, just real quick, join hands with the person next to you. Come on, this is the benediction. Turn around and hug about four or five people.

Wish them happy new year.

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