

What Should I Do?

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance through prayer when faced with uncertainty in life decisions.

Duration: 19:14

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Direction"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the common dilemma of not knowing what to do or where to go in life. He shares a personal experience of receiving a word from the Lord at his wedding reception, despite the seeming impossibility of the situation. The speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking direction from God and trusting in His plan for our lives. He also references the story of David being chased by King Saul and how David sought God's guidance in his difficult situation.

Transcript

I was talking to someone recently, and they were in a quandary about what to do, and I said to them, when you don't know what to do, you don't know what to do. And when you don't know where to go, you don't know where to go. But what a lot of us like to do when we don't know what to do or go, is we force an answer, and we make up our mind without realizing the power there is in another kind of prayer.

We prayed for children that are away from the Lord. We prayed for a book that's going to be birthed by the Holy Spirit that's going to bless multitudes of people. We prayed for requests and a 24-year-old who's still scarred by being abandoned when she was five.

There's all kinds of different prayer. The general word in the Greek language for prayer includes praise and thanksgiving. We don't have to wait until Thanksgiving.

Every day is Thanksgiving for a believer, amen? Come on, do you have something to thank God for today? Let's just thank Him out loud. Thank you, Lord. But you can't be a one-note piano.

You have to understand the complexities of prayer. There's a time to shout glory. There's a time to sing.

There's a time to intercede. There's a time for everything. And then there's a time for this.

Then all the army officers, including Johanan, son of Kareah, and Jezeiah, son of Hosea, and all the people from the least to the greatest approached Jeremiah the prophet and said to him, Please hear our petition and pray to the Lord your God for this entire remnant. For as you now see, though we were once many, now only a few are left. Pray that the Lord your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do.

Pray that the Lord your God will tell us. Read that with me. Pray that the Lord your God will tell us where we should go.

Let me just give you the setting of this, and let's go to a different kind of prayer. The book of Jeremiah is just incredible. Jeremiah was incredible.

He was this mighty prophet, but he was this vulnerable person. To be used by God, you have to be vulnerable. You've got to be flesh and blood.

He was a man that God chose to prophesy during the reign of several kings. Jeremiah was prophesying for a long time. And the prophecies in the book of Jeremiah, they're not sequential.

They go here, they go there, then they go back to this king, then they jump ahead, then they go back. It's like it's a compilation of the words that God gave him. He prophesied in the southern kingdom.

The northern kingdom had already gone into captivity. And the Lord spoke to Jeremiah and said a lot of things through him. One of the hardest things that God said to Jeremiah was, Go out and speak my word, and don't be afraid in front of them, or I'll let you crumble in front of all of them.

You've got to be brave. And one more thing, Jeremiah. Say whatever I tell you, but I want to tell you now.

They're not going to listen to you. How would you like to have that ministry, right? Speak my word and be faithful. But by the way, not a soul is going to listen to you hardly.

But Jeremiah was just a man of God. So Jeremiah prophesied to the southern kingdom and said, The Babylonians are going to come and eat you for lunch. They're going to knock down the walls and they're going to destroy the temple because this is my judgment on you because you worship idols.

You worship idols. You worship the queen of heaven. You're worshipping the stars at night.

You're doing all kinds of foul things. Well, the people, the leadership, and the false prophets said, We don't want to hear this guy. Lock him up.

So at different times in his life, he was beat up, locked up, persecuted. It was hard. In fact, it got so hard for Jeremiah that at one point he said, God, I can't talk anymore for you because every time I talk for you, it gets worse in my life.

So I'm done. Nada mas. I'm out.

Afuera. I'm gone. No more.

Find another prophet because I can't talk for you because they mock me. They make fun of me. My wife and I have been talking lately that there is a spirit of mocking now in our country, mocking of Christianity, mocking of God.

How many know what I'm talking about? Just lift your hand. It's not just I don't believe. It's a mocking spirit like they mocked Jesus when he was crucified.

We can't let that shake us because God saves mockers too. The two thieves were mocking Jesus on the cross, but one thief came to his senses and said, Lord, remember me. And Jesus forgot the mocking and said, today you'll be with me in paradise.

So don't get mad at people when they mock. We need supernatural love for them. Well, they were mocking Jeremiah, and he said, I quit.

But then he said those famous words, but when I said I won't speak anymore, there was a fire in my bones. There was a fire in my heart. I couldn't, I had to speak.

You know, when God puts his testimony inside of you, you got to speak. Amen? Because if you're quiet, you just get, what's the old saying? Inspiration that doesn't find expression leads to depression. Inspiration that doesn't find expression leads to depression.

Because whatever God inspires you, whether it's to write a song like my wife or do a CD or whatever, you have to express that testimony, that praise. Because inspiration that doesn't find expression leads to depression. So let those hallelujahs out.

Don't hold them in. Sometimes we hold in our hallelujahs. I was once in a drugstore, and I couldn't hold a hallelujah in.

And I just said, hallelujah, right on the line. And everyone turned and looked at me, and I said, what can I tell you? I said, hallelujah. Good to praise the Lord, isn't it? So anyway, Jeremiah was this torn person.

If you read it, he's so human. He's so vulnerable, and he's so mighty through God, but then he's so weak. He curses the day he was born.

He says, I wish my white mother would have never given birth to me. I mean, why put that in the Bible? Because that's real people, right? There's only one hero in the Bible, and that's Jesus Christ. Everybody else, we're made of flesh.

An odd word came to Jeremiah because God told him to tell the people, don't fight the Babylonians. Let them take you into captivity, because one day I'll bring you back. But if you fight them, or if you go down to Egypt, and you try to rock and roll against them, then it's going to be bad for you.

That was an odd word. And the people said, we don't want to hear that. We want to hear a word of victory.

But God said, no, it is what it is. You're going to Babylon. You're going to be in captivity.

But trust me, even there. The Babylonians came in. They surrounded Jerusalem.

They starved them to death, literally. Then they crashed through the wall. The Hebrew people, Jewish people, fought like fierce warriors, but to no avail.

They were conquered. The Babylonians did something very smart. They took all the young men and the leaders, and the people with great potential, and they took them and put them in different parts of the Babylonian Empire, especially in the throne city in Babylon, where the king was.

And they just left a fragment of people left in Jerusalem, just some of them to tend some of the farmlands. But they just scattered the people. They went into captivity, just like God said.

Now, there were some warriors who had already left and hid in other countries like Moab and other countries when they saw this happening. And once the captivity had been accomplished, they came back to Jerusalem and Judah. But to what? It was a mess.

The walls broken down. The sacred temple razed to the ground. Devastation.

No one to do the crops. No farmers. No money.

And no real protection because you're not a nation anymore. Whatever the Babylonians want to do, if they want to come back and beat you down, they're going to come back and beat you down. You're just nowhere.

You don't know what to do. So this tiny remnant of people, discouraged, no means of support, no political leverage, nothing. They go to Jeremiah, who's still there, and they say, Jeremiah, and they're so far from God, notice their wording, talk to the Lord your God.

They're so backslid, they can't even pray to God themselves. But we can tonight. And they say this simple word.

We're in a mess. There's no answer to the human eye. Our minds can't conceive what we should do next.

I had four people of the many that I saw praying from six to seven. I had four people who were all in this spot, and I said to them, I'm not going to pray for you because the word that the Lord put in my heart for tonight from Jeremiah is for you. And here was their dilemma, the same as that remnant.

Would you please pray, Jeremiah, and have God tell us what to do and where to go? Because we don't know. Should we or shouldn't we? Should we go down to Egypt? Should we stay here? It looks very risky. And if we do stay here, what should we do? Where should we go? You know, those are the two big questions in life for all of us.

Where should you be, and what should you do? Should you go to that college or not go to that college? Should you marry that man or not marry that man? Should you switch that job or not switch that job? Should you step out into some ministry or not step out into that ministry? There were three or four that just looked at me and said, I don't know what to do, and I don't know where to go, not knowing that that was the passage that I wanted to give to you today. God is a God who loves us so much that He wants to direct our paths. Can you receive that tonight? God wants to direct your path.

If there's nothing true in the Bible, this is true. God has a plan for our lives, and He wants to direct our paths. And sometimes we don't see it, but you need that word from the Lord.

Not to get overly family-centered tonight because my daughter's here, but when my wife and I got married, at our wedding reception, the Lord spoke a word over me in the business world and over her working for Sterling Drugs on 40th and Park Avenue and spoke a word about what He was going to do through us one day. If you would have been there and known me and known her, she was ahead of me, more talented than I am, but if you would have looked at us, you would have said, that's the most ridiculous word in the history of the Christian church. They're not going to influence anybody.

This guy hasn't even been a strong Christian in college, but boy, that word helped us because we knew what God wanted us to do. And when you know what God wants you to do and where He wants you to go, you can take on the world. Do I get an amen here? You can take on the world because wherever God leads you, He's going to be with you.

And whatever God tells you to do, He's going to bless what you're going to do. Do you get it? Life is made up of where you go and what you do to a great extent. And they came and said, we don't know what to do.

We don't know where to go. Maybe it's in a relationship that's broken up and you don't know what to do and where to go. You don't know what to say.

I was so encouraged the other day in reading, I've read this so many times, but I was reading through the Bible and I got to this portion of Scripture where David is being chased by King Saul. And he takes his mother and father because he's going to go on the run now because Saul is going to kill him. He takes his parents to someone he trusts and he says this, Would you please watch my parents until I see what God will do for me? Hey, if you're David, as in Jesus, son of David, if you're the one that killed Goliath, don't you know all the time what you're supposed to do? No.

Sometimes God puts you in a situation where you don't have a clue what to do and you don't know where to go and you don't know what to do and God is watching. Are you going to make it up and do it on your own or are you going to come to me and ask me? Because if you ask me, I will lead you in the way that you should go. You will hear a voice behind you saying this is the way.

Walk in it. You will know where to go and you see that in the New Testament. Paul, Peter, Peter ends up at Cornelius' house because God told them to go there and then God shows them what to do and Paul doesn't know where to go and the Spirit of Jesus forbid him to go where he wanted to go and then suddenly he has a dream and the Lord, He shows him a man from Macedonia, northern Greece and then they knew that's where God wants us to go.

God wants to lead His people. God wants to lead us and show us. The question is can we get quiet enough to listen? And that's why praying loud all the time is not a good way to pray.

There's a time to shout and pray and cry out and intercede and take authority and then there's a time to be still and know that I am God. In the present culture of Christianity, there's all kinds of praise and worship. There's all kinds of shouting glory depending on the church and the setting but there's very few Christians that have learned the fine art of speak my Lord, your servant is listening.

When you say to God, speak my Lord, your servant is listening. Oh, listen. Are you kidding me? When God sees someone who loves Him so much and trusts Him so much that they say speak my Lord, your servant is listening.

I want to know where you want me to go. I want to know what you want me to do. Listen, I've made more mistakes than all of you all put together but I can tell you one thing.

When you're led by God, you're blessed by God and when God shows you what to do, He will prosper. There'll be battles but He will see you through. So all these questions that maybe you're facing, maybe the Lord put this in my heart because tonight He wants you to teach you to listen.

Teach you to listen and wait. Wait my soul upon the Lord. Wait.

Be still and listen. That's a powerful kind of praying. I've met some people who pray out loud all the time and are always shouting and taking authority over everything and their life shows very little fruit because they never learn to listen to the direction of God.

I'm coming right back on Thursday but tomorrow night, I'm in Rock Springs, Georgia. Now what am I supposed to preach on? Don't you think I have a few sermons from this book by now? But what does God want me to speak on? Don't you think I can get up there and preach some warmed over hash and serve the people some food? But what's the word that they need that God ordained? How many believe He has a word that I'm supposed to deliver? Yeah. So whether it's that or something in your life, He wants to lead you.

Let's close our eyes. Lord, teach us by Your Spirit all the different ways to pray. Don't make us a church just of noise only but of waiting and worshiping and quietness and trust.

But Lord, there are people here I know who don't know what to do and where to go. They don't. One person is so discouraged that they want to move back to where they used to live because it's not working out in New York.

Is that frustration? Or is that You, Lord? You have to lead them. You have to show them where to go, what to do. Because when we make decisions out of enthusiasm or frustration or depression, it can get worse before it gets better.

If you're here tonight, balcony, downstairs, so good to see so many of you on a not the nicest of days. And you say, Pastor, that word was for me tonight. Just a little exhortation.

But you know what? I don't need you to pray. I can pray myself, Pastor. But I want to ask God, God, where do I go and what do I do? What do I do in this situation? Are you leading me? Are you holding me? Are you stopping me? What are you doing, God? Come out of your seat from up in the balcony.

And you know what? When you get down here to the front, you can stand, but you want to kneel. You can kneel from downstairs, upstairs. I need a word of direction from the Lord.

What do I do? Where do I go? I don't care how depressing it is around me. If I can just get a word from God what to do and where to go, everything will be fine. I don't care what they knock down.

I don't care if the temple is destroyed. I don't care if the walls have come down. Lord, thank you for this time in your presence.

And now we're not done listening, Lord. We've just begun. Wake us up in the middle of the night like you did young Samuel.

Teach us to know your voice and be able to say, Speak, Lord. Your servant listens. Give us the direction we need for our lives, what to do, where to go, how to react, what your plan is.

Show us. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Get everyone home safely. No muggings, no thefts, no accidents, no anything.

And when we lay our heads on our pillows tonight, help us to remember to say more than ever before, Lord, we've got to tell you we love you now more than ever before. Asking all these things in Jesus' name. And everyone said? Amen.

All right, turn around and hug a bunch of people, would you?

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