

How Does the Lord Lead Us?

by Shane Idleman

To know God's will, we must line up our heart with God's heart, read His Word, and pray consistently.

Duration: 49:53

Scripture: Psalm 25:9, Proverbs 16:9, Isaiah 30:21, Jeremiah 29:11, Acts 16:6-7, Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 1:5

Topics: "God's Guidance", "Trusting God's Sovereignty"

Description

Shane Idleman discusses how the Lord leads us, drawing parallels between the American Revolution and our spiritual journey. He emphasizes the importance of worship, humility, and thankfulness in aligning our hearts with God's will, as well as the necessity of prayer and the guidance of Scripture. Idleman highlights that while God is sovereign, our choices matter, and we must be willing to follow Him, remove distractions, and trust in His timing. He also warns against the dangers of pride and nationalism, reminding us that our hope should be in Christ, not in our country. Ultimately, he encourages believers to seek God's direction through worship, prayer, and the Word, while being open to His leading through circumstances and closed doors.

Transcript

In July 1776, during what many have called one of the greatest historical events of all time, I would not disagree with that. Of course, Jesus was the primary one, but there's a lot of things that were pivotal in world history. The Continental Congress of the United States of America officially declared independence and its reputation as a great country was born.

Despite the beliefs of some, early Americans were not all renegades and rebels. For decades, the colonists tried to cooperate with the king, but as time passed, it became evident that change was necessary. Great Britain needed to relinquish her oppressive control.

And although controversy surrounds the biblical justification for the American Revolution, the founders did not initiate the conflict, and thus, they believed that they had biblical justification for their actions. The founders viewed the Revolutionary War as a defensive conflict rather than an offensive war. After peaceful and legal redress had been exhausted, they moved toward independence from king independence on God.

And that's what we do celebrate with Fourth of July. A lot of people, especially the young adults, are getting a lot of misinformation about our nation and about the heritage. And I personally believe we can be a proud American as long as we're not prideful.

There's something, it's okay to be, look at what God did. Look at what God did. Now, in the midst of that, there was evil.

There was perversion. All kinds of things, because the light was being diminished by the darkness. That's normal.

But I think it's okay to say, hey, we're just blessed. We are thankful for that. We thank God for our military.

We thank God for the blessings that we now enjoy. Now we just need to steward it correctly. So don't be fooled into all these terms out there.

Nationalism, all these, you know, American pride. And now it gets dangerous when that's your hope and not Jesus Christ. When you're proud and you're angry and you're arrogant and you put country above God, we don't drape the cross with the flag.

Absolutely not. But you can be proud, blessed by how God has blessed you and your children and your prosperity and your posterity. I mean, that's biblical.

They were proud to be Israelites. They were proud to be... Many nationalities are proud to be that nationality because they were born and raised and see how God sustained them. So it's all really a reflection of the attitude.

So what I want to talk to you about this morning, and as this message grew and grew and grew, hoping I can get through it, but you know me, it might turn into part two next week, because I don't want to rush this topic. We're in Genesis. Many of you know we're in Genesis.

The message is, how does the Lord lead us? How does the Lord lead us? Anyone need help in this area? Lord, is that your voice? Is that your will? Is that really you? Or is that me? Is that an open door? Or is that the enemy opening a door? Is that really you orchestrating my circumstances? Or is that just basically life happening? And I believe God is sovereign. And so I don't believe in luck and things like that. But obviously, God allows some things to happen.

I don't think He wants us... He's going to direct us to turn right at every stop line instead of left at every little... You know, there's principles to live by. And that's where the big phrase, free will, comes from. How does God operate in His sovereignty, but also man is given the ability to make choices? And how does that work inside of God's will? Well, theologians haven't figured it out, so we probably won't figure it out this morning.

That's a heavy debate. I just know that both are true. I know that God is sovereign and His plans will prevail, but I also know that man is responsible for his actions and his actions can change the course of certain things.

We see that even in the Bible. That Hezekiah, when he humbled himself, God relented. Josiah humbled himself.

The nation was spared judgment. What about Nineveh? In 40 days, I'm going to destroy Nineveh. Well, they diverted that judgment for about 150 years until the prophet Naaman came on the scene.

So, how does the Lord lead us? And of course, we're talking about God's will in Genesis 24. And basically, pursuing God's will boils down to one question that you need to answer this morning. This will help a lot of people.

Are you willing to follow Him? Are you willing to follow God? Are you willing to remove things from your life that are pulling you away? Are you willing to remove distractions? Are you willing to stop making excuses and just saying, Lord, whatever You want me to do, I want to hear Your voice in this area and then truly mean it. A lot of us get confused and God's will becomes difficult when we're trying to fight it. When we just flow in God's will and allow God to teach us and direct us, it doesn't become as challenging.

So where we left off last week, I should probably bring some of you up to speed. Abraham sent out his servant to find his son a wife. And they went to the land of Israel.

Well, not really the land of Israel as of this point yet, but where Abraham was from, where there were people from his family who loved the Lord. And we talked about that last week, so make sure you listen to last week's message. So now we find Abraham's servant found out that she was a lover of God.

Her name is Rebekah. He bowed his head and he worshiped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master.

As for me, being on the way to find a wife, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren. The Lord led him to the right location. Wouldn't you like that in your life? The Lord just led you to the right location.

And He does that more than you think. We have to remember though, just because it's difficult doesn't mean you're out of God's will. Sometimes it can be.

And hopefully, maybe next week, I'll talk about the storms as we get into more chapters here in Genesis. The storms of being in God's will. And I still remember, that was probably one of my biggest wake-up calls when I came back to the Lord, is I thought, being in the center of God's will, now life's going to be a breeze.

Man, I'm in God's will. I'm walking on clouds. Every decision will be blessed.

And this will be wonderful because we hear it on TV. Your most popular books out there talk about this wonderful, great, encouraging life. And on one hand, it is wonderful.

And you are encouraged because you're walking with the Lord. But the enemy does not like you now that you're fully on God's side. And so, he can put something in someone's heart to go and harass you, to critique you, to challenge you, or challenges come up, and all hell can break loose even in the center of God's will.

And so, how do we know if we are led of the Holy Spirit? Led of God. And that's what I want to talk about from this story. Key number one.

Key number one. Worship, humility, and thankfulness lead us to the heart of God. And so, we see here that even before this point, the servant was a worshiper.

He was humble. He was thankful to God. And what those things do, those three areas, they actually line you up with the heart of God.

And so that's one secret to knowing God's will, even though it isn't a secret. Obviously, it's in His will. But if I line up my heart with His heart, if I'm aligned with His heart, that direction makes a lot more sense.

I go in the direction He wants to go because I'm worshiping, I'm thankful, and I'm not grumbling and complaining. And Lord, my heart is for the things of God. And so that lines up and like a magnet, it pulls you in the right direction.

If you don't get your heart right, if I don't get my heart right, can we really discern God's will that clearly? Just scroll through the Old Testament and see what God has to say about grumbling and complaining. We posted something on social media and it's just funny to watch the comments. You know, like, we still love California.

She's worth fighting for. And you get all these people. God, let me get out of here.

I hate that place. Hold on now. Grateful, thankful.

Shouldn't we be thankful? I want to encourage Californians right now. Shouldn't we be encouraged? You want to go live in North Korea? Russia? Ukraine? Iran? Iraq? Syria? Most of Africa? We can keep going. And so, we can be concerned, but we still should be thankful.

And then once you line up your heart with God's heart, then He will may direct people to move. He may direct people to do different things, but now your heart's lined up with Him and you're going in His direction. And it's much easier to lead someone who wants to be led.

I've given this example many times, but how many of you have tried to get your kids somewhere they don't want to go? Kicking and screaming. You're getting in this car seat and they're just fighting that car seat. And it's so hard.

You're still coming with me. Don't make this so hard. Versus the child who says, okay, where are we going? Sounds great.

Let's go. Boy, that was nice. See, it's much easier.

Same thing applies with God and us. It's much easier to direct those who are not fighting Him. 1 Thessalonians.

Got a lot of Scriptures for you this morning. 5.18, give thanks in some circumstances. You catch that one? That didn't even sound right.

Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God. So many of you, Lord, what is Your will? I came here, Lord, what is Your will? Well, you know this is His will. To be thankful.

Because I'm just telling you, thankfulness changes my heart. Joy comes in. Peace comes in.

Gentleness comes in. Longsuffering, the fruit of the Spirit comes in. And so I think the enemy can really sidetrack us when we're disgruntled.

And when we're not happy. And we're not giving joy in all circumstances. It doesn't mean we should be excited about difficulties.

We don't rejoice in difficulties, but there's a thankfulness as we go through them. Psalm 25.9 promises that God will guide, lead, and teach the humble His way, His direction. It promises He will do that.

And it probably shouldn't be in quotation marks there. I messed up. That's the idlerman version.

I'm paraphrasing. That God promises in that verse that He guides, leads, and teaches the humble. And then we have key number two.

This is very important. How often do I talk about this? The Word leads us. The Word leads us.

And I'm going to talk about this until the day I die, so get used to it. We have to remind people, the Word leads you. Can you imagine not having the Word of God? It would be ugly.

Why think this? Well, that's what's happening in our nation right now. Why think this? And I think that. This feels good.

Why don't we just allow people to do whatever they want? There's no gauge of truth. There's no gauge of morality. So the Word will lead you.

God leads you through His Word. 2 Timothy 3.16 I'm giving you again a commentary version. Some Scripture is inspired by God.

There's that word again. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and it teaches us to do what is right.

You cannot know God's will without looking at His Word. And this isn't the time to answer the question, but there are answers for those who are truly seeking. A lot of people say, well, Shane, I can't trust His Word.

It was put together by men to dominate people. And how can it even be trusted? If you truly want to know, there's information out there that is mind-boggling how consistent Scripture is. That's why we call it inerrant.

It is the inerrant, inspired, authoritative Word of God. Bar none, nothing is a close second. No papacy, no leader, no group can change it or overwrite it.

It stands alone. That's why you've got great calls of the reformation on faith alone, through Christ alone, the Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone. And there's truth in that.

Sometimes it's good for the church to go back to that truth. So let the Word guide you. I'm amazed at how many people are confused in God's will, but they're not reading His Word.

Because see, I can be confused in God's will, and I live there sometimes, let me tell you. I'm confused, Lord, I don't know Your will in this area. I thought this, but now this is happening.

However, I'm strengthened as I'm reading Your Word. I'm encouraged as I'm reading Your Word. So now my confusion gives way to peace and joy because I'm trusting God.

I'm camped out in the Psalms. I'm obeying the Proverbs to the best of my ability. Nobody obeys the Scriptures perfectly.

If you do think you do that, we've got some Scriptures we'd like to share with you. And so God works through dependent vessels, not perfect vessels. And so even though I'm confused, God's Word strengthens me and I get encouraged and clarity in His Word.

Even though the situation is still confusing. Does that make sense? I don't understand this situation. This prayer request that's been 15 years seems like it's not happening.

I'm so confused. I thought you put that on my heart. I thought you gave me Scripture.

But then you get in God's Word and it gives you clarity and direction to just hold the course. Or it will give you a lot of clarity and direction as we talked about last week. Who to marry.

It doesn't say who to marry, but it gives you principles to follow. It doesn't tell you where to work, but it gives you principles to follow. It doesn't answer every circumstance.

It doesn't illustrate every circumstance you'll ever go through. It doesn't talk about cars in the Bible. Should I buy a new car or a used car? Boy, that has changed a lot, huh? Now the used cars are up like 25%.

But anyway, should I buy this? It doesn't give you every single circumstance, but it gives you every single principle. So as you live by the principles, God will guide you. If not, you're kind of like a boat out in the ocean without any direction, without any motor.

It just kind of goes wherever the wind... One day it's going north and the next day it's kind of northeast and south and it's just blowing around. The Bible even talks about that. An unstable man or woman blown around by the trickery of men and deceitfulness of false doctrine.

And they're caught up in all these different things. And they're like, you ever meet those people that aren't very solid? Because they're drifting around way too much. And so God's Word is like an anchor.

It helps set the course. I might not know the direction. I'm confused in the direction, but I know who I'm trusting in the direction.

I know who I'm trusting in the storm. God has encouraged me that He will continue to guide me. And a lot of times it has to do with my timing is not God's timing.

Are you ever on God's time clock? Because our time clock is things are ticking. I got to get moving. Let's get this going.

God's like, nope, nope, nope, nope. How many times have I heard this over there? Why are you rushing to get married? Mary, my biological time clock is ticking. I don't care if they're not a Christian.

My biological time clock is ticking. Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick. My time.

I could go there for a little while, but I'm not going to. Let's just go to key number three. Overcoming the sin of prayerlessness.

I said it. I said it. Prayerlessness is a sin.

Prayerlessness. No time for God. As we apply God's Word, we must be men and women of prayer.

Do you know how many people are misled just with the Word of God, but no time for prayer? They don't know God's character. Do you know many cults start with the Word of God? Ever heard of David Koresh? When I was out there in Waco, Texas, it was pretty close by. Started with the Word of God.

Then he says, God says I can marry lots of women. Oh, okay. And have lots of kids and do things secretly and manipulating the text of Scripture.

Cults start with a portion of God's Word, but they don't look at the totality of God's Word. And they're not people of true prayer and brokenness and humility because that type of person God will lead. I'm amazed at how many people think they can adequately determine God's will without devoting much time to prayer and fasting.

Even Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before He chose the twelve disciples. Prayer was the catalyst and the sustainer to knowing God's will. Because as I'm praying about a certain situation, I thought we're going north, but often God shifts that in the prayer closet.

Then my attitude gets a little better. Anybody have bad attitudes and not praying with the right spirit? Just me? Just your pastor? Okay. I'm too transparent sometimes.

No, I do, right? Go get them, God. Go get them, God. God says, no, you love them.

Let Me work on your heart. Or prayer requests. I mean, I can't even get into all the different things over the years where God has really changed my heart and changed course.

Not in a complete different direction, but He just kind of takes it a little bit now that the heart is more pliable. And so you have to become men and women of prayer. You know how many... I don't know.

Every time I do this, I feel like I'm convicting people, but it's okay. Phil and Carrie told me it's okay to do this, so blame it on them. But a lot of times at morning worship, the reason we push that a lot is you'll see people with their Bible sometimes in their journaling.

God is speaking to them. They're writing down stuff. I'll go up and add stuff to my sermon three, four, five times just in that morning worship time, and God just takes things in a different direction.

Clarity becomes... things become crystal clear on things I've been stressing about. Just after an hour and a half of worshiping, I'm like, you know what? I got it. I'm not going to worry about it again.

Lord, You show me when it's Your time. Thank You. So how many people are not getting clear direction from God because they're not spending time in prayer seeking His heart? And that's why we do have early morning worship before the services.

Not for our benefit. Sometimes, maybe a little, because we like it too, but it's for the congregation to come and be encouraged and fed. And how many marriages have been restored at this altar? How many have fallen apart not here? And there's a consistent pattern.

How many addictions have been broken? How many relationships restored when we become men and women of prayer? And be careful because people say, well, I've got the Word. Okay, you need the Word with prayer. Gentleness.

The Spirit gives life. And people are sometimes confused about that verse that talks about that the letter kills. The letter of the law kills.

What they mean by that is you're just giving somebody the law. You're just giving them the law and Phariseism and legalism and look what the Word says. And you kill them.

You have to bring life with the Spirit. Let the Spirit of God and the Word of God, they complement each other. There are churches that have the Word in their church, but they have another book or another book.

And it's one of many things. So that Word is killing because it's falling on deaf ears. The Spirit of God is not there.

And I think like many churches in America, like Samson, they know not that the Spirit of the Lord has departed. Well, Shane, isn't God's Spirit everywhere? Of course. But there's something very unique when God's Spirit's tangible presence is there.

You can tell in the worship. You can tell in the prayer time. Listen, I've been to dead churches.

I've been to dead homes. I've been to dead prayer meetings. There's a clear difference.

I've heard dead preachers. There's no spiritual life in them. Why is that? Because there's usually no spiritual life in them, so it's hard to give you spiritual life if there's nothing in them.

Fire is contagious. Fire spreads. And the key four, led by circumstances.

Did you know that God will lead you by circumstances? And many of us, we're guys, we're truth. It's about the Word, about the truth. We kind of get a little nervous about circumstances or dreams or visions.

I've got to tell you this. Thank God for reminding me. I was going to write this down.

I was on the way to church this morning and I heard on our radio network, I never knew this. I'm ashamed to admit, but you know the book Uncle Tom's Cabin? And Abraham Lincoln went to this little old lady and said, so you're the little woman who started this civil war and brought this evil to our eyes. Number one, I didn't know she was white.

She was. Number two, in her biography, it talks about she had a vision from God of a slave being beaten. God showed her during a time of communion.

She went back and she wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin and changed the course of our nation for the better. Isn't that amazing? Well, a vision? Hold on, hold on. You're getting out there.

Am I? Could it be that we're not open to what God really wants to do in our lives? On one hand. And then there's other people who are way too open. Caution to the wind.

No, no, no. You've got to be cautious. It's good to be cautious and conservative, but you have to be open to what God is doing.

It was just amazing to hear her story. And so led by circumstances, Acts 16, and they went through the region. How do you pronounce that? Perga and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

Wait a minute. The Holy Spirit stopped them from bringing the word to Asia? Lord, I'm having a hard time understanding that. Well, remember, a good thing isn't always a God thing.

If God forbids them to bring the word to Asia, He's saying, wait, no, hold on. Not yet, because we learn in 2 Corinthians, I believe it is that Paul actually did bring the word to Asia. Asia Minor.

But it's not his timing. So He stopped them and redirected them somewhere else. And so a good thing isn't always a God thing.

And the irony on this topic is people don't understand that each church has different DNA. Different DNA. And usually the DNA of the elders.

Who has God called to lead the church? That church is going to look like what God has called them to do. And so that's why we look a little bit different. Another church over there will look a little bit different.

Another church is going to look a little bit different. And I've had people get upset at me for all kinds of things. Why aren't we more mission oriented? Why aren't we more focused on the homeless? Why aren't we more focused on single moms? Why aren't we putting more people in Uganda? Why aren't we doing this? I'm just exhausted listening.

That's your passion. Go do it. I'm just trying to fulfill my... I've got five kids.

That's hard enough. And then leading a church and leading the radio and writing articles. How much? I can't take on more than what God gives me.

Why do you talk so much about repentance? He put it on my heart. That's my DNA. So we're not going to always... He doesn't put that DNA in other pastors sometimes.

They're more of a loving shepherd and always encouraging and always motivation like a cheerleader. But sometimes, I've got a little coach in me. I'm not a cheerleader.

I don't like skirts. I've got a coach in me. And so, see, there's different DNAs and people should start just being thankful.

They want the church to do everything. Ironically, those people never wanted to run with a ministry. Oh, no, no, that's the church's job.

No, if God gave you the burden, it could be your burden for a reason. Why don't you run with it and we'll come alongside? See, there's different callings for different things. And this fits right in here perfectly.

That a good thing isn't always a God thing. So if He closes a door, don't try to force it open. Men, anybody ever get a crowbar out for God? I have.

Oh, man. And He has slapped me and silly, embarrassed me. Just close that door.

Close that door. I'm trying to think of so many situations. Have you ever went through depression for a while when things don't work out? And I went through it.

I didn't even know Morgan, I remember. I tried out for L.A. County Sheriff. I was all the way through.

All the way through. They wanted me in there. I don't remember how old I was.

29 and physical and the agility and everything. Okay, final thing. Polygraph.

Polygraph. Okay, now I guess they've changed and I could have been a sheriff. But I failed it.

And they said, did you use this one certain drug less than four times or more than four times? I'm like, oh, gosh. Because if you say more than four, you're done. You're done.

And I honestly didn't know, but I think it was more than four. So I said, I think less than four. Eh, eh, eh, eh, eh, eh.

You get the letter in the mail and you are done. That's called a closed door. Crystal clear.

And I mean, I'm making plans. I told my mom, here's what I'm doing. I moved down to Whittier.

I'm going to be close to the training center. Just everything fell apart. But thank God.

Thank God for broken roads and closed doors. So God, I wanted to not rush through this because you don't want to force a door open, but just because a door is closed doesn't mean it's always going to be closed. See, this is an interesting topic.

Did you know me and Morgan dated a year and a half before we dated again? We dated, went on a date, and I'm like, no, no, no, thank you. She said, no, thank you. A year and a half.

Closed door. God says, wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Not yet. Not yet my time. And all of you could preach this sermon, I'm sure.

But I wanted to encourage you that God can lead you through circumstances. So just, Lord, is this You leading me? You closed the door. There's nothing else I can do.

He knows your heart. Do you want me to keep praying here? Do you want me to keep hoping for this? Lord, You show me. But as of now, it looks like You've closed this door.

And I don't want to force it open if you're not in it. It's a closed door. Let me give you a contemporary example.

Really, really close to home. And it's no secret, many people have asked, and I get asked this probably monthly, people in the overflow room at both services, have you ever considered anything in East Lancaster, East Pondo, West Lancaster, has God ever opened a door? And I'm like, we're not going to go push a door open. We could force a door open, but let's see, does God want us to ever do that? Does God want us here? Does God want Santa Clarita? What does God want? So letting Him open and close the doors.

Because we could push open a door. A good thing is not a God thing. So if there's no peace, if there's just waiting on God, let Him guide us and direct us.

And I look over my life, He has led me a lot through open and closed doors. But an open door isn't necessarily a God-opened door. See where this gets confusing? Because I believe the enemy can open doors.

I've counseled people, men have said, Shane, I've got this great job, it pays this, this is great. And their focus is all on the money. Within a year, their whole marriage is falling apart.

That wasn't a God-opened door. The enemy can open doors. Hollywood can open doors.

Anybody can open doors. So you have to make sure, is it a God-opened door? God will lead you through. And they also attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

So He didn't allow them. He forbade them. And I just added this this morning too, early this morning.

Here's where you have to be careful. When God closes a door, I've seen this a lot, instead of the person becoming better, they become bitter. And saying, okay, well, Lord, it's not what I was hoping for, but I'm trusting You.

I just texted a friend of mine, I hope he's listening. But he was coming to church just seeking God when there was a little bit of hope. It was about a year ago.

When there's a little bit of hope, that his marriage will be restored. But as soon as she left and said, I'm never coming back, he's never been back to church. Mad at God.

How could God allow this? Well, it makes me think, why were you coming? God's not Santa Claus. His sovereignty is your sanity. And so see, that's the dangerous thing about closed doors, is we can become closed off to God.

So trusting, okay, Lord, You know best. And if you truly think He knows best, which I think we all do, there's a lot of just peace knowing, okay, Lord, You closed this door. Anybody pursuing a relationship where God closes the door singles? You get upset? Say, well, I don't care.

I'm going to force my way through. Then six months later, you're like, what have I done? God knows what's best. So I would like to talk about this more, but there's so many different situations.

Here's the key. If you don't apply the other principles, this one's going to be hard to navigate. Because I'm not in the Word.

I'm really not praying much. You're not going to know how to navigate open and closed doors. They line up.

When God closed the door with Paul, these people were fasting. They were praying. They were doing the will of God.

They were walking out and doing ministry. And so it was kind of common sense that these are doors that God is opening and closing. But if you're not following the other principles, you're not going to know how to navigate some of these difficult open and closed doors.

Led by circumstances was number four. And then number five, open and closed doors. I guess I jumped ahead of that on my own.

Open and closed doors. How is this different? Well, circumstances are what you're going through. You know, God just... Let's say you want to buy a house, but you can't.

Something happens with your credit. Okay, it's a no-brainer. There's circumstances that come up.

But then these, another way God leads us is through an open and closed. God will actually open the door. Give you an opportunity.

2 Corinthians, there it is. So when he went to Troas to preach the gospel, he found that the Lord had opened a door. Now here's two dangers though in this area.

When we look for loopholes, or we misquote Scriptures to force a door open. And I could stand up here for another hour giving example after example, but you know what God is doing in your own heart. If you're trying to open a door or close a door and God doesn't want you to, usually what happens is there's not a lot of peace in your home or in your own spiritual life.

I don't care what God says, I'm going to open this door. I'm going to close this door. There's a little bit of anger, a little bit of frustration.

And you're like, I'm going to get the pry bar out. So you'll have the fruit of the Spirit there. You'll have patience and long-suffering and gentleness.

And then key number six, it really should have been the final key, but I want to say it now. Sovereignty has the final say. Sovereignty has the final word.

If you can really develop this, it will help you. Because God is not against you, He is for you. So if you're praying, obeying His Word, walking by faith, making mistakes, we all do, we don't walk perfectly, but trusting, okay, Lord, I'm serving You, I'm trying to do what is right, I have a repentant, broken, humble heart to the best of my ability.

I truly want to hear Your voice. You know I'm going to obey Your voice, Lord. I'm going to trust that what You're doing is what's best.

I'm not going to try to second-guess what's going on. Sovereignty is your sanity, because if you try to figure out what's going on in America right now, it will drive you insane. So you trust in God's sovereignty in your situations.

Proverbs 16 and 19-21 both say that although we make plans, it's the Lord who will guide us. So let's say you're wanting this, you're thinking this, and it just slams shut. Okay, Lord, You know.

You know I'm just going to trust You. I'm going to trust Your sovereignty. And if You open the door, I'll be waiting.

If You close the door, You want this closed for good, just continue to show me. And You're waiting on Him. You're not rushing ahead.

How many of us get in trouble rushing ahead? You buy anything you regret? Marry anybody you regret? No hands. Okay, that's good. Not me, because we didn't rush ahead.

But you can see this rushing ahead. I'm going to fix this myself. Rushing into a job prematurely.

When I talk with younger men sometimes, I have to tell you guys this too, but never quit a job if possible when you're angry or upset. Like, I'm quitting. I'm done with these people.

How do you know God isn't working through them to break you and to humble you and molding you? And so we don't let our emotions get us out of the workplace. Let God open the door. Let God make it clear.

Give you peace. I mean, I quit. I told you before, and I told this story to my family too, that I quit Coeur d'Alene water district a few times when I was their heavy equipment operator.

And I would walk off the job site. I can't say I didn't ever say some words. But this is like 22 years ago, so don't hold me to it.

But I'd end up going back and apologizing because I was a new, you know, come back to the Lord, I'm working through all this. And every time, I hate working here. I hate it.

You know, and just, ah, I quit. And I have to go back and apologize. And then finally, the Lord makes His will clear.

And it's a nice, smooth transition. There's peace. He's represented well by my testimony.

And so, you have to be careful that your emotions don't cause you to react. How many fights in marriage are caused by reacting? Oh, lots of heads, okay. Right, you react in anger? Okay, I got permission to tell you a funny story yesterday.

It happened yesterday. My wife said I can tell you. This will be a day I will never forget.

Anyway, I've been a Dodger fan from when I was little, of course. And I don't go to much. I don't follow much.

But we went to the game last night. And my wife said, hey, I'm going to go get the kids some food. I think I can handle it.

You know, carry it. So I know what I'm thinking is, ah, I'm convicted. I need to go help her.

Right? So I get up and I'm helping her. And they're ordering. And then I hear everybody goes crazy.

Like what? I look up. There's a home run. First inning, first batter.

Unbelievable. All right, let's order. Let's order.

The crowd goes crazy. Another home run. Second batter.

I said, do you realize, do you realize the chances of that? Gosh, I'm never going to get food again. So we're ordering. You hear, oh, it goes all the way to the warning track.

Third batter. Okay, let's hurry up. Let's get back there.

Crowd goes and it's like off the chart. You can't even talk. Another home run.

Anybody see the first three of the first four batters, the first inning home run, only seven pitches. I don't know what the statistics on that are, but it's, it's, it's, that just does not happen. I was just out for like a half hour.

I'm like, I cannot believe I just missed three home runs in the first inning, four batters. Getting a stupid Dodger dog is probably not healthy. So yeah, I said, but she goes, I didn't tell you to help me.

I'm like, but you, you can't say I might be able to handle it. And I'm like, and so it's, you know, little friction was there because that's a big deal, guys. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine missing all four of the three of the home runs right there in seven pitches? Anyway, let's get back on track.

Here's where, here's where I wanted to not rush through too. I want to give you a caution alert. I think we have it up there.

Caution alert. And people ask me these questions. And again, I don't want to rush through it.

So I might have to do some next week. But what about burdens, dreams, visions, promptings, and words from the Lord? Do you all agree we should be careful? But here's why these things really don't bother me. Because of Scripture.

In the last days, God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters, obviously, their physical sons and daughters, because Peter was quoting it as well, quoting Joel, but also into the lineage, into the future, future Christians, future believers. They will prophesy.

They will see visions. They will dream dreams. And God can use these things.

It's in His will. I mean, it's in His Word that He can use these things. Somebody by the name of Mary who was pregnant with Jesus and her husband were given direction through a dream.

Through visions. Peter was given a vision as well. Unloading the burden.

Unloading the burden. Malachi 1, this is the burden of the Word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. And you'll see that sometimes throughout the Bible.

The prophets, and if you've ever... I don't know, not a lot of people have done what I do or do what Pastor Abram does. Maybe a lot of pastors don't feel this, but a lot of times throughout the week, there's a burden. There's a fire that's kind of burning.

And you have to deliver this. You have to share this. That's why sometimes there's passion or there's volume in the message because His Word is in my heart like a burning fire.

It's shut up in my bones and this burden has to be released. And that's a lot of times what preaching is, there's a burden that is released. And that's what he's referring to, this burden that God gave Malachi for the people of Israel.

However, when it comes to you, if you feel a burden for the lost, you might start a ministry. If you feel a burden for a certain area, you might go on the mission field. If you feel a burden for a nation, you might start a prayer meeting.

And so God, do you ever feel that burden? Like I've got to do something. I've got to make a difference. Even if it's in my home or my community or in my neighborhood, there's a burden you might have to pray for certain family members.

I just have a burden. People tell us that I have a burden for the kids in children's ministry. I just want to see them come to the Lord.

I don't know what to do with this burden. Or I have a burden to serve. I don't know what to do with this.

So God can sometimes give you a burden. To me, it resembles like a 100-pound backpack. Okay, I've got this 100-pound backpack from God.

What do I want to do? I sure want to get it off. I want to take off this burden so I'm going to obey God's call. So He can direct you through a burden.

I don't think we would have started West Side Christian Fellowship if it wasn't for a burden. It was like, I don't know, take it or leave it. Maybe I'll just go sell cars.

Or I'll go do this. I'm going to start a church. Morgan and I, we didn't know what to do with this.

What do we do with this? Oh, Lord, what are You doing? And so God can often direct you with that burden. And the idea is to press you down so you look up. To press you down into the prayer closet.

To press you down in that time with God. Now you have to sort out the burden through your own natural emotions and the Word of God. But a lot of times, God will give you a burden to do something.

Many of you guys know, some of our worship leaders have left. We might have a few more leaving because God has given them a burden to take this fire to other places and they have our blessing. And that burden they feel like, I don't know what to do with this.

And I realized probably a decade ago, you know what? People come and go. That was the hardest lesson for me and my wife. We thought, oh, everybody's come, we're family forever.

Till the day we die. No, mainly just me and her and a couple of other people. Because there's nothing else I can do.

I can't move. So that burden, you see other people have that burden to go start a church or bring the worship somewhere else. And you realize that God fuels them up and then He releases them out to other areas.

Planning churches. Planning ministries. And so usually that starts with, and I hear people say, I have a burden to do this.

God has opened this door and I feel a burden. And so I think this is an area we shouldn't overlook too often. That burden of the Lord.

Now if you say, which many do say, I don't have a burden. Could it be that you're not seeking God wholeheartedly? Could it be you haven't surrendered everything? And say, Lord, I lay down everything. Give me a burden for the lost.

Give me a burden for abortion or the homeless. And He begins to put a burden on you and that's one way to determine His will. What about those who say, I had a dream.

I saw a vision. I had a dream. I saw a vision.

Well, guess what? There's even another area I want to really talk to you about next week. We can probably even put it up there. God often leads you by... Now, there's a bad word up there, so I switched out mine.

It's called submission. God often leads us by submission. So I put a better word for next week.

God often leads us by yielding. Now, I don't think it's a bad word. I'm kind of joking, right? You know, because I don't want to submit.

But it's a yielding to others. And look at all these places that God, from parents to civil authorities, and then the next screen, I think we even have where He leads us through obedience to even church leadership. Did you know that? Now, this is not good if your leaders are arrogant and mean-spirited and want to lord over you and push you.

And I'm actually the complete opposite. I don't like leading people, pushing them, controlling. Neither does Pastor Abram, neither does our elders.

So that's not who we are at all. However, God has given us a biblical mandate. You can read it there.

Obey your leaders. Yield to them. For they are keeping watch over your souls.

And I will have to give an account for how I lead the body of Christ. And there's a lot of important things I want to share with you. I want to share with you next week.

Please be here if you can. I'm going to open up about the church and how we do things. And why we do things.

Why maybe sometimes people don't know a lot of what's going on. And I'm going to share a lot of that with you next week. And that's what I really just... It just grew and grew and grew.

And then we're going to move into storms and challenges in the will of God. And also through endurance. Anybody need help with endurance? I think we have Scriptures up there too for endurance.

I'm going to put those up next week. And I knew this would happen this week because there was so much and God was just pouring stuff in my heart. And I don't want to rush through because this is where most Christians make the biggest mistakes, correct? Missing God's will.

Or kind of going outside of it. And then God has to bring us back. But I do want to talk to you about how He leads us to salvation briefly.

How He leads us through salvation. I don't even think we have a screen for this because I went and put this together early in the morning. So He's going to lead a person to salvation through His Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is convicting you. The Holy Spirit is drawing you. He's going to lead you through His Word to salvation.

The Word of God, as you open God's Word, you can see that it has saving power there in the Scriptures if we repent and believe. He leads you to salvation through creation. His invisible attributes are clearly seen.

Clearly seen. He leads you to salvation through other people. And then finally, He leads you to salvation through His love.

The love of God. And so, when it comes to knowing God's will, I always want to throw it out there. If you don't have that relationship with Him, if you're not walking in obedience, and if you haven't repented, and you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God wants you to have that relationship.

He's been leading you. He's been convicting you through the Word of God. He's been convicting you through preaching.

He's been convicting you through His love and His mercy and His grace. So don't miss that opportunity this morning. It's very simple.

The Bible says repent and believe. And one of the things that amazes me about being a pastor is people have been coming to church sometimes for months. Sometimes years.

Or they come with their parents or a friend and you never realize they never had saving faith until they come up and tell you, you know, I was just playing church. I came because my spouse brought me. I liked things he had to say.

It made sense. But Jesus was not my Lord and Savior. I never repented, whatever that means.

And so that's why we want to give people that opportunity. Because there's a lot of people even in the church, and you don't want to play games with God here. You don't want to play games with God here.

You will never know His will or His will for your life unless you get your heart in a right relationship with Him. So repent and believe this morning.

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