

When God Speaks Discerning His Voice

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning God's voice through scripture, prayer, and openness to the Holy Spirit while addressing the need for repentance and releasing bitterness.

Duration: 49:47

Scripture: Genesis 20:3, Genesis 21:1-2, Genesis 22:1, Psalm 34:17, Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 1:28, Matthew 6:33, Acts 16:9-10, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:5

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

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical need to discern God's voice amidst the chaos of competing influences in our lives. He illustrates this through the biblical accounts of Abraham, Sarah, and the challenges they faced in trusting God's promises, highlighting the importance of obedience and faith. Idleman encourages believers to seek God's guidance through prayer, scripture, and even dreams, while cautioning against emotional decision-making. He reminds the congregation that God is always watching over us, even in our failures, and that true repentance and trust in God are essential for spiritual growth. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper commitment to placing God at the center of our lives, urging listeners to let go of distractions and fully surrender to His will.

Transcript

...on His Word, obeying His Word, are hungry to worship. So whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. What you feed on, what you feed grows.

The spiritual side or the carnal side. So I want to encourage you guys to really take that to the Lord. And in the times that we're in, global economy, our nation, the need to hear from God has never been greater, I think, at least in my lifetime.

To clearly hear from God. Because we hear so many different voices. Different promptings.

Do you ever feel that? I mean, I've been through hell and back sometimes when the old Shane Idleman wants to come and play. And you feel those, you hear those voices. And what would cause that sheriff that was on the news to release that felon and then they all take off in a car? You think that's going to work out? I mean, what voice are you listening to? Where are we getting our information from? So many people making major decisions not really hearing the voice of God.

Or making maybe emotional decisions. And so I believe, anybody made emotional decisions? Okay, yeah, the need to react instead of respond. And so the title this morning is When God Speaks Discerning the Voice of God.

Who wants to be able to discern the voice of God? Every hand should go up. I understand it's difficult sometimes when we put you on the spot. But we want to hear God's voice, the correct voice.

And I'm going to pull these from Genesis 20. Actually, a couple chapters. 20, 21, 22.

Like I said earlier in the study, we're going to be going faster through a lot of these more principles instead of verse by verse, expository. But this is such an important topic. In Genesis 20, I'll bring you up to speed.

God told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a child. And they doubted God. And they were confused.

How in the world can this happen? And of course, Sarah gave her handmaiden to Abraham to try to help God. You know, hey God, this must be how you're going to do it. Oh boy, oh boy, I've learned a lesson on that one.

I don't think you can handle that. This is how you're going to do this, I believe. Now, that's usually not the case.

Let me just tell you. Often how I think God's going to do it is not quite exactly how He decides to do it. And then we get to this part where Abraham, it gets hard sometimes because he was Abram, and then God changed his name to Abraham after the covenant He made with him.

He told this king that Sarah was his sister. Not his wife. Now technically, you know, half-sister.

But he lied to this king because he feared God. I'm sorry, he feared this king and not feared God. So he said to Sarah, you're my sister.

But God came to Abimelech, the king, in a dream, by night, and said to him, indeed, you are a dead man because of the woman you have taken, for she is another man's wife. Let's stop there for a minute. I just actually noted this yesterday morning.

When we sin, God's still watching out for us. Now, I'm not giving people permission to sin, because that's never the right answer. There's consequences to that.

But even that song we sang just a few minutes ago, God's always been watching us and looking out for us. Even when the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and when he falls, the Lord pulls him back up. And so we see here that God is watching out for us, even though Abraham sinned.

Now, many speculate, was he worried that the king would kill him? Hey, this is my wife. And the king says, okay, I'm going to get rid of you, and now she'll be my wife. And possible, we don't know, but we know that God warned Abimelech in a dream by night.

So I want to just throw out this question for you to consider this morning. Does God still speak to people through dreams? You don't have to answer, but that helps. Now, on YouTube, if you put in dreams in my name, I think a message will come up that I gave on this topic already, so I'm not going to go into a lot of detail.

Let me back up a little bit, and then I'll get to the meat of this. The short answer is obviously. I mean, there's no way you could say, no, He doesn't do that anymore.

We have the Bible. And the reason people say that is, I know why they say that, because we have all that we need to live godly in Christ Jesus. The Word of God is inerrant, inspired, and it's our nourishment, it's our food, but we don't worship the Bible.

It points us to different things. And then that's why the gifts of the Holy Spirit, some churches don't believe that, even in this valley. We're not one of those churches.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit come alongside and help us in our journey. I've got the Word, but Lord, I need a little help. Because I've got some things I want to do, and I don't know if it's you.

John's not going to tell me, Ezekiel sure isn't, and I don't know what Isaiah's got in mind, but I need to know, am I supposed to be a pastor? Are we supposed to do this? Are we supposed to do that? Am I supposed to do this? You fill in the blank. And so sometimes we need a little help in God with dreams. I've told you before, and I hate to be repetitive, but there's so many new people sometimes with the mass exodus from California, and then we get a lot of new people and people coming from different churches.

But this is so important because 2001, it's a long story. I moved back home with my mom. I think I was working for Brent.

I actually see you here this morning. Good to see you. Barnett Construction, that was fun times.

Boy, he made me do some hard work. Here's a digging bar. Here's a jackhammer.

I'll come back at lunch. And so, I had this dream. I'll never forget it.

It was so vivid where I'm completely asleep and I walk out to the left and I see this. I see a sea of people and I'm speaking to them. What does that have to do with anything? It didn't make sense for a while.

And as I started to read Billy Graham's autobiographies, he would have the same thing. And so see, that doesn't cause me to change my career. It causes me to have confirmation in what God is doing.

Also, I told you, I had a Jehovah Witness over for two hours. One of the most exhausting conversations. Actually, they brought back someone because they didn't want to talk to me.

And so this guy, man, wow! Okay, before we begin, can we just pray in Jesus' name? No? We don't pray to Jesus. Okay, so we're already not in good footing here. And it was just getting hard.

I mean, I'm getting irritated. And just recently, I think it was the night or two nights before, I had this dream of this black leopard coming at me and I was shining the light on him and he was just trying to get around it. And so God brought that to my mind right then.

I just relaxed. Oh, okay, he's not open to it. And so that's how it works.

It doesn't happen very often. It doesn't happen, to me at least, and some people though. Joseph was commanded in his dream to what? Flee with Mary? Joseph, actually the other... I'm sorry.

Yeah, Joseph, Jesus' dad. And I would say it's actually, he's the son of God, but Joseph is the temporary father. He was given a dream to what? Go to Egypt and flee.

God didn't say take this road, turn right here, go sit in this town. So sometimes with dreams, it's more of a prompting to go in that certain direction. We have, of course, Joseph and the dream he had in the Old Testament.

Paul had a dream. The wise men were warned not to go back that way and talk to Herod. And so God can use these things.

And you see in the Christian community, like I always like to do, is give you the both sides, and you see one side that is not open at all. Oh, that's just some pizza. That was some pepperoni sitting there.

That was not a dream from God. God doesn't do that anymore. But then, the other side is, man, it's a dream every week.

Come on, folks. He gave Abraham one dream, one vision. It lasted quite a while.

And God doesn't lead, okay, here's a dream. Here's a vision. Here's a dream.

Now, maybe if somebody's specially gifted, God's working in them, and they're gifting, okay, you just have to be very, very, very careful. This side has to be open, but cautious. This side has to be careful.

And not just, I had a dream about this. Usually, if there's a dream about something, and I've had some that I don't even know if they're going to come to pass, and I can't really talk about them because I'm just praying about them. I remember one, I actually know the street.

I see the stop sign. I see the church. And I see the cars backed up a half mile.

And so, I don't know if that's going to happen. That did happen when we had Kim Walker-Smith guest worship, and I got some people mad at me because the line was down around the corner back down by the community center. And so, you know, God just, the Holy Spirit is to help.

And sometimes I need some help. Even studying the Word of God, I need some help. This is a difficult decision.

Anyone been there? I'm having a difficult time, Lord, will You show me? And so, there can be that time where God will use that dream. At least in my life, it's been mainly to warn, or encourage, or exhort, or to prepare. I had another, gosh, I didn't know this was going to be a dream sermon.

Many of you know we recently sold our house. Well, not recently now, it's been about two years. Kind of foresaw what's coming up now.

And I had a dream that a Coldwell banker was doing an open house. And I'm like, no, I have experience in real estate. I'm going to do a FSBO.

You guys know what that is? For sale by owner. Well, that's pretty draining, let me tell you. I don't know if that's a good way to go.

And so, through a series of events, guess what eventually happened? Yes, a friend of mine works there. This, this, and then an open house opens. And it's like, wow, this is... But see, that doesn't make me make decisions.

It only confirms what God is doing. Because I trust You, Lord, 100%. I don't trust Shane Eidelman.

These thoughts I have? I mean, I have thoughts all the time. I need to go talk to that person. I need to go confront that person.

Is that Shane angry? Or is that the Lord prompting? Because thank God we don't do every impulse, or we would be in trouble. We'd be hurting a lot of people. And so, I usually take it to the Lord and say, Lord, You have to confirm.

Show me what this means. Some things, you know, it's in the back burner up here for a while, and then God... I'm hoping I can share more sometime in the future about that dream I had about the sea of people. There's so many different things, but God will use a dream to speak to you if we're open but cautious as long as it lines up with His Word.

Okay, I guess I could have just shared that 10 minutes ago. But I wanted to give you some background. But Abimelech had not come near her yet.

And he said, Lord, will You slay a righteous man also? I haven't done anything yet. Lord, thank You for warning me. Did he not say to me, she is my sister? So God was gracious enough.

Abimelech didn't know. Abraham was worried that he would get killed. And God said, okay, in a dream by night, you're a dead man if you take her to be your wife.

And she even herself said, he is my brother. Half lie? In the integrity of my heart, the king says, in my innocence, I have not done this. I have not laid my hands on her.

So what I like here is God gave him an opportunity to repent. You catch that? Why didn't God just take him out? Here's what you're about to do. This is why it's wrong.

You have an opportunity to repent. And that's why I truly believe that God has given all man the ability and the inclination. God is not willing that any should perish, but all come to the knowledge of salvation.

And I desire every man to be saved. And there's a call to repentance. And so maybe you hear this morning, someone here this morning, is God trying to ring your bell? Knock on your door? Get your attention? Repent! But Shane, I thought that had to do with salvation.

No, I actually repent a lot more than I used to. Before I was full of God's Spirit, I wasn't repenting. I thought I had it all together.

I'm a pretty good guy. My twenties, I'm humble, I'm gracious. I give to Red Cross now and then.

Repent? What are you talking about? That's pride. And so for a believer to repent is saying, Lord, I'm going in the wrong direction. Unless none of you went in the wrong direction as a believer.

But let's assume you have. This is not right. This is not good.

My attitude's not right. I'm repenting. I'm changing course.

And again, as always, I don't know how transparent to be, but I got here about 5.45 this morning. Spent a lot of time at this altar. And I had to release a lot of bitterness.

I had a root of bitterness. And it was festering up. And a lot of it has to do with friends that were good friends that moved.

And I've been holding that on. You're like, well, why are you leaving me here? Like these best people in the church just moved the last couple of years. I mean, we're talking 150, 200 people.

It's the same of all churches I know. Most churches have not grown through the pandemic. Did you know that? Most churches are at half to 60%.

We're the only church that I know of that has actually grew after it. Other than Jack Kibbs, Rob McCoy, and of course, people you know. So I just released that.

Why am I holding that in? That's a tool of the enemy. People enjoy their life. Do what they want.

And there was a release there. Also had to release it from about six different pastors over the hill who closed down during the pandemic and who were mad at me. And I believe some of them are letting in destructive doctrines into their church.

And I just had to, Lord, I give it all to You. I give it all to You. Release all this bitterness.

Maybe some people in this church, I had to release some bitterness. Because see, all of us are susceptible to the plans of the enemy, the thoughts that come in. So long story short, it's quite freeing.

Feels pretty good. You should try it sometime. Doesn't mean the thoughts don't come back.

But hey, Lord, I'm letting that go. You've got this. God is the master chess player.

So when someone makes a move you don't understand, watch out. Because He does not miss a move. And the more I trust in Him, the more I want to just... And the pain was pretty deep because some people would move and I wouldn't even know until it was too late.

And like, I didn't see that coming. And so just releasing all of that and so many other things that are so important to just get our heart right before God. So He gave him the opportunity to repent.

And I know God's been dealing in my heart for a while on this issue. Maybe in some of your hearts, whatever that area is, a wrong critical heart, judgmental spirit, bitterness. But you don't know what they did.

True, but you releasing it doesn't mean they're right now and you're wrong. It just means I'm not holding this anymore. I'm getting this junk out of the trunk.

And I'm moving forward. And so He gave him the opportunity to repent. And He gives us that same opportunity as well.

And so I mentioned dreams already. Destiny or danger. I would just say be careful.

And I would say this without a shadow of a doubt with no hesitancy whatsoever. You should be buried in the Word. That's where you're going to get 99% of your direction.

In the Word of God. And I know a lot of people. I've been to churches before.

Me and my wife are looking for churches and different things. It's all about dreams and visions. What are the prophets saying? What are the prophets saying? I don't know.

What is Jesus Christ saying to me every day in His Word? I don't need all these little... And then I feel like I'm a double-minded man unstable in all my ways. I'm looking to people. Give me a word.

Give me a word. A dream. A vision.

No, what does God's Word say? Here's my path. And Lord, I need a little help sometimes. I need a prophetic word sometimes to speak directly to me.

I need a vision or a dream for my life. Lord, would You help me down this path? And that's how they work. And then 22 years of coming back to the Lord, I've never been steered wrong with a dream as long as you keep it within the restraints of Scripture.

If I have a dream to do something that's not biblical, what about if I have a dream to move to Idaho and start a church? Who's going? Listen, for the last two years, people are all, you need to come to Tennessee. You need to come to Idaho. You need to be in Florida.

No, I need to be right where God wants me. But what do I do? What do I do if I have a dream? I haven't, so don't worry. But what do you do with that? Obviously, this doesn't make sense.

Obviously, this isn't going to work. And so you just run it through the filter of Scripture. But I do want to read this one.

Acts 16.8-10. Acts 16.8-10. I think we have it on the screen actually. A vision. Now this is a little bit different than a dream.

If you've had these before, it's just like God just shows you something. It's like you'd walk out and you could see, like I see a church there. And God just shows you something.

Again, you've got to be just as careful with these as dreams. Because you can show yourself something. The enemy can show you something.

The wrong desire can show you something. And so, yes, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. It could have been a dream, but the word vision here is used.

A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to them. I'm pretty sure this wasn't a vision from the enemy.

The devil's going to tell you, go preach the Gospel in Macedonia. So we can rule that one out there. And visions are interesting.

I'd say, I don't know, I can't even think of, I probably should have thought about it. I don't know if I've ever had, maybe my wife can remind me later, but if I've had a vision where I'm up and you see something. I know I have, I just can't recall what they were, but sometimes God will show you things.

I just think of one, I don't know if I should tell it though. I told my wife, I remember exactly where it was, and this thought is not even on my mind. You ever been there? And I can picture Tim sitting in the pew right over there, and as we're making the announcement about the special needs class, I can just see Tim is getting excited, wondering if God wants him to do that.

Hmm. So when you know it, I text him, and guess what? I can't believe you are asking me that. Every since you announced it, it's been on my heart.

I've been taking it to the Lord in prayer. I don't know about that. There's fruit.

Am I going to text him that? That's not even on my radar. It's not even on my mind. And so see, boom, I want you to do this.

Does that line up with his word? Now, of course, I didn't do it right away. I processed it. Okay, let me see.

Let me see. Well, he's worked with special needs in high school before. Hmm.

I don't know. That might work. Let me just throw it out there.

And so see, that's how these things are supplementary. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, they supplement. You ever hear the word supplement? I'm going to talk about those a little bit on May 21st next Saturday.

You take supplements. If you want to be convicted, come here Saturday. Let me tell you, I've spent 60 hours so far on this message in the last month.

Ten times more than any other sermon usually. But a supplement is when you're deficient in certain areas. So you take supplements.

Now, there's a big debate on if it actually gets into your system. And we talk about fat-soluble and water-based. Let's just say this.

Something is added. For example, vegans or vegetarians, they have to take B12, B-complex vitamins because some vitamins come directly from meat and dairy, the fat-soluble vitamins. And you have to supplement yourself.

B12, thiamine, riboflavin, you know, those things. And so you have to supplement. So that's what the gifts of the Spirit are.

I have the meal. The meal is the Word of God. But I'm a little deficient on trusting me.

I want to know if this is God. So I need a little supplementation. I need a prophetic word from time to time.

That doesn't bother me. Because if it lines up with God's Word and the person is sincere and they're humble and they're gracious and they're not a... You know, there's some people, not here of course, and they've come, oh, I've got a word for you. I don't know about that.

Because that's how they get built up. Oh, I'm a prophetic voice. And they're arrogant about it.

See, when God truly speaks to someone like that, it's usually from a humble person who's going out in fear and trepidation to speak to someone. Like, Lord, I pray this is God. God, please show me.

And there's a humility. You are basically saying, thus saith the Lord. Now, I've never said God says this.

I would say, I feel strongly. Man, I don't know what you want to do with this, but I feel God's put this on my heart. I'll leave it up to you.

And so those things help us in our walk with the Lord. So again, visions and dreams confirm. They convict.

They warn. And they encourage. But direction is where we can sometimes get into trouble.

Getting that direction. I had a dream to leave my job. Well, have you been praying about leaving your job? Or have you been complaining about your job? Because you can have, I had a dream to leave.

Okay, are you complaining about the workplace environment? Does God want you to keep you there? Or are you free to... You see how that works. The direction is so important. And Paul was so full of the Spirit and lived a life of prayer, that this lines up perfectly.

And see, the more time you spend with God in His Word, the more time you spend in prayer, the more time you spend waiting on Him, actually, the better you can hear His voice. To me, it's not as confusing as it was 22 years ago. God had to lead me as like a little baby.

Come on, Shane, it's okay. Come on, come on. I don't know, is that you? Is that you? I've spent so much time, listen to me.

Because what it is, hearing God, it's like the outflow of what's already going inside. It's almost like, remember the old radios where you turn that... And then you get the right song? As you're following God, waiting on God, repenting, worshiping, praying, being active, serving, repenting, full of the Spirit as much as possible on this side of heaven, because sin's in there too, you turn into the frequency. Ah, that's God.

That's God. That's God's voice. And Lord, this is a big deal.

I don't know if it's you, so would you show me? Because again, I trust you. As soon as I know it's you, I'm on it 100%. I'm on it 100%.

As soon as I know it's you. I actually wasn't even planning on talking about this today. But many of you know, I'm going to talk about it on that day as well, Saturday, but I went into a fast, a long fast, and God's been dealing with me in this area probably five years.

So don't say, oh wow, Shane's pretty disciplined. No, it took five years of spanking. I've got journals in my Bible.

I'm like, ah, 40 days. You've got to be kidding me. That's like for Jesus.

There's no way. I've had dreams about it. I'll just turn into certain... Lord, if I see that verse today, if I see that verse, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.

Lord, I need confirmation. Ah, I didn't see this verse. Let me just do some reading from Ian Bounds.

And there it is. Right before bed. And so it's been a long process on that and being dialed in to the right voice.

And so people are like, well, what? Day 23, 24, 25, 26, aren't you? By now, you might as well just open up Fort Knox. Because God has so confirmed it. I know He's working.

I know He's doing it. You might as well. I just gave my daughter some chocolate muffins today somebody left for me.

And I'm just making dinner for the family. Grouse-fed beef and the smell. It's just dead to me.

Because I know God has told me to do this. And so I'm going to talk about that hopefully more on Saturday. I don't want to make it about that, but it's so important.

It's so pivotal to starve the flesh and be filled with the Spirit. Tomorrow will be actually the 40-day mark. Now, one out of ten don't like me talking about this.

Pastor, didn't you read Matthew 6 where you're not supposed to talk about your fast? Yeah, I read it every six months. But see, context, context, context. If your heart's wrong, oh, look at me, I'm so spiritual.

Oh gosh. But if you're helping people, you're motivating people, God releases you to talk and call a corporate fast. I don't see any harm in that.

How do you know Jesus fasted? Well, that darn guy told people. How do you know anybody in the Bible fasted? They told people. See, so it's about the heart.

Now, if you go around, actually, it's humbled me more than anything else. The fruit has been amazing. People all throughout the United States that are being transformed by it.

It's amazing. And spiritually, I've gained a lot of weight. Physically, I've lost about 35 pounds.

230 to 195. But joint pain, pretty much eliminated. Energy.

Go to bed at 9 o'clock, wake up at 3 this morning. Energy. I could go on a jog.

Getting the addictive nature of caffeine and sugar and processed foods out of me. And just starving the flesh and fighting grip every step of the way. Now, I'll have a little juice like I brought today so I don't pass out.

Enough to get me through the day. I had a tablespoon of almond butter yesterday because I have stuff to do with kids. It's not easy to fast.

But my whole point in that was when you know God's told you to do something. And not everybody's kind and gracious. Stay at home.

You're getting too skinny. Are you sick? If 195 is too skinny, why didn't you go look at pictures from the 1950s? Everyone was an ideal weight. But see, our focus... My focus is also on taking care of my blood pressure.

What's getting up there? 150 over like 95. Now it's down to below normal. So aren't we supposed to take care of this wonderful gift that God... Do you think I can be a better pastor? Let me tell you without a shadow of a doubt.

I can be a better husband. I can be a better father. I feel like preaching my heart out.

Because the physical affects the spiritual. Does it not? Quick example. I'll be back on point.

I'll get away from the conviction. But I was driving by the diner on the way here. You know, right down the street.

And a thought came. Boy, can you imagine a big stack of blueberry pancakes with maple syrup and a big strong cup of coffee? Doesn't sound good. But I thought, if I actually did that, I wouldn't be able to preach

well.

I'd be like, worship team, can you come back up? I'm going to get to part two next week. I'm just so tired, it's nap time. The physical affects the spiritual.

Angry outbursts on our kids and our spouse. Get off that Christian crack and you'll be a lot more sensitive. It's just truth.

These are truth bombs. And what I've noticed is people just don't want to hear conviction. And then they'll shoot the messenger.

And so it's been extremely difficult, but extremely rewarding, because I know God called me to do it five years later. And boy, I've tried. I've tried and I've blown it.

On my sabbatical, I tried. When you know it, blew it, blew it, blew it. And then you get frustrated.

Then I just say, I don't care anymore. That's why I put on weight and I start to not eat as healthy. And my joints are hurting.

I can't play with the kids as well. Everything is affected by how we take care of this gift. For those who can.

I know not everyone can. So Genesis 21. Isaac is born.

And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said. And the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. Now again, I'm bouncing around here.

Genesis 20 was dealing with Abimelech. Now Genesis 21. The Lord visited Sarah as He said.

And the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. And at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Three times. God said. God spoke.

I told you this would happen. When God sets something in motion, let it happen. Let God just have His way.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, Isaac. Isaac, Isaac, Isaac. And that's where we get Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The twelve tribes of Israel that are part of the Old Testament. And one verse that really stood out is Psalm 19. It's been an anchor for me.

Remember the word. Remember the word to your servant upon which you have caused me to hope. And the psalmist cried out, Lord, remember the word.

Remember what you told me. God, I remember what you told me that my sons or my daughters would come to know you. I remember what you told me that my spouse would come to know you.

I remember what you told me about this situation. I remember you told me that if I seek you, I will find you. God, I remember that voice, that word you gave to me.

Now, Lord, would you please strengthen your servant. You've given me hope. God, the hope is fading.

Don't look at the news too much. It's hard to keep your hope alert up here. God is always on time.

And then it gets into Hagar and Ishmael. Many of you know the story, but for those of you who don't, Hagar is the mistress. They said, okay, we're going to fix God's plan.

Obviously, I'm too old, and so God doesn't know what he's talking about. The child, the promise, she's going to have to come through Hagar. And that caused all kinds of problems.

And then Hagar had Ishmael. She got Ishmael, who's older than Isaac here. And you still see that conflict today in the Middle East.

It started way back in Genesis. And so Ishmael and Hagar had to depart. Genesis 21, and God, there's a consistent pattern here.

And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad. Basically saying, I hear the voice of the child.

Can you imagine? And it's different. I mean, it's interesting, because at the time, one text says he was probably older, and another one makes it sound like obviously he's a young child. And so God could hear the voice of this young child weeping.

The mom gives some distance so she doesn't hear the cry of her child. Have you ever done that? You don't want to hear your child cry every time my wife puts my daughter down for a nap. I'm saying, let me go outside.

Going, Daddy! Daddy! Every time, every time. Oh, I'm going to go in there and get her. And Morgan says, she needs to learn her lesson.

She needs to go to bed. She's cranky. But I hear, Daddy, is that out the front? I'm out the front door.

I hear, is that her? Now, you know the real cry, though, when it's like something is wrong, and you get off that phone call, you burst through the door, and it's the same picture. God hears the cry of his children. Then the angel called to Hagar out of heaven and said, What ails you? Fear not, do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad.

And I think that's an encouragement for some of us today. What ails you? What burden did you bring in? Don't worry, God hears your prayer. God hears your cry.

Sometimes maybe you just need to be told to stay the course. Just stay the course. Sometimes we don't have answers.

I don't have answers for a lot of things, but I just stay the course, because the enemy wants to knock you off course and get you distracted and go down the old path that is not good. Not where the Bible says choose the old path. Make sure you choose the old path, the good path, the straight and the narrow.

And so Psalm 34, I think we have that one up there as well. English Standard Version. Some people call it the Elect Standard Version.

Some of you will know what that means. Well, let me just tell you. A lot of the translations, whoever are the translators, they define the word, they're going to kind of bend it to what their theological system is when they define words.

There's different translations out there. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of their troubles. Is that a promise we can take home today? When the righteous cry for help, genuine help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

The problem is we read that and we say, amen, that's going to happen today. And then five days from now, that's going to happen soon. Lord, what, you just, what am I, well, there's no time frame.

And God, and it's perfect time. I look back and I can't think of one time where God was not on time. Wasn't on my time, but I can't think of one time.

And even looking back where I wanted things to be pushed and rushed, man, I praise God they weren't. I praise God that they were just, you know, at His time. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them.

Psalms 145, the Lord is near to all who call upon Him. Those who call upon Him in truth. See, there's a distinction there.

He's near to them. Doesn't mean He delivers me right now. Doesn't mean He gets me out of the problem.

But He's near to me as I'm crying out and calling for Him. What we have to understand is we talk a lot about faith in God and persevering and trusting. Did you know that those are really only tested in the furnace of affliction? I mean, it's really easy to have faith when I see the result.

It's easy to persevere when I'm already at the end of the finish line. So these things, these are spiritual muscles, spiritual disciplines that we keep the course regardless. And that pleases God, I believe, more than anything else without faith, it's impossible to please God.

When I say, Lord, I trust You. I don't see the results. I don't know where this is going.

I know what You want me to do or where You want me to hold the course. I don't see any. Actually, anybody see it going the wrong direction instead of the right direction? That's the time to dig in deeper.

That's the time to say, okay, come hell or high water, I'm staying in the course. Now God says, now that boy has faith. That woman has faith because they don't even see what's going.

Isn't that the strongest trust a person can give to God? I'm praying for this. I want this, but I don't... I see the opposite. That's the only thing that keeps me going, praying for our nation and praying for a spiritual awakening.

If you look around, you can get very discouraged. You say, well, God must not be hearing. I know you might be saying, oh, that's a remnant church.

That's a remnant of believers. Are they still worshipping me? They didn't give up on their prayer meetings and prayer mornings and they're continually battling and they're seeking me. That is a church that I want to get behind.

They know that I might not answer according to what they want. But that pleases the heart of God. But now we have to look at Proverbs 128 in contrast.

Then they will call upon Me, but I will not answer. They will seek Me diligently, but not find Me. And you say, that doesn't make a lot of sense.

Well, as with all things, any time you read a Scripture, read all of the Scripture. Front, back, middle. The context is, wisdom cries out in the street.

Wisdom cries out in the street. God's telling people, turn to My wisdom. Wisdom cries out like a lost child crying out.

Get wisdom and get all your understanding. Get understanding. She will exalt you.

She will promote you. Get wisdom. Get wisdom.

Get wisdom. And the people are rejecting, rejecting, rejecting, rejecting. And then finally, Oh God! Oh God! Now, here's the key though.

Sometimes that Oh God at the last minute, He hears. But what is going on here? Well, I believe, again looking at the context, is this person is caught rather than contrite. They're caught.

Oh, they caught me. Ah, Lord help me. They're not contrite.

And we see this a lot in the church. So many people, maybe they're at the altar, they're crying, Pastor, can you please help my marriage? Oh God, please help, please help, oh please. And come to find out, they're just mad that they're going to have to split their money now.

It's ruining their reputation. They're caught. They're not repentant.

Big, big, big difference. What's the difference? Wrong heart. Wrong heart.

And so a person who is caught, God's not going to answer that prayer until they get contrite. And one person is weeping over the consequences, they're not completely broken. See the difference? What happens is this person, the consequences are hard, I'm going to be hit financially.

Now I'm, whatever's happening, and now I've been exposed. We don't like to be exposed. And we get angry, we cry, and now I'm exposed.

And what happens is, when this person doesn't get their way quick enough, what happens? I'm out of here. I'm out of here. Oh see, it really reveals the heart.

That is a true, testing like this will definitely reveal the heart. And then Abraham's faith is confirmed in Genesis 22. This is the one I want to talk about a little bit more, on hearing God's voice.

We might have to do part two, because this is so important about Isaac. Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice. And I'm going to spend some time in there.

Again, Genesis 22, when we go into part two. But let me just read it for you, so something to think about. Now it came to pass, after these things, that God tested.

Does God test? Put your name in there. Now it came to pass after these things that God tested. Shane.

God tested. Scripture is really clear that God does test. There's a testing.

And it's not like God saying, I wonder if they're going to pass this test. It's more for me than Him. God tests me.

What does a test do? It brings out the best and the worst. It puts the weight on. It puts the responsibility on.

It leads to spiritual maturity. And Abraham said, here I am. It's amazing.

Ready to follow no matter the cost. Abraham was ready to follow no matter the cost. Then he said, take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering.

Wait a minute. This is the son of the promise. You did this? God? You allowed this blessing to take place, and now I have to give it up? Now of course, this is a very popular passage.

Christians that are mature or know the Scriptures will say, oh, this could be your Abraham-Isaac situation, meaning you have to give up a dream. Sometimes that's very biblical. Very biblical to say, Lord, I feel this.

I'm wanting this. It doesn't look like You want me to do this. I'm giving this up.

I'm giving this dream up. I'm basically putting it on the altar. And sometimes God will take away to really reveal what's in the heart.

Isn't that true? Like when things are going my way, man, Lord, I'm seeking You. Man, things are getting back together again. This is being restored.

This is being repaired. Man, I'm following You, Lord. We need those times.

Thank God. But sometimes God says, He rips all that away from you. Now it's all falling apart.

Lord, You're taking this from me? My job? My career? Spouse? Kids? Health? I mean, there's so many things. And now that that's gone, will You keep walking in the direction towards me? It tests you. It tests the heart.

And I can't tell you. I would say, eight out of ten people turn and run when God doesn't meet their expectation. Without a shadow of a doubt.

Without a shadow of a doubt. That's where we get better. I've been hurt by the church.

I'm not going back. I'm not following God. I'm going to sow my wild oats.

Oh, be careful, those oats aren't wild. There's a penalty. There's a price to pay.

And so we trust Him. Many times, He'll take away the dream. Take away the dream.

He'll say, will you still trust Me? Will you still follow Me? Closing, some of you have heard this, but when we first started the church, it was a great opening night. 200-some people came. And then about six months later, I preached it down to 652.

And I told my wife, I don't know, did I miss God's call on this? My goodness. You say, Lord, I'm not going to get bitter or upset. You know what to do.

I'm going to preach Your Word regardless. And you go through that difficult testing season. There's been testing seasons here at the church.

Anybody have testing seasons in their own family? Those are not the times to bell out. They're the times to buckle up and prepare for the journey and begin to trust God. Even when I don't even look like it.

Even when I don't even see the results, I'm going to trust You. And so I'll talk about this more next week. But God's will isn't always what we want.

If I want to leave you with a few things, that would be one of them. God's will isn't always what we want because we have the fleshly desires in there. It often goes against our fleshly desires.

How many people that are single or they're wanting to get married, they meet someone. Oh, I know we're on yoke, but I'll bring them around at some point. Okay, that's not God's will guiding them.

What's guiding them? Eye candy. Younger guys. All the younger people going, yep, I can tell your age.

But see, what I want, my lusts, my desires. Lord, I know You want me to be wealthy and work at a Fortune 500 company. No, I want You to do this.

Oh, no, no, no. I mean, over the years, it happened to me, so I'll be honest with you. It was hard to come back to the Lord and fully surrender everything because I thought I'd end up in Uganda.

In the jungle. Is there a jungle out there? Or the desert? I don't know. Oh, because we think God's will.

Oh, my goodness. But we forget that He gives you the godly desires of your heart. He puts you where you've created to be.

And so when you're there, you're excited. You love that God puts you in these certain spots. And again, faith must be tested.

It must be tried. So the question to think about today is what do you do when the dream dies? What do you do when the dream dies? Well, what you do is you encourage yourself in the Lord. But one thing that's been life-changing for me is Isaiah 40.

What you do when you don't know what to do is you wait and worship. You wait and you worship. You wait and you worship.

Where do the alternatives? I wait and I grumble and complain. Or I wait, and I'm going to go for plan B. Anybody ever work on plan B? One hand out of the whole group, that's pretty good. But remember this, God steals you.

Satan will rush you. God leads you. Satan pushes.

God reassures you. Satan frightens. God enlightens.

Satan confuses. God encourages you. The enemy discourages us.

God comforts. The enemy worries. God calms.

The enemy causes us to obsess. And God will convict you, but He will not condemn you. So as always, I want to give that call to those who might be listening who don't know God.

They don't really have that relationship. Charles Spurgeon said, men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. And if you don't have God on the throne, two groups of people quickly, if you don't have God on the throne at all, if you've not bowed your knee to Jesus Christ, confessed that He is Savior and Lord and repented of your sin, you need to do that this morning.

There's no guarantee of tomorrow. This is not a game. This is the truth.

Harden not your heart when you hear His voice. And the other group of people that might be here this morning, you love the Lord, but He's not on the throne. He's not on the throne.

Your career is on the throne. Your child's on the throne. Sports is on the throne.

Your career, money, recognition, comfort. I want to hold on to these things. Let me tell you, the best freedom you'll ever have is when you put God on the throne.

And you pray, Lord, whatever You want me to do, whatever You want me to do,

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