

Are You Following in God's Calling?

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following God's calling and being balanced in the Christian life, with a mix of truth and grace.

Duration: 1:50:28

Scripture: Acts 16:6

Topics: "Gods Will", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice and following His will, using examples from the Bible like Mary choosing to sit at Jesus' feet, Paul being redirected by the Holy Spirit through sickness, and the need to seek God's will above seeking money, pleasing men, or personal comfort. It highlights the significance of recognizing God's voice through peace in the heart, advice from godly people, and being open to God's redirection even if it seems like a setback.

Transcript

Yesterday, in the evening, we heard Brother Sher from Luke chapter 10. He was speaking from verse 38 to 42. Soon after I was born again, this is a verse that God spoke to me.

In verse 41, 42. Martha, Martha, you're worried about many things, but only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Martha, Martha, you're worried about many things, but only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. I was a new believer, and I'm very thankful that God told me that in the Christian life, one thing is absolutely necessary.

I was a new believer, and I'm very thankful that God told me that in the Christian life, one thing is absolutely necessary. And that was to do what Mary did. And she was, verse 39, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word.

And she was, verse 39, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word. Now, that is not our human understanding as the most necessary thing as a Christian. As human beings, we feel that we have to do something.

As human beings, we feel that we have to do something. Sitting and listening is a passive doing nothing. Sitting and listening is a passive doing nothing.

Whereas here, Martha was the active person doing something. Whereas here, Martha was the active person doing something. And the interesting thing is, she was not doing it for herself.

And the interesting thing is, she was not doing it for herself. There are many people who serve God for money, for honor. Martha was not doing all that.

There are many people who serve God for money, for honor. Martha was not doing all that. She was spending her own money.

And she was sacrificially serving the Lord and His people. And she was sacrificially serving the Lord and His people. If you meet somebody who is sacrificially serving the Lord and His people.

If you meet somebody who is sacrificially serving the Lord and His people. Will you ever think of saying to such a person, Oh, you are worried and bothered about many things, like in verse 41. Oh, you are worried and bothered about many things, like in verse 41.

You know, we have learned to be very courteous to people. So we would say, I appreciate what you are doing. You are doing a good work.

So we would say, I appreciate what you are doing. You are doing a good work. But, where the Lord felt something was wrong, He would speak very strongly.

But, where the Lord felt something was wrong, He would speak very strongly. Now, I realize that not everybody is called to speak so strongly. Now, I realize that not everybody is called to speak so strongly.

To say straight away to somebody, you are worried about many things. Or to say to Peter, get behind me, Satan. Or to say to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

Or to say to Pharisees, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell. Or to say to Pharisees, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell. The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ full of grace and truth.

The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ full of grace and truth. It's a balance. It's not only grace, it's not only truth.

It's not only grace, it's not only truth. And nobody has that balance perfectly, except Jesus. And nobody has that balance perfectly, except Jesus.

Because He was the body of Christ. One man, body of Christ. But, after that time, no one man has been the body of Christ.

All of us are only a small part of the body of Christ. All of us are only a small part of the body of Christ. And so, if we are to be balanced, we need one another.

And so, if we are to be balanced, we need one another. Paul was a wonderful man. No, radical and wholehearted.

And there were certain qualities in him which made the Lord call him. Paul tells us himself that he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, the great professor. Paul tells us himself that he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, the great professor.

But, pay attention to the difference between Gamaliel and Paul. Open, please, the 5th chapter of the Acts of Apostles. In Acts 5, and verse 34, we read about this certain Pharisee named Gamaliel.

And he was a teacher of the law, respected by all the people. This was Paul's professor in Bible school. And when he heard about all these Christianity and the Apostles being persecuted, he was a very gentle type of person.

He said, be careful, men of Israel, take care of what you do with these men. Because, some time ago, there was a man called Theudas who rose up, and some people followed him, and it came to nothing. After this man, Judas arose, and he drew away some people, and that also came to nothing.

So, stay away, verse 38, from these men. Because, if this plan is of men, it will be overthrown. If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, because you will fight against God.

Now, what do you think of that advice? What do you think of his advice? It sounds so gentle and diplomatic, and we can say that he had such a Christian attitude. But it is not true. I will give you an example.

There was a man called Muhammad, and a lot of people followed him. And we say, if it is not of God, it will be overthrown. If it is of God, it will continue.

There was a man called Russell, one of the early leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses. What should we say? If it is of God, it will be overthrown, it will come to nothing? Or Joseph Smith, who started the Mormons. Like that, many, many people.

To say that if something continues and becomes big, it is of God, is not correct. Buddha, what a movement he started. So this argument, that if something is of God, it will be not of God, it will be destroyed.

If it is of God, it will continue, is not correct. In fact, the true followers of Jesus throughout the centuries have been small, persecuted groups. In fact, the true followers of Jesus throughout the centuries have been small, persecuted groups.

They have never grown to enormous sizes. The second thing I want to say is, see, Gamaliel taught the Old Testament law. And the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 13 was very clear.

And the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 13 was very clear. That if a man arises, claiming to be a prophet, and does miracles, and leads you to worship another god, you must not listen to him, you must stone him to death. So here was Jesus, claiming to be a prophet, doing miracles, and as Gamaliel and the Jews understood it, leading them away from what they felt was the Jewish faith.

So, according to Deuteronomy 13, if you believe that, he and his followers should be killed. So, according to Deuteronomy 13, if you believe that, he and his followers should be killed. And the only one who wholeheartedly did that was Paul.

Gamaliel was saying, well, we don't know. That's why God could not choose Gamaliel, but he could choose Paul. That's why God could not choose Gamaliel, but he could choose Paul.

God will choose a man who is sincerely wrong, than insincerely right. You know, who is not right, but insincerely diplomatic. That's how Gamaliel was, and that's how many Christians are.

They don't want to offend anybody. They don't want to hurt anyone, and they get a reputation as loving, gentle people. But Paul was not like that.

He said, if what Gamaliel taught me from scripture is right, there's only one thing to do. All these followers of Jesus must be eliminated. All these followers of Jesus must be eliminated.

He was like a ship going full speed in the wrong direction. And when God turned him around, it turned around very quickly. Gamaliel was like a ship at anchor.

It's almost impossible to turn a ship around, which is at anchor. I don't know whether you know that. I've served enough on ships to know that if you're going full speed, you can turn it very quickly.

But you've got to be sincere. God is not disturbed when a man is sincere, even if he's wrong. I remember earlier in my ministry, I was very sincere, but I was a bit legalistic.

I was strict about certain things, which are not so necessary to be strict. But God had mercy on me and turned me around, because I was not seeking my own. I thought that this way I would please God.

But the great danger for people like Paul is that they can follow this bad course and hurt many people. When God called him, he said, I need to give him somebody to balance him. And so you read in Acts 13, verse 2, that he called Saul and Barnabas together.

Now Barnabas was the exact opposite of Paul. If Paul was truth, Barnabas was grace. And together they could manifest the glory of God, full of grace and truth.

And you see Barnabas' quality here in Acts, chapter 4. You see Barnabas' quality here in Acts, chapter 4, verses 36 and 37. His name was actually Joseph, a Levite. But he was such an encourager of people that the apostles changed his name.

He said, we don't want to call this man Joseph, we'll call him the son of encouragement, Barnabas. I mean, if somebody looked at your character and said, we're going to change your name to something like that. What a testimony that is.

I mean, if somebody were to give you a name, what name would they give you? Supposing your wife were to give you a new name, what name would she give you? Man of encouragement. That's a wonderful testimony. You know, our wife knows us better than anybody else.

You ask your wife when you go home, supposing you were to change my name, what would you change my name to? Am I a man of encouragement? He was a wonderful man, Barnabas. And he was a very generous man. He owned the land and he just sold it and gave all the money to the apostles.

And, you know, the wonderful thing is, when everybody was very afraid of Paul, Barnabas was the one who went, it says in Acts 11, about Barnabas went to Antioch. You know, there was a new church started among the Gentiles. And when the church in Jerusalem, verse 22 heard it, 11, 22, they said the best person to send is Barnabas.

And sure enough, I mean, they were all new believers. But in those new believers, he saw the grace of God. You know, to see the grace of God in a man who's been a believer for 30, 40 years is easy.

But to see the grace of God in somebody who was converted last week, that really requires some grace in your own heart. And he encouraged them, it says in verse 23. And look at this, look what the Holy Spirit describes Barnabas.

Verse 24. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith. What is the result? Great numbers were brought to the Lord.

And look at his humility. He said, I don't want a name to build a mega church here with all these people. I feel there's somebody who knows the Bible better than me.

Let me go and get him. He went to Tarsus to look for Saul. Saul had already been converted in chapter 9. But all the believers were suspicious of this man who was once persecuting the church.

He's now claiming to be a Christian. Is he a spy who has just come inside to find out something about us? There was only one man who trusted him and said, I'll go and bring him. And that was Barnabas.

Saul had gone back to Tarsus to his father who was a businessman. And if Barnabas had not gone, Saul may have just ended up as a businessman. And he went there and brought him to Antioch.

And for a whole year he got Paul to teach in the church in Antioch, verse 26. And they became such a wonderful team. And God had proved them and said, OK, now I've got a greater ministry for them.

And that was the balanced ministry of Saul and Barnabas. That's why the devil came there and split them up because you know in chapter 15 he just separated them. That's very sad.

That was not God's will. God's will was they should work together. But he split them up.

So what I want to say is that in the body of Christ there are some people who are called to minister like Paul. And some who are called to minister like Barnabas. One is not more important than the other.

If you have only grace, you have problems. If you have only truth, you have problems. If you have only truth, you will also have problems.

In the Gospel of John we read that in Jesus Christ God's grace appeared in full grace and truth. Let's turn to Acts 13. We read that Barnabas and Paul went out on their ministry together.

They had already been called as we read in verse 2. But they had the humility to wait for other elders also to be sure of their call. That's a wonderful example. Verse 2 is clear.

God says I've already called them. And in their private time of prayer God had called Barnabas and Saul. But they still prayed with verse 1 the other prophets and teachers.

While they were verse 2 fasting and ministering to the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke. And then the elders laid hands on them again and fasted again and prayed and sent them out for free. The great movements in the early church were always with prayer and fasting.

We found that also in our early ministry in our own church in India. And we also experienced this in our ministry in India. We read in verse 6 that when they went out on their ministry they reached the island of Paphos.

On this island there was a black priest, a false prophet, a Jew by the name of Bar-Jesus. And although Barnabas was 5-6 years older in faith than Paul. But in verse 9 we read that it was Saul called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, who spoke to this magician.

Listen to his words. Verse 10-11 You will be blind and you will not see the sun for a time. We would have thought Paul spoke in anger.

But it says he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was also filled with the Holy Spirit. But he could never have spoken like this.

I cannot imagine Barnabas turning around speaking to somebody saying you son of the devil, you enemy of righteousness. What I learned from that is two people can be filled with the Spirit and they can have two different ministries. One is truth, one is grace.

Both need each other. Truth is like the bones in our body. If you did not have bones, you won't be able to stand.

You will collapse like the jellyfish. Advantage of that is you can fit into any opening. No bones, square opening, round opening, triangle opening.

Anything you can go through. There are some Christians like that. They can fit in anywhere.

Catholics, Baptists, Protestants. They all fit in. No bones.

A lot of people think this is Christ like. It's compromise. At the same time, if you are only bones, supposing you see in the middle of the night one skeleton walking towards you.

You don't exactly feel very eager to go and meet him. The Pharisees were like that. Truth, truth, truth, truth, truth, truth.

You approach them, you feel like running away. When you met them, you were in a rage. Jesus had as much truth as the Pharisees.

But his bones were covered with flesh. And we see this beautiful person. If you remove his flesh, it's all skeleton.

But in him we see truth covered with grace. Both are scary and bad. True grace must include truth.

To help us to understand, we think of it separately. Grace and truth. It's like in water.

There's hydrogen and oxygen. When you separate them, it's not water. When you put it together, it's water.

Grace and truth make us Christ-like. And nobody is perfect in this except Jesus. And if you look at your life, you have a tendency towards being truth or towards grace.

If God wants to work with you and use you, you need a co-worker who is the opposite of that. I've seen that. Now, anybody who has heard me knows my strong point is truth, not grace.

But God gave me a wife who is the opposite. So I sometimes say, I make all the enemies and my wife makes them into friends. And then in my church, God gave me a co-worker who is exactly the opposite of

me.

It was exactly like Paul and Barnabas. I see my great need of him. And he sees his great need of me.

We've got strong views. He on grace and me on truth. But we've worked together for 38 years.

With strong disagreement sometimes. But not even one day where we broke fellowship. In 38 years, we could always speak freely to one another.

And when we disagreed on something, we didn't just say yes to please the other person. He didn't say that to please me, I didn't say that to please him. We would say, okay, we'll wait till we agree on that, then we'll go forward.

It's just like at home. If there was something concerning our children in the school or something, my wife and I disagreed on it, we'd say, okay, then we won't do anything till we are both agreed, then we will move forward. We felt that unity was important in the home and in the church.

And it's worked wonderfully for our children at home and in our church. But this has become very clear to us that none of us, even after so many years, I still feel I'm not perfectly balanced. And this is one way God humbles me by saying, you cannot operate apart from the body of Christ.

So, I'm constantly aware of my need of other brothers. And many times, the revelations I get on God's Word, most of the revelations I've got on God's Word are not when I'm alone meditating on His Word. Very often, it is when I'm fellowshiping with other believers.

Maybe they ask me a question which I've never even thought about. And I say, Lord, You've got to give me some answer to this. I didn't even think about it.

And like that, I get a revelation which I wouldn't have got if I had not been in fellowship with the brothers. And so, I greatly value fellowship with other brothers. In our weekday meetings in our church on Wednesdays, I just sit at the back and listen to a number of brothers speak.

And I find that the Lord speaks to my heart. And after they've all spoken for about one hour, I may get up and share 10-15 minutes. On Sundays, we have many more outsiders and so many people come to our church, so then I take the whole time myself.

But I see that in the ministry of Jesus, there are different aspects that different ones may be called to fulfill. For example, He spoke tender words like, I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more.

I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more. Come to me, all of you who are labored and burdened.

I will give you rest. That's one type of ministry. And the other type of ministry is, you serpents, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell? One ministry is to go to the pool of Bethesda and gently heal one man.

Afterwards, go and meet him in the temple and encourage him. And the other ministry is to go into the temple and turn the tables of the money changers and throw the coins away. He would encourage people in the temple and he would drive out the money changers from the temple.

Both are Jesus. And the people who major on grace, who think Christianity is all grace, if they saw Jesus opening the cages and letting the birds out and turning the tables of the money changers, they would have gone to him and said, Lord, you must be more Christ-like. Because Christ-like people don't turn the tables and throw the money.

Christ-like people will say, will you gentlemen please move away from here. Our idea of Christ-likeness very often is not from the Christ in the Bible. It is influenced by our personal bent of mind.

At the same time, there are others who feel all the time we must be chasing people out. There is no encouragement in them. Both these people by themselves are very dangerous.

If Paul was by himself, he would drive everybody away. And if Barnabas was by himself, the church would become a wishy-washy, compromising church. That's why there's a difference between Old Testament and New Testament ministry.

In the Old Testament, every prophet operated alone. If it was Moses, he was alone. Joshua alone.

Samuel alone. Isaiah alone. Jeremiah alone.

Everybody. They were lone prophets. They could never work with others.

The closest that we see to two people coming together is Haggai and Zechariah at the end of the Old Testament. And there also we don't know whether they worked together. Because Haggai was a much older man and Zechariah was a much younger man.

And it's possible they worked independently. At that time. At the same time.

But that's how all Old Testament ministry was. And the greatest prophet, John the Baptist, alone. Single man.

But as soon as you come to the New Testament, Jesus always sends people two by two. He never sent anybody alone. He sent out his disciples two by two.

And you come to the Acts of the Apostles and you see Peter and John. Two. Paul and Barnabas.

And when Barnabas left him, Paul and Silas. He never felt he could do it alone. So, that is why in the New Testament you never read of a single pastor leading a church.

Always the apostles appointed elders, plural. Acts chapter 14. We read here in Acts chapter 14 of the apostles appointing elders.

Verse 23. They appointed elders in every church. Not one.

But two. You see in Titus chapter 1. Verse 5. I left you in Crete that you might appoint elders in every city. Not a pastor.

A pastor is not a position of leadership. It's a gift. It's one of the gifts you read in Ephesians 4.11. Apostles.

Apostles. Prophets. Evangelists.

Pastors. Which means shepherds. And teachers.

Those are gifts God has given to the church. But the leadership of the church is people who are appointed as elders. The elder may be a shepherd.

It may be a prophet. It may be an evangelist. But it must be two.

So that there's a balance of grace and truth. And that's good also to keep us humble. You know when God blesses our ministry the great danger is spiritual pride.

That can come to any of us. Spiritual pride is like bad breath. Sometimes we don't know that our breath is bad.

Pride is like that. Especially when you grow older your breath becomes bad. I found that when I was young I didn't have so much bad breath.

Once you cross 65 you don't have much control over breath. So I have a faithful wife who tells me but pride is like that. We don't realize it.

But other people can sense it. This man is proud. And there can be spiritual pride in you which you don't even see.

A more mature brother will see it like that. Even without you're opening your mouth. In Proverbs chapter 6 it says pride is in your eyes.

It's in the heart but it comes out through the eyes. Like Jesus said bad things in the heart come out through the mouth. You want to see that verse? It's Proverbs chapter 6. And verse 16 and 17.

There are six things the Lord hates seven which are an abomination to him. Number one haughty eyes. Pride in the eyes.

But you say I thought evil is all in the heart. That's right. But like you can see anger on a man's face.

It's not started in the face it's started in the heart. And pride is also in the eyes. I also see that men who frequently lust after women and watch internet pornography you can see lust in their eyes.

You can't hide it. A pure girl will be able to see lust in the eyes of a man. He may hide all his lust in secret but you can't take it away from your eyes.

There was a great man of God in India in 1900s called Sadhu Sundar Singh. He was Sundar Singh. He was I think the most godly man that India has ever produced.

He died in 1929. I met an old man who met him long ago. That older brother told me.

He said I saw Sadhu Sundar Singh. He was 35, 40 years old. Sadhu Sundar Singh was 35, 40 those days.

He said the thing that struck me about that man was the absolute purity of his eyes. He had looked so much into the face of Jesus that his eyes had become pure. There is a danger for pride in all of us.

But we are protected if we recognize our need for other members of the body who try to balance us. So you don't have to be like somebody else. This brother who works with me he never tries to have my ministry.

And I don't try to have his. But as we grow older we will become more and more balanced. As we grow older this balance becomes better and better.

A person who used to be only grace gradually becomes more and more truth. I saw this in my brother who works with me. I see how he can stand and defend the truth like I did years ago and I find in fellowship with the body I also have grown to be more balanced in relation to grace.

And that's why some of the messages I preached 35 years ago I say please don't put it on the internet it's too strong. What I said was right. But the way I said it there was not much grace in it.

So I see now that there is more balance. But still I know that I have a certain burden to speak against certain things. Against Babylonian Christianity.

Turn the tables of the money changers. To speak against people who make money in television evangelists who speak against money. And I tell others, my co-workers in my church please do not imitate me.

God will not back you up. Because He may not have called you for that ministry. So we have to be very careful that God has called us to this ministry of exposing error and turning the tables of the money changers.

And if you do it in your own human zeal God will not back you up. It will bring chaos. And just because you see God's blessing on another man who does that ministry does not mean He will bless you when you do that.

The great danger is when we are blessed in one ministry we think we can do another also. There is an Old Testament example from which we can learn. It's in 2 Chronicles and chapter 26.

Here was a 16 year old king called Uzziah. Chapter 26, verse 1. This was the king in the days when Uzziah prophesied. Verse 3. He was 16 years old when he became king.

He lived right in the sight of the Lord. Verse 4. And he continued to seek God. Verse 5. Verse 7. God helped him.

And many wonderful things he did. But listen to this. Verse 16.

When he became strong, his heart was proud and he acted corruptly. What was his mistake? He didn't commit adultery. He was unfaithful to the Lord by going into the temple to burn incense on the altar.

What's wrong with that? No king was allowed to be a priest in the Old Testament. And no priest from the tribe of Levi could become king. Because king-priest was not allowed because it was reserved for Jesus Christ.

Like Melchizedek. In Israel, God said king is separate, priest is separate. When Saul tried to offer a sacrifice, Samuel said, because of this God has taken away the kingdom from you.

And Uzziah thought, God blessed me so much as a king, I can also be a priest. God smote him and he became a leper. We read in verse 19.

And they, verse 21, he was a leper to the day of his death, they put him in a separate house. What a sad way to die when you started so well. What was his crime? Because God has blessed me so much in this ministry, I can do that also.

There is a great verse in Colossians chapter 4. The Lord gave me this verse when I was a very young man. Colossians 4, 17. Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you fulfill that.

God has given you a ministry. Make sure what it is. And fulfill that.

Don't be a busybody in somebody else's circle. Stay inside your boundary. Paul was very careful about that.

He says in 2 Corinthians in chapter 10. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 13. We will not boast beyond our measure but within the measure of the sphere or circle God has apportioned to us.

We will not boast beyond our measure but within the measure God has apportioned to us. God has apportioned to us a measure of service, a boundary. And we have to stay within that boundary.

If God expands that boundary then I can move more. In many areas. When my wife and I were married our financial circle was very small.

We had very little money. And the Lord said stay inside the circle. If I had borrowed I would be going outside the circle.

If I had looked at somebody else and said I want that in my house but I can't afford it because my financial circle is so small. And God tested us like that for three years. We did not have money to rent a house for three years.

We stayed there in one small room so we will not get into debt. We did not buy any new clothes. Even for our child we could not have money to buy clothes.

My wife would tear up some of our old clothes and stitch little dresses for our child. It was good. We passed the test.

And then God gradually increased that financial circle and taken care of us today so wonderfully. But always we said we will stay within that circle. The same way in ministry.

It was very, very small when I started. I said I will not push my way here and there to get ministry. Never.

I said Lord if this is a small circle of ministry you want me to do in all my life that's all I'll do. And little by little God expanded that ministry. But step by step God expanded my ministry.

Your boundaries must be increased by God and not by you. God gave me the gift of speaking when I was 22 years old. Many people who were older than me were jealous of me and tried to push me down.

Because they saw other people were more willing to listen to me than to them. They were double my age. They were the elders.

I was a young brother. And the Lord said shut your mouth and submit to the elders. And the Lord said to me shut your mouth and submit to the elders.

And those were the years when God broke me. Right up to the age of 35. In so many ways He broke me, humbled me, humiliated me.

It was good for me. Because God never commits authority to an unbroken man. Because if an unbroken man gets authority he'll become a dictator.

So don't be in a great hurry to seek for ministry for yourself. Let God break you. He'll break you through other people.

And today God's made the circle of my ministry very huge. I'm not proud of that. I say Lord you can make it small again if you like and I'm quite happy.

Somebody asked me the other day in India Brother Zach I mean you've written books, tapes, internet what is the most important thing you think in your ministry? I'll tell you honestly it's very easy to answer that. To me the most important thing in my life is my bridal relationship with my bridegroom Jesus Christ. I have no... I don't think of my ministry.

I sometimes say Lord I'm happy to lie down in bed be paralyzed and not able to speak. It's okay. Because I'm not first of all a preacher I'm a worshipper.

I'm a worshipper. Because I'm not first of all a preacher I'm a worshipper. I'm not going to preach in eternity I'm going to worship in eternity.

I want to prepare for eternity by being a worshipper now. I want a love relationship with Jesus. That's like I said yesterday about the cup being full then overflowing.

In the Old Testament the cup was upside down and the ministry came from outside. In the New Covenant in the day of Pentecost God filled the inside of the cup That's this fervent love relationship with Jesus. And from there the ministry flowed out.

And if my ministry is to turn the tables of the money changers I'll do it. And if the Lord says now you must go and comfort that poor adulterous woman and don't condemn her, I'll do that. So that's why my life is at rest I'm not in competition with anybody in the world.

I have no desire to go here or there or there to expand my circle. I say that standing before God I have zero desire to expand my circle. If I go where God has not sent me I will be a curse and not a blessing.

Many people invite me to different places. I get a hundred invitations. I have no desire to go to those places.

Because I know one thing other people don't know. Some people say, oh brother Zach wherever he goes he'll be a blessing. I say that's what you think because you don't know God.

I know God and I know it's not true. I can be a blessing only where God sends me. If I go to a place where God has not sent me I will create more problems there than blessings.

I am the same person. I have the same knowledge of the Scriptures. I can speak from my experience.

But I will be a hindrance to God's work if I go where God doesn't send me. And so the most important thing is not to go here and there and bring revival. I learned that from Jesus.

My study has been the life of Jesus. To minister like he ministered I've tried to pattern my preaching after the preaching of Jesus. On our website there's a number of articles that I have written and one article is my style of preaching.

I've written a number of points that I've learned from the preaching style of Jesus. How he would speak in a way that even little children could understand. That's the best way to preach.

But I learned it from Jesus. And here's something else I learned, Luke chapter 4. When Jesus was in the house of Simon Peter many people heard he was there. And Luke 4, verse 40.

You've got to read carefully now. When the sun was setting that means 6 or 7 days 7 o'clock in the evening. All those who were sick with various diseases brought them to him.

I don't know how many hundreds of people were there. Jesus could have prayed a mass prayer when he saw a big crowd of sick people. They would have been healed even with a mass prayer.

But Jesus had such compassion. He felt that some of those poor people some of those lepers they need a personal touch. You know how today's preachers are they don't like to meet people personally.

They are so big they can only preach to a big crowd. Jesus was not like that. So today's preachers are not like Jesus.

He laid hands on every one of them and healed them. He had that gift we don't have that gift but we can at least meet with people individually and demons were coming out of him out of people but he would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. Because they knew that he was the Christ.

Oh, how different he is from those people who are cursing demons today. Demons know that you are the husband of God but he does not allow them to speak. I noticed that some cursing demons talk to demons.

They ask them many questions. You don't want any testimony from them. It must have taken a long time to finish all this.

When did he go to bed? Maybe midnight. Next morning when a revival like this takes place anywhere the sensible thing to do is stay and continue the revival. That's what human reason says.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil says stay there. But Jesus went to the tree of life. He came to the father early morning he went to a lonely place what did he do? He prayed.

Father, what do you want me to do? The father said, go away. The multitudes came to him and tried to keep him from going away. He said, sorry, I heard the father before I hear all of you.

But he said, I'm sorry but I'd rather listen to the father than you. I have to preach the kingdom of God in other places because I have been sent by my father for this purpose. He had no desire to suddenly become a great revival preacher there and expand his ministry.

He had heard his father. If it's reasonable to stay here I want you to go. God's ways are not our ways.

We must humble ourselves and recognize that. So often what we think is right is not God's way. Now I come back to Luke 10.42 One thing is meaningful to sit and listen to God's word.

What is God speaking to you? I remember a brother in India from a non-Christian background. I remember a brother in India from a non-Christian background. He was one of the greatest servants of God in India.

He was also from a Sikh family like Sadhu Sundar Singh. You know these people who have turbans? He was converted the year Sadhu Sundar Singh died. the year Sadhu Sundar Singh died.

His name was Bhat Singh. He was the greatest man of God I knew in India. And he said once I'd never read the Bible I was so angry I tore the Bible in my unconverted days.

But when he was converted and he was filled with the Spirit he started reading the Bible. And he said when I read Genesis chapter 1 I read there God said and God said and God said and God said the next day God said this on the next day God said this on the next day We Christians have read that so many times it doesn't strike us but he was from a non-Christian background with idols and all that. He read this and he said wow the God of the Christians speaks.

All my idols don't speak I say so many things to them but they don't reply. It's only me talking. But the God of the Christians every day he's saying something.

I said wow this is amazing how a non-Christian sees something in the Bible which I don't even see when I read it. Such a simple thing that every day God said something that's the message in the first chapter of Genesis. And because the earth listened something happened, something changed.

And finally the earth became perfect. So I learned from that that the most important thing every day is to hear God. I wake up in the morning and say I want to hear you Lord.

Whatever I'm doing whether I have a shower or sitting on the toilet I say Lord I want to hear you. It's the most important thing every day. What are you saying to me? I can have so many ideas what I should do but you know what I should do.

Jesus sometimes would travel 80 kilometers to help one person. 80. You read that in Matthew 15.

Jesus was in Galilee we read in Matthew 15, 21 he went outside Israel to the district of Tyre and Sidon That was not Israel, that's outside. And I looked in a map once that's about 80 kilometers. And why did he go? He felt a prompting in his spirit I must go.

He listened to his father. And when he went there with his disciples there was a Canaanite woman. This is one of those all the Canaanites were supposed to be killed but the Israelites did not kill all of them.

She was a descendant of that. She was not an Israelite but she said Lord son of David please help my daughter's demon possess. And he first tested her humility and faith.

And she humbled herself. She said Lord if I can't have the bread just give me a crumb. Jesus said woman your faith is great.

And Jesus in the 28th verse said your faith is great. And her daughter was healed at once. You know Jesus cast out the demon the daughter was in some other house maybe two kilometers away the demon was gone.

What did he do next? Verse 29 he went back. 80 kilometers back. What he learned from there was you know I've learned to read the Bible very slowly.

To stop stop and think. 80 kilometers one way 80 kilometers back. And no car or chariot he had to walk.

I don't know it would have taken at least more than a day to walk and more than a day to walk back to help one person. When I saw that I said Lord Jesus make me like you. I don't want to preach to great crowds.

I want to do your will. If your will is I preach to 30,000 I'll preach to 30,000. If your will is I speak to one person I'll speak to one person.

Crowds or no crowds don't interest me anymore. To hear what God wants me to do. like we read in Colossians say to Archippus Take heed to the ministry God has given you.

Fulfill it. Take heed to the ministry God has given you. When we come to the end of our life we should be able to say like John 17.4 what Jesus said at the end of his life I have finished the work you gave me to do.

the work you gave me to do. I have finished the work Father you gave me to do. I didn't go to Africa.

I didn't go to China. I didn't go to India. I didn't go to Europe.

I didn't go to America. I didn't go to Russia. I hardly went anywhere except in the small nation of Israel.

I hardly went anywhere except in the small nation of Israel. I didn't have a ministry for even ten years just three and a half years. But Father that's all the work you gave me to do and I finished it.

And therefore, verse 4 I have glorified you on earth. Have you understood what Christian ministry is? It's so different from this American way of ministry I see today. This is very different.

This is spiritual ministry. And if you go this way you will find at the end of your life you can say I have glorified God. Paul said that in 2 Timothy 4 in 2 Timothy 4 he says verse 7 I have fought a good fight.

I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. But you say Paul you wasted 30 years of your life as a Jew and fighting Christians.

30 years of your life you fought against Christians and you were his enemy. How did you finish and now you are 67 years old you are dead. You are dying.

How did you finish the ministry when you wasted 30 years of your life? God had mercy on me because I was blind. And God allowed for that. Maybe we wasted many years of our life in foolishness.

I also wasted some years in foolishness when I was ignorant. But God has mercy on that. We don't have to condemn ourselves.

But we can finish the ministry God has for us. Part of that ministry for Paul was lying in a jail many years. God who sent an angel to deliver Peter from a jail couldn't he have sent an angel to deliver Paul from a jail? God's ways are not our ways.

I read in Acts 16 Paul had a vision. A man saying come to Macedonia and help us. Macedonia is Philippi.

So he went to Philippi. And when he goes to Philippi the first thing that happens he is locked up in jail. Silas is with him.

Paul are you sure you got this vision to come to Philippi? Is this where God has sent us? Is this where God has sent us? To prison? Beat us? Yes, this is the place. It's almost as if God was saying In the jail in Philippi there is one needy man who will volunteer to go to jail to save him. Paul says yes.

Paul says yes. Lord send me anywhere. I want to bring people to Christ.

But Paul you'll have to go to jail. Oh sure. I can save one soul I'm willing to be beaten, jailed.

Paul, you're my man. That jailer is converted. And his whole family was baptized that night.

And his whole family was baptized that night. And I have a feeling that this man was one of the elders in the church in Philippi. And perhaps the first meetings were in his house.

God's ways are not always the way we think. God's ways are not always the way we think. You know, in Philippians he says a lot of the Roman soldiers are getting converted.

How did that happen? Again, the Lord says there are some Roman soldiers who are needy. Who will go to visit them? They won't come to your church meetings. You can only meet them in jail.

God says, I'm ready Lord. So he gets locked up. And since he was a high risk prisoner they would chain him to a Roman soldier for 8 hours.

And while sitting there Paul would say become friends with him. So you know we're all sinners. And start the gospel message.

And people can walk out of our meetings but this man cannot walk away. And in 8 hours this guy is converted. In 8 hours he's converted.

Not only converted, he's been established in the faith. He's got solid Bible study for some hours. And they pray together.

They say praise the Lord Paul I'm so glad I got tied up with you. Now my 8 hour shift is over. I have to go.

The next man comes. Paul starts again. What a wonderful thing it is to be where God wants you to be.

Not to try and push the boundaries of our ministry. Think of what a fantastic ministry Paul had. One man.

If you take one man, Paul, out of early Christianity half our New Testament is gone. So many churches are missing. One man.

You know you can be that one man. Any one of us. God has no respect for persons.

But he wants people who like Mary will listen to him and not go by their own reason. But he's looking for people like Mary who will sit at his feet and listen to him and not go by their own reason. I decided to do that many years ago.

I said Lord, I'm not going to go where everybody invites me. I will just run around here and there. I will not even go with the biggest group inviting me.

I remember once in India this was 1983 there was a big Pentecostal group that invited me to come to speak at their conference of 10,000 people. At the same time one small church of about 30 people invited

me to come. And at the same time and I prayed the Lord said go to that small group.

I said okay. So I told the big conference I'm sorry I can't come. And I went to the small group.

And there were people ready to hear the word. And God started a new church there. And from that church many new churches started in that whole state in the last 30 years.

we have a conference there every year for 30 years. What I would have missed if I had just seen oh 10,000 people I must go there. There are many instances I have experienced like this in India.

One thing is needed. Mary has chosen that good part. Not running around like Martha doing this that and the other for the Lord.

But listening. So the picture the Lord gave me in my mind was that this is a huge fruit garden that our Master has. And He wants me to go and pick up all the ripe fruit.

Supposing I say I want to do something for the Lord. And I go and sit under a tree and wait for 5 years for the fruit to fall. And collect it and go.

Then I go and sit under another tree. Instead of that instead of doing that I go to the Master Lord, where do you want me to go? The Lord says go to that tree. So I go there.

The fruit is ready to fall. In 5 minutes I've got my basket full. I don't waste 5 years.

Then I go to the Master and say here it is. Where shall I go next? Now go over there. The fruit is all ready to fall.

It's much better to listen to the Master. In the Luke in 1 Corinthians 4 there's a verse which says in 2, verse 2 A steward must be found trustworthy. There's a translation in English called the Living Bible.

And that paraphrase reads this verse like this. The most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his Master tells him to do. So that's what I've tried to do.

People also ask this question how do you hear God's voice? Well, it's like this. If there are 10 women speaking on the other side of this wall you can pick out your mother's voice very easily. Or if you've been married many years, your wife's voice.

But I can't make out. I don't know which is which. How do you recognize that voice which I cannot recognize? Because you've heard it so often.

I remember once there was some sick person in the US and he had been listening to my messages. Somebody else told me his wife is sick, Brother Zach, why don't you call him? I didn't even know who he was but I was given the phone number so I thought I would call him and pray for him. So I picked up the phone and I said, can I speak to so-and-so? He said, oh, hello, Brother Zach.

I said, how do you know me? He said, I've heard your voice so often that I can recognize you. I learned something from that. That's how you recognize God's voice.

If you hear it and hear it and hear it, you recognize it. And how do I keep on hearing it? First of all, through the Bible. This is definitely God's voice.

So when I'm taking a decision, I hear so many voices in my heart. My reason, my fleshly desires, the devil, advice of others and God's voice. Which is God's voice? Which is your mother's voice there? If I read God's word and everything God tells me I say, Lord, I want to do it.

Help me. I'm going to obey. Over a period of time, I begin to understand God's ways and I can recognize His way and His voice.

When I think of a course of action, when I have to take an action, either I have a little disturbance in my heart or a peace in my heart. That's how I know. It says in Romans 8, and verse 6, Romans 8, 6, The mind of the Spirit is peace.

The mind of the Spirit is peace. The mind set on the Spirit is peace. If it's the Holy Spirit's voice speaking to me, I'll have peace about it.

All the other directions, I think I'll have a little uneasiness. Even when young people are considering marriage, I say, find out all the facts about the other person. Talk to the person.

But ultimately, say, if you have peace in your heart, that's the way to proceed. That's how I married my wife, too. I said, Lord, I want to wait on You.

I want to wait on You. And over a period of time, I have peace. That is how we know what is God's mind.

And in the early days, we may make a few small mistakes. But they will not be serious. God sees our sincerity.

But I have to be free from certain things. I cannot serve God and money, If I have a mindset on money, I will miss God's voice. That's Luke 16.13. You cannot serve God and money.

Galatians 1.10. If I seek to please men, I cannot be the servant of Christ. So there are two things I have to be particularly careful about. I'm not seeking money here.

I'm not seeking to please men. And Romans 15.3 says, Christ never pleased Himself. So, that's the third thing.

I'm not seeking my own comfort or my convenience. Because if any of these three areas I'm seeking something else, then that will deflect my understanding of God's will. To use an example, in the olden days, 150 years ago, every ship had a magnetic compass.

And that compass showed them the magnetic north. And the magnetic north was nearly the same as the true north. And so, it gave them a direction.

But if somebody kept a little magnet underneath that, the needle will show north in some other direction. So, you had to make sure that there's no magnetic material near that compass. Something like that.

If I have a little love of money, the needle will show in that direction. If I want to please some men or I'm afraid of some men, then the needle will point in some other direction. Or, if I seek my own comfort, that's another magnet.

So, so many people, they think they're going to the true north, it's not north at all. Because there are these other magnets that are deflecting that needle. So, that's why we have to cleanse ourselves.

Lord, I don't want my own pleasure. I don't want to please men. And I don't want to seek money.

Tell me what is your will. And little by little by little, it becomes more and more clear. And then sometimes, if God sees that I've not heard Him clearly, I'm thinking of going in a certain direction and that is not His will.

Because my mind is not perfect. And the Lord sees I'm making a mistake now. But He knows I really want His will.

And He knows that there's a standard prayer that is in my heart always. Whether I pray it or not, it is in my heart. Lord, if something is not Your will, close the door that I can't go there.

That's my protection. That God can do something and close the door. Maybe I don't get a visa.

Or maybe I fall sick. It's amazing. If you are sincerely seeking through God's will, it's amazing what God can do for you.

I'll give you one example. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16. I think I'll stop after this and we'll have a break.

Acts 16. It says here that Paul verse 6 was passing through the Galatian region was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go and speak in Asia. See, Paul said I want to go and preach in Asia.

I've got a burden to go there. He wasn't seeking money. He wasn't seeking to please men.

He wasn't seeking his own comfort. With a sincere desire to spread the gospel. But as he was passing through Galatia, the Holy Spirit said no.

Can't go there. Now the question is, how did the Holy Spirit speak to Paul? How did the Holy Spirit speak to Paul? It was not a voice from heaven. Later on, when he was going to Philippi, there was a voice from heaven.

That is one way God speaks. God has spoken to me sometimes in a dream. But here, that was not the way.

Do you know how the Holy Spirit stopped him? By making him sick. That is one way the Holy Spirit stopped him. He was in Galatia.

Now you turn to Galatians and see what Paul says. Galatians 4 and verse 13. You know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time.

So, he says I did not plan to be in Galatia but I came there and I got sick. I was only planning to pass through Galatia and go to Asia. But the Holy Spirit stopped me.

How? By a sickness. And this sickness was such a trial to you, verse 14, in my bodily condition. And Paul continues in verse 14 You did not despise me or loathe me.

It was some type of sickness that they could see in Paul. Something in him that could have made them loathe him, it says here or despise him. But he says you loved me so much you treated me like an angel.

And not only that, verse 15 you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So, maybe it was some problem in his eyes that everybody could see. Some eye infection or something that you know

in internal sickness you don't loathe them but if the eye is always dripping you can loathe them.

He said you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. That's how much you loved me. So, amazing ways by which God stops His servant to build a church in the Galatian region.

So, if you ask how were the churches planted in Galatia? Paul didn't plan to go there. He wanted to go to Asia. The Holy Spirit stopped him in Galatia by sickness.

A sick person, he preached the Gospel. I remember I was once going to one of the Arabian Gulf countries in Bahrain. There was one brother of ours who had gone to work there so I just wanted to go.

I was going to a nearby country in Dubai where we had a small church. I just thought I'd go two days to encourage this brother in Bahrain and from there I'd go to another place. But when I went to Bahrain and I had to apply for a visa to go to the other place they said this is a Muslim holiday time the offices are all closed for the next five days.

They had long holidays at that time. I was stuck in Bahrain for five days. So, I said we don't want to waste it.

I said brother if anybody here is interested can you gather some people together we'll have a meeting. And because it was Muslim holidays everybody was free to come the whole day. And we had meetings the whole day and at the end of it there was a church born there.

It's still going strong there are some 70-80 people in that church. I didn't plan it. Whether it's sickness or not getting a visa God can stop you.

If He sees that in your heart you only want to do His will it's amazing what God will do. So we hear God's voice sometimes God speaks to us through another person through circumstances closing doors through the witness of the Holy Spirit within us and also through the advice of godly people. But I can't take that as final I always say take the advice of godly people but ultimately go by peace in your heart.

I say, listen to the advice of godly people but ultimately go by peace in your heart. Even when people come to me for counsel I say, I will give you my advice but don't do it until you take it before God and say, Lord what brother Zach said, is that your will for me? And if you don't feel peace about it don't do it. I won't be offended I'm not God you must have a connection with Christ I'm not Christ I'm only like a signpost saying Jesus is there don't get stuck at the signpost go there that's what I tell every person even if you are a young believer I can give you my advice sometimes I tell them this is what I have faith to do in your situation you may be younger you may not have faith to do it live at the level of your faith see, faith is like money some people have a lot of money they can rent a big house another person has little money he must rent a small house faith is like that don't tell people to live by your faith that's like telling people to rent a house as big as yours you can't afford it so I say this is what I would do in my situation God doesn't expect you to live at my level of faith you live at your level of faith this is my advice do according to your faith one thing we have to be careful here supposing somebody does not listen to you I have experienced that also and they go and make a mess of their life and they come back to you never say these words I told you so I never say that to my children I never say that to young brothers I always say never mind we can learn from our mistakes I never tell people I told you to make them feel bad let's see how we can make something good out of this situation let's pray Heavenly Father please help us to understand your will more clearly that we can do your will in all things we pray in Jesus name Amen

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