

## MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

### Introduction to Dr. Thrasher and Message Series

*Greg Wheatley:* Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a ministry of the Center for External Studies at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. I'm Greg Wheatley, and today we begin a brand new quarter in Radio School of the Bible, and as you probably know, that means a new topic of study.

As a matter of fact, our topic for this quarter is one that I think has entered every Christian's mind, and maybe several times, and it's this one: God's will for your life. I think I have your attention.

Well, with that, let me introduce our instructor. His name is Dr. Bill Thrasher. He is professor of Bible and Theology in the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute, and we'll be meeting Dr. Thrasher in just a moment and then getting into an overview of this.

Well, let's meet our instructor. Again, his name is Dr. Bill Thrasher. He is in the graduate school at Moody, and Dr. Thrasher, looking forward to this quarter on Radio School of the Bible.

*Dr. Thrasher:* Thank you. I certainly am myself.

*Greg Wheatley:* Let's find out a little bit about you before we dive into our topic. Now you've been at Moody Bible Institute how long?

*Dr. Thrasher:* 17 years. I came in 1980.

*Greg Wheatley:* That's a long time. And in the graduate school that whole time?

*Dr. Thrasher:* No. I taught my first ten years in the undergraduate school; had a wonderful experience. And then there was two professors, they transferred to the graduate school when they began a resident graduate program.

*Greg Wheatley:* All right. And this topic, I take it, is one that is very much near your heart.

*Dr. Thrasher:* Well, very much so, and I think that you'll see in a sense the way that we approach it that most people find freedom in regard to this topic. It can produce great bondage in people's lives.

*Greg Wheatley:* Well, it really is that kind of topic, and I think we're gonna find out, I'm guessing, that maybe that's due to some misconceptions about God's will.

*Dr. Thrasher:* Yes. We will talk about some problems in regard to God's will.

*Greg Wheatley:* All right. Well, let's dive right in. Today we get an overview of where we're headed this quarter, and with our overview, here is Dr. Bill Thrasher.

*Dr. Thrasher:* Thank you. The first key point that we'll be talking about for a number of sessions is this: that a person who wants to know God's will must understand God's purpose for their life. Now in regard to understanding God's purpose for their life, first a person has to come to grips and be able to answer five key questions. We'll be looking at these key questions.

The first key question is: What is the basic message of the Bible? What is the primary thing that God is seeking to communicate to us? What's the basic message of the Bible? We'll seek to discover that on a future broadcast of Radio School of the Bible. Also, what is the basic plan of Satan? What's the basic plan of Satan?

And then the third question is: What is the result of following Satan's plan, and how do I know that I am following that or I'm not following it? And then the fourth question is: What is the basic plan of God for man? And then the fifth question is: What is the basic purpose of God for man? I think when we can come to grips with these five questions, I think then we're at a good starting point of understanding God's will.

Now I think one of the problems – you mentioned problems, Greg, and I think one of the problems is this: that there tends to be a greater interest in God's will than in God Himself. And I think that produces great confusion in people's minds. They don't wanna make a mistake. They don't wanna do anything wrong. They wanna have His blessings, but they're not in the business of developing a relationship with Him.

*Greg Wheatley:* That's interesting you say that, because I think what you're saying, Dr. Thrasher, is that we kind of want to have this blueprint of what God wants out of us. And you see it show up a lot of times when we come to a major decision point in our life. Who should I marry? What job should I take? We almost want Him to write that in the sky, but we're not willing to get to know Him. Is that what you're saying?

*Dr. Thrasher:* That's exactly right. I remember a wonderful missionary statesman who's with the Lord now, Oswald Sanders. And he said that it's better to have an experienced guide than a detailed road map. And perhaps most of us need to repent of craving a detailed road map and not welcoming God's invitation to allow Him to be an experienced guide for our life.

*Greg Wheatley:* Very interesting.

*Dr. Thrasher:* So we'll talk about the importance of knowing God. We'll also look at what are symptoms that I have a wrong view of God. And then we'll spend considerable time on what does the Bible really teach me about God, who wants to disclose His will to you and me? And what we'll see is this: that knowing God's will is a result of knowing God. Really it's a byproduct.

Many of the things that we crave and we desire are secondary benefits. In other words, Scripture says, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and these things will be added unto you." And I think you'll find direction in life is a secondary benefit of pursuing a relationship with God. And we'll look at other secondary benefits, but we'll key in on the benefit of direction, or knowing God's will for our life.

Also, a person who wants to know God's will needs to know how God speaks. God speaks, I think, in one primary way and three secondary ways, and so we'll be looking at the way God speaks. Certainly God does speak. I mean you and I couldn't carry on a relationship with somebody if they never spoke to us.

And I think you in radio, and have spent a lot of years in radio, knowing that that's one challenge in regard to radio communication is we're talking, and only as they write in do we really get to hear from them. That's why we do greatly appreciate their response.

Also a person who wants to know God's will must be aware of some basic problems. We've alluded to that. One problem, we said, was having a greater interest in God's will than in God Himself. Another problem is wrong ideas about the God who guides and we'll talk about that when we allude to certain wrong views of God. Also wrong about ideas about how God guides.

I think that sometimes people are looking for some subjective confirmation in regard to every decision they ever have to make. Now it's not that God cannot do that, but I think it's wrong to say that God cannot do that. But to make that the norm for every decision that one makes I think obviously can put a person in great bondage.

*Greg Wheatley:* There is a freedom factor there, isn't there? Because I guess the ultimate maybe silly example is the person who would get up in the morning and ask God which color shirt they should wear. That's a little bit ludicrous. But we do that – and again, that's going back to what we said earlier, that we kind of almost wanna put God in a box by doing that, don't we?

*Dr. Thrasher:* That can be true. That can be true. I think certainly a life needs to be lived in open submission to Him, and certainly He has the right to show me what clothes I'm to wear, and we're not saying that. But I think we're saying almost really I think the underlying motivation is what gets a person in bondage. And that is an underlying motivation of fear as if they live in fear that they're constantly gonna make a mistake. And I think as opposed to resting in God's acceptance of them.

*Greg Wheatley:* And that gets back to knowing who He is, doesn't it?

*Dr. Thrasher:* Exactly. We'll also – we cannot really explore God's will without talking about some vital subjects in regard to the subject of prayer. That's a subject that is certainly very important on my own heart because of my own weakness that has driven me to prayer. I teach a course on that.

And so this will not be a course on prayer, but hopefully we will have some time to develop this idea of how a person sustains a meaningful prayer life as well as how does a person develop the habit of meditation of Scripture? That's the one discipline that God promises to bless unlike any other discipline.

We'll also talk about a person who wants to know God's will needs to have discernment in their life, and we'll look at certain Scriptural principles that help us in regard to questionable areas where people come to different decisions on whether God says this is right or wrong.

And then we'll also close with some very practical suggestions in regard to pursuing God's will. So that's a basic overview of where we'll be going in these 13 weeks together.

*Greg Wheatley:* Let me ask you this, because I think primarily those who would be listening are those who have put their faith in Christ. But let's talk about for a minute for one who has never done that. Who maybe has listened to this radio station but has never come to a point of faith in Jesus Christ. Do we have anything to say to that person?

*Dr. Thrasher:* We certainly do. We have a very explicit statement in 1 Timothy that says it's God's will – and there God's will is speaking of His desire – that all come to a knowledge of the truth. We read the same principle in 2 Peter 3. "It is God's will that none should perish but all should come to the knowledge of the truth."

So certainly it's God's will that they enter into a relationship with Him. That they accept the payment for their sin through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and they come to Him. And they begin an exciting adventure, because when they step into a relationship with Him, God has a plan for their life that He longs to disclose.

So if a person doesn't know the Lord, certainly God has a will to bring them into relationship with Him. If a person's known the Lord for many, many years, God has a fresh will for their life at this moment. I remember a statement in college that's always been a great encouragement to me, and it was this: that any time a person is surrendered to God, God has a will for their life.

*Greg Wheatley:* That's an interesting thing, because sometimes we think God is hiding His will from us. That it's this hard, hard process of finding it out. But really in fact, God does not desire to hide from us.

*Dr. Thrasher:* No.

*Greg Wheatley:* It's not that we have to twist His arm, so to speak, to find out His will, is it?

*Dr. Thrasher:* No. God is eager to disclose it. Now I think what we don't realize or thank God enough for is things that I do not know. I've certainly – I craved in a sense to have that detailed road map for my life before I entered seminary, telling God why that would be good for me to know that. Saying, "God, if I knew all these factors I'd know how to prepare myself and gear myself for that." And I cried to God for that and prayed for that, and the Lord never gave that.

I remember a wise pastor came to me one time. He says, "You know," he says, "you're the kind of person if you knew with that kind of precision what was ahead for you, you'd probably grow greatly discontent in the present." And so God doesn't promise to satisfy every curiosity at a given amount of time. There's uncertainties that all of us have in the future; things we'd like to know how they're gonna work out. But God knows what to teach us, and when to teach us.

*Greg Wheatley:* That's a good word, and that's a good place to stop for today. That is an overview of where we're headed in this quarter of Radio School of the Bible. This is the very first class session, so you're right in on the front end of this one. God's will for your life – a very interesting, very vital topic, and it's our topic this quarter.

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