

## MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

### How God Guides, Part 2

*Greg Wheatley:* Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a production of the Distance Learning Center at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. I'm Greg Wheatley, your host for these programs and in our final quarter together we're studying God's will for your life. Our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology at Moody Bible Institute's Graduate School.

Well, we're gaining these insights into God's Word and what it means to get to know God better and as a result of that, to understand more and more about His will. That's really kinda been the premise of this entire quarter and Dr. Thrasher, it's time to get back at it today.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Well thank you Greg, it's been a joy to be here. We've said that a person who wants to know God's will certainly needs to have a greater desire to know God and to know God's will. And as we respond to the character of God, we'll be led into the will of God. God is one who is eager to guide us. We've looked at some errors to avoid with some errors to avoid or things or patterns that we don't wanna fall into that can hinder us from experiencing God's will. Then we've also looked at some instructions or how God guides us and the first thing we talked about was some general instructions to heed that are things that are specifically stated to be the will of God.

We've also said there are examples to follow and that our supreme example is the Lord Jesus Christ. There's also discernment to exercise in regard to God's will, experiencing God's will. Discernment I believe scripture teaches is a fruit of presenting our life to the Lord. It's a fruit of concentration. We read in Psalm 25 where it says, verses 9 and verse 12 of Psalm 25. "He leads the humble in justice. He teaches the humble His way." And then in verse 12, "Who is the man who fears the Lord? He, God will instruct him in the way he should choose."

There's discernment to exercise. Jesus said it this way, recorded in John 7. He says, "If any man is willing to do His will, any man is willing to do God's will, he shall know the teaching whether it is of God or whether I speak for myself." He says the discernment came from what, determining that there's one thing I desire in life and that is to do the will of God.

So God does not communicate His will to one who wants to know it only out of curiosity to decide whether or not they'll do it. He communicates His will to one who's determined ahead of time that that is what they desire. There is discernment to exercise and that discernment is given to those who have presented their life to the Lord. There are also, and this is the words that I noted, there was a couple lectures I heard J.I. Packer talk about the will of God. They were a tremendous help to me.

He talked about nudges to note and we've talked about that as we've looked at the prompting of the leading of the Spirit. I'd like to just lead us to a few scriptures that talk about this nudgings to note. I think you'll find that perhaps the listeners can identify with these and it may in a sense being able to detect what God is up to in their life. Interesting words we read in Nehemiah. We read something like this twice where he says, well the first time here is in Nehemiah 2 and the second time is in Nehemiah 7.

But here in Nehemiah 2:12 it says, "When I rose in the night and I and a few men with me, I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem." God putting things in our mind, putting in our heart. There's a second time we read a statement like that in regard to once again Nehemiah 7:5, "Then my God put it into my mind to assemble the nobles, the officials and the people to be enrolled by the genealogies." So nudges to note. Can God in a sense influence us that way? Obviously He can.

Fact that's – now, the fact that there's a thought in my mind doesn't automatically mean it's of the Lord. Satan in a sense evidently put that thought in Peter's mind, the idea of Peter showing this great concern for Jesus saying, "Oh, you couldn't go to the cross," and he said, "You couldn't do that." And He said, "Get behind me Satan." So there's, our mind's a great battlefield but certainly what God put it in my mind, Nehemiah says, "God put it in my heart." There are nudges to note.

There can be thoughts in a sense that God is putting on your heart and then when you develop the discernment of being able to respond to those, that is the prompting of the Spirit. Sometimes God will maybe give you sort of a vision, able you to visualize what God desires to do. He was able to do that with Caleb, you know when he went through this experience and Caleb told the people, he said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, but we shall surely overcome it." It's like God gave Caleb the faith to visualize what God wanted to do. Now people didn't respond to him, but sometimes God obviously many times in ministry start that way.

When they're start – you know God gives someone the vision to sense what God wants to do. I'm told that Dr. Bill Bright got the vision for Campus Crusade for Christ when he was studying for a Greek exam. And he said, "There's nothing necessarily spiritual about that," but God put on his vision –

*Greg Wheatley:* I hear a lot of people have had a lot of visions studying for Greek exams.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And you probably hear a lot of people that had a lot of visions that said they couldn't depend upon 'em. But God sometimes will enable you to visualize what He desires to do. Obviously he did that with a man, a great man of faith and what God wanted to do in regard to mobilizing collegiate students and certainly it's gone much beyond that. But there are times God could do that.

Sometimes God puts just great concerns on your heart. He put a great concern on David's heart and Solomon talks about this. It says, "It was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord. But the Lord said, 'Because it was in your heart to build a house, you did well that was in your heart.'" Now He was gonna fulfill that through His son. It may be sometimes that things are on our heart that will be fulfilled in another generation. It may be that God uses those just to lay a prayer or a foundation for those works.

All of us benefit what God enabled D.L. Moody in a sense to visualize. There's a school now that he wouldn't even be able to get into because of his lack of education. But there's a school now, there's a graduate school, there's many other things or whatever because of his great faith, his great dedication to God. So God can put concerns on your heart and sometimes those concerns can guide you into pursuing what He wants you to do. Sometimes God can put restraints on you. The Apostle Paul, we'll look at that dramatic illustration there in Acts 16 where he wanted to go to Asia and the Lord said, "No, go west." And God put restraints upon him.

So we're talking about nudges to note, God putting concerns in our heart and in our mind, enabling us to visualize what He wants us to do, sometimes putting restraints upon us. Like I say, all those need to be – what – subject to God's Word. Certainly we're talking an area where one can be deceived but we also still, we can't discount that. It's a subjective area that we all feel uncomfortable with but you can't discount it or else we'll come into – what – our own form of evangelical humanism. God is a God. He is God. He is personable. And we've probably all seen a lot of abuse in that. But yet we can't discount it.

*Greg Wheatley:* Maybe here Dr. Thrasher, just a couple of quick words and you have alluded to some but maybe just a couple of practical reminders of how we tell the difference. Because we're so prone to be flawed and to not understand necessarily when it's God saying something and when it's just our own devices, maybe a couple of checkpoints for that.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* I think one checkpoint would certainly be if it is of God it's gonna be in harmony with the balanced teaching of scripture. I think another checkpoint I find is if it is of God, am I willing to wait? You know when I'm unwilling to wait and I'm just impulsive, that probably shows either it's not of God or I'm not willing to be – I'm not fully convinced it's of God. I think another checkpoint is let's say this is something I've visualized and I believe it's of the Lord.

How do I respond when obstacles come in the way? How do I respond? Do I feel like it's up to me to tear down those obstacles or can I sit back and say, "God, Lord, if this is of you, this gives you another opportunity to show it's of you and confirm it's of you by dealing with these obstacles in the way." So I think those are some checkpoints that we all need because certainly we can be deceived. I would say a few other things in regard to how God guides us, there are circumstances to observe.

Once again that's another area we certainly contend to read circumstances the way we want to when we're not fully yielded to the Lord. There can even also sometimes be what satanic hindrances. Apostle Paul says, "I wanted to come to you, but Satan hindered me." We can believe the Lord to overcome those as we wait upon him. But God can open doors. And so circumstances are to observe are one way that God does guide us.

Also there can be wisdom to draw upon. We've talked about the need in a sense to get council, especially the key people in our life. Another final one is what we just might call peace to cherish. Now this is certainly, it's like you don't face seeking the will of God on one point. You say I have peace about this. Well, that needs to be in the total mix of things. If you have peace about it, although what all the council is against it. It's not really in harmony with God's Word; it's not God's will.

*Greg Wheatley:* But because we should say it is possible to have peace about a decision when all of those other factors are wrong. I mean that is very possible that one could feel a certain peace about something and it actually would be wrong. Is that not correct?

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* I think that's true. I think that if a person truly – that God will keep us in His will and a person needs to just – am I really willing to live open before God? I mean sometimes is there something I'm wanting more than God himself? And when you want something more than God himself, even though it's a legitimate gift of God, I think we can open ourselves up to deceit. If there's a deep agitating uncertainty, we need to say okay Lord, what's disturbing that peace? Well what's disturbing that?

And it may be that we need to go deeper. Maybe are we just afraid and the Lord wants to deal with that fear? But that is one matter to consider in the context of the other, the concerns that we've raised.

*Greg Wheatley:* Well thank you Dr. Thrasher once again for an excellent session here in Radio School of the Bible, as Radio School of the Bible is a production of the Moody Broadcasting Network in Chicago.

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