

## MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

### God's Special Plan for Your Life

*Greg Wheatley:* Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a ministry of the Distance Learning Center at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. I'm Greg Wheatley and we've been studying during this quarter, God's will for your life. It's a topical study, as you may know; some quarters on Radio School of the Bible brought you a topical study. Some bring very important studies of a book, an entire book of the Bible. Whatever the case, we're always glad that you've joined us and hope that you benefit from the studies here in Radio School of the Bible.

This quarter, our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology in the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute. Well Dr. Thrasher, as we come down to the last two sessions, we're going to see how we're going to wind this series up. We've had a great quarter talking about God's will in Radio School of the Bible.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Well thank you Greg. It's certainly been a pleasure to be here. We've said this in regard to giving a little bit of a recap. We've said that a person who wants to know God's will must realize that God is eager to reveal His will to us. We said that it involves being aware of certain errors to avoid as well as knowing how God guides and we've looked at most recently at some principles that helps us in regard to discerning God's will in regard to questionable matters.

I'd like to conclude with some concluding remarks these last two times together. First I'd like to say to any listener that God does have a will for your life. Some may have had or may have presently fear or tension that somehow they may have missed out on some of God's, parts of His itinerary for their life. And somehow they may think they've been sentenced to second-best.

I appreciate it so much just the words of the great missionary statements George Verber. He said, "If you know if you missed plan A, there's plan B. And if you miss plan B, there's plan C. And if you miss plan C, praise God there's a big alphabet." And he wasn't in any way making light of sin and nor am I and nor am I or he saying there's not consequences for wrong choices. But what we are saying that any time a person has surrendered to God, God does have a will for their life.

And I remember Dr. J.I. Packer saying, “We should never limit the power of God or the graciousness of God in bringing us back to His best.” We’ve always perhaps if you know that scripture you’ve been encouraged by it there in regard to Joel, how He can restore the years that the locusts have eaten, the locusts being the instruments God used to discipline His people. But God can restore those years. To a repentant heart, God can even confirm the promise that He is able to work together for good, even those things that are not good, even those wrong choices and wrong as we live out in a repentant heart and live in light of God’s guidance for us from that moment forth.

So God has a will for your life. It’s important to surrender to Him and to pursue that. And what I’d also say is be continually listening to God. I think a person that’s after God’s will—it’s not just a matter of okay, in this tense moment, can I make the right decision. Not that in any way God’s not concerned about that, He certainly is. But it’s a life of continually listening to the Lord.

I went to Auburn University. I went there as a Christian but not really knowing the Lord well enough that I really knew how to let God guide the plans and ambitions of my life. It was there as a sophomore that I was drawn into a real surrender of my life to the Lord through a very outspoken Christian who lived for the Lord in the midst of an environment that was not popular to live for Him. And so I roomed with him for a year. That’s how God, where God guided me to finish majoring in business but a sense that going into business was not His will for me. He did want me to go into the ministry.

Well I wanted to go right into the ministry. Older wiser men getting council from others told me that it was important to get training and that was the advice of my parents as well. And so I did that. Before I did that I was able to work under a pastor. Worked under a pastor, a delightful pastor there in Chattanooga Tennessee, Ben Haden. Was an intern under him and he was a wonderful guide and helped me in a sense there before I went to seminary, to Dallas Seminary. Well there at Dallas Seminary I did one thing that was a help.

Oh, after maybe first semester there I took out a sheet of paper and I wrote at the top of that sheet of paper, Future. And any time a thought that would come to my mind regard to the future is what a sense maybe, I would write it down. And some thoughts would sorta just come and go. Maybe they would just be influenced by who spoke in chapel that day. But really soon one page became more than one page, it became several pages as I would add thoughts, would jot down. And there were times I would sit back and read in a sense what the Lord had, seemed to be impressing upon me. And really it’s out of that process that I sense God led me into teaching. And opened the door to come here to Moody in 1980.

There at – I mean in my own image, a person wanted to be a teacher, it wasn't a very good image. It seemed like there at seminary there were people with warm, compassionate hearts and they wanted to be a pastor or a missionary and then there were the more cerebral kind and somehow they wanted to be the teacher. And sensing God leading me to teach I said hey, I'm not sure I wanna be associated with those warm, kind people or whatever. But you know God gave me a vision in a sense for being a teacher, a vision by saying just made me to visualize what a person could accomplish as a teacher by befriending students and having them into your home and seeking to love and encourage them. And my, they have been countless encouragement to me during my years of teaching.

Course the first 8 ½ years I was, I taught here at Moody. I was single. And then the Lord leading a wonderful lady into my life, Penny, Lord willing you'll meet her tomorrow. And then God giving us two boys, Will and Michael, and then, Lord willing we have another one that'll be born soon as well. But what I'm saying is to be continually listening to the Lord. It wasn't a moment in time, boom, that God says, "Hey, go be a teacher." But it was a process, a long process of the Lord saying, "Hey you know that's the ministry I have for you." And then writing some letters to various schools or whatever and God opened the door in a sense to come to Moody and that's been a real blessing to be here. God has been so merciful to me during that time. So be continually listening to God. God has a will for your life.

I like so much what the late Dr. Oswald Sanders said in regard to about a call. He defined a call this way, as a growing conviction as you become acquainted with the facts – a growing conviction as you become acquainted with the facts. In other words a call to a certain profession or a mission field or a ministry. It's not necessarily instantaneous. It may be that you need to seek information and to explore and to get various opportunities in regard to ministry. And out of that God will guide.

The familiar adage you know God, it's hard to steer a parked car. You know, we need to be involved in ministry. Surrender our life to the Lord, being involved in ministry, and also very important just to accept ourselves—not to try to be something, be somebody that we're not. And that's what I would say. You don't have to be anybody that you're not. God has a personalized will just for you.

*Greg Wheatley:* What I hear you saying is there's a dynamic sense to all of this thing of finding God's will. And sometimes what happens I think when we get bound up as Christians is when we assume that it has to be a certain way, that somehow there's gonna be this instantaneous call or this instantaneous vision or almost that God is gonna zap us with something. When in fact it's much freer than that. There's a dynamic to this that we're trying to learn.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Yes and I think we've tried not to present that to anybody and I hope we haven't. The idea that, I mean, there are the Damascus road to experience that Apostle Paul had. Quite frankly, I think scripture indicates that God was at work in his life even prior to that point but that was that dramatic experience. But you are correct. There's no two people that are exactly alike and therefore God communicating His will to someone is not gonna be the exactly the same in any two people's lives. And so that can bring great bondage. Certainly unless you're doing something we'd say that's immoral or wrong, you know God's will for you to do today is to do what you're doing today and in the context of that God will show you if He wants to change or lead you into something else. We're saying God has a sovereign plan for your life.

We've at times alluded to that definition and I don't know who it's original with or who to give credit for, but I've shared it many a times that God's will is exactly what you would desire if you knew all the facts. God's will is not to be something to be feared. I know certainly countless people have thought and even articulated that they fear God's will. They fear that they came to God with an open heart saying, "Oh Lord, I'll do anything you want me to do." They sense that God would ask em to marry somebody they didn't wanna marry or God would send em to some distant place they didn't want to go. But God you know, I have my boys, they'll be with me tomorrow and if they were to come to me and say, "Daddy, you know I just – there's one thing I wanna do, I just wanna please you. I just wanna please you. I'll be glad to do anything you ask me to do."

What I say, “Oh, that’s exactly what I’ve been wanting you to say. Now go in there and chew on that piece of board and I’m not gonna give you any lunch.” That would be unthinkable. It’s incredible the thoughts we think about God. You know Jesus says just the opposite. “If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how could your father being good, know how to give good gifts to us?”

*Greg Wheatley:* And it goes back, doesn’t it? I think we started here very early in the quarter in talking about a distorted view of God that would make us think that He’s something that He’s not. He’s in fact is a very loving, generous father.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* That’s exactly right. We did. We built much of our time around the idea that getting to know God. As we get to know Him and respond to the revelation of His character, which is a major message of God's Word, will be led into the will of God. As we get to know the shepherd, we’ll be able to discern His voice. And so that is God’s will for our life. It certainly does start with God and it ends with God.

For all eternity, the Lord has made a provision if you’re a Christian—to be with Him for all eternity, to know perfect joy and perfect fulfillment. And during this brief space of life here on earth, the great accomplishment or true success is doing His will and accomplishing it. Well, Lord willing, we’ll finish next time.

*Greg Wheatley:* Well, Dr. Thrasher, thank you very much again for your insights and your teaching today. Now tomorrow, a special treat for you. You’re not going to want to miss the final session in Radio School of the Bible. We’ll get to meet Dr. Thrasher’s family and hear a little bit about them as well. Thanks for listening. Radio School of the Bible is a production of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

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