

"Finding God's Will"

Sterling UMC
July 3, 2011
Genesis 24:1-21

Alice in Wonderland came to an icy fork in the road. Panic stung her as she stood frozen by indecision. She lifted her eyes toward heaven, looking for guidance. Her eyes did not find God, only the Cheshire cat leering at her from his perch in the tree above. "Which way should I go?" blurted Alice.

"That depends, . . ." said the cat, fixing a strange smile on the confused girl.

"On what?" Alice managed to reply.

"On your destination. Where are you going?" queried the Cat.

"I don't know, . . ." stammered Alice.

"Then," said the cat, with a grin spreading wider, "it doesn't matter."

Many of us feel like Alice in Wonderland, we stand at some crossroads in our life and don't know which road to take. The difference between us and Alice however is that we DO know where we are going. We are children of the King and we are headed to eternal life in His presence. But, do you see, that is part of the problem. It would be easier to look at the decisions of life and conclude that it didn't matter which way we choose. But because we belong to Him . . . it does matter. We know that when we live according to His will, we will know His blessing and experience His joy. Jesus says, "he who does the will of God is my brother and sister." (Matthew 12:50); Jesus also tells us to pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

Some decisions in our life are major: where should we go to school? What job should we take? What home should we buy? Which person should we marry? What commitments should we accept and which should we decline? How does one discern God's will for our lives in these times?

In our text this morning we see a long story of the arranged marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham sends his trusted servant (perhaps Eliezar) back to the homeland of his family in Haran to get a wife for Isaac. It is in this story that we find some principles for finding God's will for our lives.

CHECK GOD'S WORD

Abraham based his request on God's promise to Him. He knew that God intended to give this land to his children. He knew that it was God's intention to judge the Canannites. Certainly there were many beautiful woman in that area. But Abraham

knew that God had called the Jews as His special people. Isaac could not marry a Canannite woman because it would lead to a compromise of faith. So, right at the beginning this servant had certain parameters to work with. He knew that he was looking for a woman that was from Abraham's family and one that would return to the Canann with him. God's promise had given the servant a good start.

The Bible is where we get our good start when it comes to finding God's will for our lives. In the Bible we find commands and principles and we also find God's promises.

God never contradicts His written word. Luke 21:33 *"heaven and earth will pass away but My words will never pass away."* God will never tell you to ignore or disobey anything in this book. Never. He doesn't say one thing one time, and another thing another time. God is consistent. If He said it in the past, He's going to say it in the future. We always get into trouble when we doubt God's word, when we don't listen to what it says.

Most of God's will for your life is already right here in this book. You don't even have to pray about it. Just do what it says. When you build your life on this book, you're going to ask the right questions. If you don't build your life on this book, you're going to miss God's will much of the time. So the first step is to check it out. It's better to memorize it. Then God can bring those verses to mind.

When God's Word speaks, we must follow that guidance. But . . . what if the guidance we get is still not enough?

ASK FOR GUIDANCE

Sometimes the simple principles are the most profound. Look at the servant praying: in our text:

Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." [12-14]

If we want God's guidance we have to seek God's guidance. James tells us if "anyone lacks wisdom he should ask of God who gives to all men liberally". But we must be asking sincerely.

Can I be brutally honest? Most of the time when we ask God to show us what to do, we are really saying "let me know that what I want to do is O.K." If we truly want to find God's will we have to keep all options open. Before we can find God's will we have to trust that God's will is the best. We must understand that what God chooses (even if it is not the choice we would have made) is always the right choice. We must be willing for

God to change our direction, or to say "no", or "not yet". We must trust that a closed door is not designed to defeat us or discourage us, it is meant to move us in a better direction. God will answer if we ask sincerely. It is certainly true that we will never be open to God's direction until we can pray with Jesus, "not my will, but yours be done."

WEIGH YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

The servant watched what was happening. One of the best things that the servant did is found in verse 21, "Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful." Consider the circumstances that the servant watched

- would she offer to bring water for the camels
- would she be a relative of Abraham
- would she go with the servant

If any of these circumstances had gone a different direction, the servant would have concluded that he had not found the right woman.

Sometimes God directs us by a closed door. Sometimes God directs by giving us a great opportunity. Sometimes there is a sense of peace. One of the best aids God gives to us is our Christian brothers and sisters. Sometimes what seems cloudy to us is crystal clear to the one we are talking to.

There are other times when we "sense" God speaking to us. We have an "impression from God." When God gives an impression he almost always also gives some verification. All impressions must be evaluated carefully by the clear and authoritative teaching of Scripture. Like in the game rock, paper, scissors . . . paper wins over rock, scissors wins over paper, and rock wins over scissors. In this case . . . Scripture wins over feelings. If Scripture does not speak to the issue we should check with godly friends.

WALK IN FAITH

When all is said and done we must walk by faith. The servant of Abraham went to Haran trusting that God would lead the way. He asked God for direction and when it was given, he acted. When he got to Rebekah's home he didn't even pause to have dinner . . . he wanted to find out if Rebekah was the one first. He continued to walk by the light God provided.

God generally guides one step at a time. Before we can see the second step we must take the first one. Let's not forget that God has given us His Spirit to guide us. He has given us minds to think and to weigh options. Sometimes we have to trust our "sanctified common sense". Sometimes we have to trust the brains and the Spirit God has given us and make the best decision possible. We must walk by faith that God will send his angels ahead of us just as He did Abraham's servant.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this servant's faithfulness, Isaac married Rebekah. Two children were born to that union and they named them "Jacob" and "Esau". Jacob's name was later changed to "Israel". This faithful servant played a key role in God's plan of redemption.

Your decisions won't affect the plan of redemption but they are significant. Strive in your life to implement these simple steps

- check God's Word
- seek God's Help
- pay attention to your circumstances
- walk faithfully each step God reveals

God does not want to play games with you. God is not trying to confuse you. It's not a cat and mouse game of "Let's see if you can figure out God's will and let's see how hard I can make it!" That's not the way God acts to His children. He wants you to know His will, so much that He's given us these seven keys in which He says "Here are some ways that you can filter out and know if it's you or is it God talking to you?"

The secret to hearing God clearly is get to know Him better and better every day. The more you understand Him, the better you know Him, the easier it is to hear His voice in a split second when He wants to talk to you. Get to know God better and better every day.

John 8:47 *"He who belongs to God hears what God says."*

If you've never opened your life to Christ, then maybe today is that day when you say, "Lord God, I want to hear Your voice. I need it. I need to know the direction You want me to go, God. I want to establish a relationship with You through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Come into my life, put Your thoughts in my mind and Your love in my heart. Help me to start growing spiritually in You. I don't understand it all but as best as I know how I open my life to You."

Others of you have Jesus Christ in your life but you haven't heard His voice in a long time because your heart has grown cold and your ears have gotten stopped up. God doesn't have laryngitis. He's still speaking. The problem is on your end. Then maybe today is the day you pray, "Jesus forgive me for allowing sin to come between me and You. Things I knew were wrong but I've allowed them anyway in my life. I ask You to forgive me and help me to deal with these issues so I can change and make things right where possible. I want to hear Your voice in my life on a daily basis. Speak to me. Help me to sense Your love. Forgive me for having false images of the way You are. You are not a god who wants to beat me up but You want to guide me and love me. I want to love You and follow You. In Jesus name. Amen."