

Only a handful of you have made it into this auditorium today without passing through at least one intersection.

Most journeys involve navigating through intersections, and in many instances, we have signals to help guide us.

Red = Warning; do not proceed; stop!

Yellow = Caution; yield; wait!

Green = Proceed; move on; go!

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THE PROMISE LIFE

# GUIDANCE

ISAIAH 30

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Wouldn't it be nice if all we had to do was look at a colored light to determine decisions and points of direction in life?

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:2-4 NKJV).

One of God's greatest and most precious promises is that of *guidance*.

The testimony of the Bible on this subject can be described in three simple statements:

1. God has led.
2. God will lead.
3. God is leading.

The promise of *guidance* added to *renewal* (Isaiah 1:18-10) and *peace* (Isaiah 26:3-4) is a great source of help and encouragement in the life of every believer.

God's Word gives indication that God has a plan and purpose for His people. We often refer to this as *the will of God*.

Someone has defined it this way: "Success = knowing and doing the will of God."

To know God's will = life's greatest ambition

To do God's will = life's greatest achievement

"Woe to the rebellious children," says the Lord, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!... Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perversity, and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant" (Isaiah 30: 1-2, 12-13 NKJV).

Israel was at a crossroad, an intersection. There was the threat of an invasion by Assyria (considered an ally with Egypt). God led Israel out of Egypt overnight, but it took years to get Egypt out of them. They looked to men for direction, but not help from the Lord.

## **First Signal in the Will of God For My Life Red Light = WARNING**

The first word in Isaiah 30:1 is "Woe"—an important word. The words, *woe* and *whoa*, have a lot in common. When I began to teach my son to drive and we got in the car for the first time, I did not say, "Start. Put in gear. Hit the gas." No. My first instruction was "Whoa." Before he moved the car, I wanted him to know how to stop. The time to talk about stopping was BEFORE he had the rate, pace and speed on the road.

The first street signal, the first sign, is STOP.

Do you seek to find guidance through the things offered to you through this world?

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV).

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12 NKJV).

This is the issue found in Isaiah—the will of man vs. the will of God.

- They devised their own plan.
- They developed their own pathway.
- They depended on their own power.

### **Key Point = Life**

One of the primary issues in the cultural war debate concerning life in America is this: Who chooses?

... man or God? The result of man's choice has been the slaughter of millions of unborn babies in their mother's womb in the name of the preservation of a woman's right to choose. I believe in choice, but only a choice that honors life.

The proneness of people toward such activity is clearly identified by Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6 NKJV).

Jesus died in the flesh to intercept and intersect the wayward hearts of men and women, and to allow each to be saved from the destruction of their own way.

### **The Second Signal in God's Will For My Life Yellow Light = WAITING**

"For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.' But you would not, and you said, 'No, for we will flee on horses'—therefore you shall flee! And, 'We will ride on swift horses'—therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!... Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him" (Isaiah 30:15-16, 18 NKJV).

Yellow lights are not easy to navigate or negotiate. In Memphis, Tennessee, the yellow light was for the quick and the dead. Green meant *go*; yellow meant *gun it!* Most drivers behind the wheel chose aggression over patience when a yellow light illuminated overhead.

Yet, note the counsel in this passage: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15 NKJV).

Don't rebel. Rest.

What does it mean to *wait*?

Some restaurant employees are known as *waiters*. Why is this title used? Often times, I feel I am one waiting. However, the person holding this position understands that to *wait* means to *give attention*, to *give energy*, to *give service*. So to *wait* means to *attend to*.

Waiting means your trust, your attention and your focus are on God, not on yourself or your circumstances.

You seek God. You trust Him. You allow Him to work in you.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).

Precepts. Principles. Promises.

### **The Final and Third Signal in God's Will For My Life Green Light = WALKING**

"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left'" (Isaiah 30:21 NKJV).

#### **• God's will is personal and specific.**

Note who is being addressed in Isaiah 30:21: "Your ears..." God is speaking to YOU. It is personal.

#### **• God's will is a pathway, not a point.**

Going back to our analogy of the moving car, the driver often uses "power" steering.

Far too many people want God's will to be a map and not a journey. Yet, the reality is that God reveals His will *in* the journey of life.

"God only gives direction signals when you need them."

—R.C. Henderson

God's means is not to map it out and then say go do it. Rather, it's more the idea, "Let Me in and I will show you—turn here, pick up your speed, slow down, turn again."

#### **• God's will is not always easy, but it is ultimately good.**

"And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers" (Isaiah 30:20 NKJV).

"The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God can't keep you and the power of God can't use you." —Warren Wiersbe

This message has been incredibly personal to me in its preparation. I have often said the hard part about preaching is not getting the material *for* the message, but getting the message *in* the messenger. Never have I prepared or delivered a more personal and at the same time, a more difficult message.

In recent days, I have been faced with some challenges to heed God's warning, to spend time waiting and to understand while walking the will of God in my life.

Through the years, one of the greatest lessons I have learned is that God's will and work in my life are a pathway that unfolds day-by-day as I proceed in the journey.

I would love it if God's will and work were like a dot-to-dot puzzle, and the more dots I connect the more I understand and perceive all He is doing in and through my life.

On the whole in my life—as in yours—there are two levels. One level is plain and evident for all to see “above the waterline.” On the deck of my “boat,” there has been a lot going on. The second level occurs “below the waterline” —inside and beneath the surface where God also works and directs.

In late September, I faced a disruption that required time, prayer and attention concerning my life, calling and service. While it was brief and limited, the result of counsel and prayer was another matter. It came in the form of an investigation and invitation from my closest friend and confidant in ministry.

Dr. Jack Graham shared with me a desire to share the platform of his ministry at Prestonwood Baptist Church in the Dallas area, and to enter into a partnership with someone who would share the burden and responsibilities of the growing and developing work at Prestonwood.

Having spent the first decade of my life and ministry with Jack Graham, there is and has been an abiding love and affection. At the same time I have now spent a decade serving as Senior Pastor, seeking to honor and develop the gifts to fulfill God's calling in my life of pastoral leadership.

Today, I have come to share with you what I believe to be the next

step in the unfolding will of God in my life—to join Pastor Graham in the role of Teaching Pastor at Prestonwood in the coming days.

I have spent the last eight to ten days sharing this information with our elders and staff pastors. I have been amazed and humbled by their positive and supportive response. While none have applauded, all have affirmed.

I have struggled and choked on every word (and you know I rarely lack for words), but I feel deeply that this is the Lord's doing in my life, and thus a part of His purpose for our church.

My agenda and plan for 2002 began much differently. In fact, in the fall of last year, I now recognize God placed limits on my ability and numerous efforts to establish and develop a plan for 2002. But I have learned and do today embrace the promise of Romans 12:2 to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This past Wednesday evening, a group met at Prestonwood and the concept of a shared pastoral role was presented and approved by their leadership team. It was—and is—my intent that you would hear about this meeting from me personally and know about this proceeding and its process, rather than hear a rumor that could spark uncertainty.

In accordance with the time-line that was discussed at the meeting, I will be invited to speak on the third weekend in February. At that time, this matter will be finalized with the people of Prestonwood. While this is not final in procedure, it is moving in process, and I want you to know and hear about it from me.

I will then return to close my ministry here at the end of the February, and will do so in deep gratitude to God and to you for the rich, rewarding and challenging three and a half years of life and love we have shared together as pastor and people.

You are so precious. In recent days, times of prayer have been turned into moments of sacrifice as I have considered setting aside the role and responsibility that has proven to be so positive and meaningful. At the same time, I have said again and again, “Leadership is a stewardship,” and my hope is that I have proven faithful to God and to you through these years.

I (we) love you. We will leave you—if it be God's will—with much affection and admiration. My (our) hope is that God will give you grace and joy in knowing the tremendous investment you have made in our lives and faith through your prayer and love. Every point of impact in my life and ministry from this day forward will be linked to the prayer, faith and encouragement you have shared.

Knowing that this personal matter pushes the point of this message to a more poignant and significant application than usual, I feel all I can do is to call us to a point of prayer and of surrender to the Lord together.

If I could speak to each of you, my message would be, “Thank you. I love you.” But more important than my voice is the voice of God speaking to your heart today.

God has a plan and purpose for you. Where are you in the journey of your life today? Do you need to heed a red light of warning to stop, turn the course, and seek Him?

Are you at a yellow light, waiting?  
Don't get impatient and impulsive.  
Wait on Him.

What about the green light of  
walking? Are you living, walking,  
depending on God to lead and

work in your life? Have you given  
God the green light to govern in  
your life? Have you committed  
your heart to Him?

My life work is to preach Jesus  
Christ. "Behold, I stand at the

door and knock. If anyone hears  
My voice and opens the door, I will  
come in..." (Revelation 3:20 NKJV).

Do you need to say today, "Lord  
proceed"?

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