

The guys at the back are real nervous right now. They said we did not plan or talk about Tim sitting down at the piano. I'm sitting at the piano because it takes me back to a moment not too long ago where I was sitting here and I don't know, I was just. I was playing something and practicing something maybe for a worship night or. I don't know what it was, but my phone rang.

It was sitting right over here. My phone rang and I'm like, what is that? What is that? And so I picked it up and it was. It was someone that I hadn't heard from for a real, real long time.

But I was. I was eager to talk to him. They're one of my favorite people. And so I said, hey, how's it going? She goes, it's pretty good.

It's pretty good. Hey, I've got a big question to ask you. And she asked the question. And I knew in a moment that I had to decide whether I was going to say yes or not, yes or no to this question.

There wasn't a question about it being God's will. There was a big question about whether I was going to say yes to God's will or not. Sometimes God gives us sort of months to pray and prep and ponder and maybe peruse the crowd and say, what do you think? What do you think? And other times God says, I'm sorry, here's the question.

Time's up. Give me your answer. Anyone ever been there before? In the moment, you have to make the call. And in that moment, I needed to know God's will, and I needed to know whether I was going to say yes to it.

It's important for all of us because when we pray, as we did last week, thy kingdom come, we need to be ready to respond when God says, my will be done. Are we really willing to pray and live that out? Because they're both equal parts of the prayer, aren't they? The question is oftentimes for us, well, how do we know what the actual will of God is? And there's been a billion sermons preached on this, I'm going to add one more to the billion.

A billion and one. But if you're at a place right now in your own life where you're like, I don't really know what the next step is. I don't know what the next good thing, right thing to do is give me some instruction. I'm going to give you just a few helpful things. For me, again, there's a billion.

Great. When I'VE asked people this morning about how do you discern the will of God? They fall along some certain lines, but each one has some very distinctive approaches to this that are really good. I can't include all of them in the sermon this morning, but there's wisdom in the multitude of counselors. God says, so don't be afraid to ask someone.

But today, if that's you, I'm praying that this will be a useful sermon for you. And let's pray and we'll get started. We're going to pray the Lord's Prayer so you can keep your eyes open if you don't know it. If you do know it, you can close your eyes. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Amen. I'll add, heavenly Father, when we know your will, give us the courage to do it.

In Jesus name, Amen. So last week we talked about the first part of that little phrase there, the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God is that place where the interest and the agenda of God supersede all other interests and agendas, including our own. And so how do we live the kingdom out? Well, it comes in this next phrase by being willing to also pray thy will be done, and not just pray it, but live it out.

And so that prayer embedded in that prayer is this, is this idea that ordinary believers, you and I, would commit to living out God's will in our lives. Now, if you've ever. If you've never wondered about God's will, then this is going to be really an interesting sermon for you. But if you are the type of person who actually cares about your life, aligning with God, then it's very likely that you have come to the point in a decision you've had to make where knowing what God wants you to do is important. More important than doing what you want to do.

You recognize I want to do the will of God. But what is the will of God? What is the will of God for me? What is the will of God for my future? If you're married, what is the will of God for my family, my spouse, my kids?

If you've got a business, and many of you do, what is the will of God related to my business? This is my income. This is how I care and take care of the people in my life. What is your will for that? The Bible word for figuring out God's will is discernment.

And discernment is just getting your ear around what God's ear is around understanding something the way God understands it. And so discerning or understanding your future, your path, your decisions, the way God understands them is important now. Sometimes it becomes important after we've made the decision and we are living with the consequences of that decision. And if you've ever been in this spot where you're like, I feel like I should have prayed a little bit longer about this. If you've ever lived in a spot where the consequences of your decisions have left you in a pretty poor position, that's when oftentimes we worry and wonder about what God's

will was and have we missed it.

And if that's you this morning thinking you've missed the will of God, I want to encourage you. God is in the redemption business. That means you and I make some pretty big mistakes. And God doesn't toss us away. He continues to reach out and invite us back into his will.

At the end of the service, we're going to lead into communion. I'm going to bring up Mark, chapter one, where Jesus, his first introduction to the will of God is when he says, hey, repent and believe the good news. That is step one in getting into the perfect will of God. We turn our lives over to Jesus when we do that, as Mark Thomas has said, we're like behind the steering wheel of that little old car at the amusement park. You know what I'm talking about, that goes around the little metal track.

And yeah, we're four years old and we think we're hot stuff behind the wheel of that old Model T. But the truth is we can't get too far off the track when we are, when we have turned our lives over to Jesus, I really honestly believe this, that he is not going to let you get off that track. The big caveat being if you absolutely insist on jumping the track. But if you're like God, I don't want to, I don't want to get it wrong. God says, relax, you're on the track.

You're fine. You. You're fine. So if you've made some mistakes and messed up in some decision points of your life where you're like, have I messed it up too much? Let me just say, no.

No, you have not. You can always come back to God. You can always come back and say, lord, get me back on the right path so that God is never in the business of rejecting you, he is always in the business of bringing you back into his perfect will. Still, we don't want to be foolish. We don't want to wrestle the control of that vehicle out of God's hands and insist on our way, make horrible decisions and drive off a cliff.

No, we want our lives to be marked by wisdom. Wisdom is marked by adhering to God's will. So how do we know what God's will is? So my life has been full of good and bad decisions, but one of the things I have learned, and I'm just going to jump right into it, if you want to know God's will, the first thing you do is ask him, God, what is your will for this? It's no use wandering, no use thinking about it without actually asking him to reveal that to it, seek his guidance.

In 2002, I had the opportunity to move out to Reno, Nevada to help a church plant. I'll be honest with you. On the one hand, it sounded a little fun and adventurous and I didn't have a wife and kids to worry about. I just. It sounded a lot of fun, but it also sounded like really stupid.

Like, Tim, why would you do this? This is financially risky. You're in the middle of building a house. Why would you uproot everything and go out there and do that? Well, Psalm 32 says, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Okay? God says, I will give you counsel. You ask me and I'll tell you. John 16 tells us that the Holy Spirit is gifted to us.

The Holy Spirit indwells us to give us and provide us guidance. So in that moment where I'm trying to decide what I'm going to do, am I going to stay here and just continue on with my life as I've planned it out, or am I going to uproot every plan and go to Reno? What did I do? I prayed. I prayed.

I prayed for some guidance. And I worked through what, what a Catholic friend of mine told me later. And I thought, I do this naturally. I worked through what he calls the four door process. Have you guys ever heard of this?

So we'll look later. Paul talks about an open door that he had going into ministry. And so this phrase, the open door becomes sort of a metaphor for the opportunities that God puts in front of us that he invites us to walk through. And so we think about these opportunities as doors. He says, knock and the door will be open unto you or beat on it.

And God says, no way. Anyway, let's talk about doors. So the first door. The first door is just asking this question. When you're posed with the challenge of what's the next step?

What should I do? Well, you ask yourself this question. Is it a good door? Is this a. Is this a good door or a bad door?

And by that I mean very simply, is this good or is this bad? Does this door align with what God wants? What God has said is good and true. Is there anything in this decision that would be opposed to God's perfect plan and will for my life? Is there anything unethical or immoral about this door?

If so, well, that's a bad door. You leave that door right there shut. Keep walking, walking past that door. But it's a good door. I don't know.

I could stay or I could go and help plant a church. I don't know. I want to go to seminary. Oh, great. That's great.

That's a good door. Sure. Check out that door. Open it up. See what happens on the other side.

Well, I've decided I want to have an affair. Okay. No, good door, bad door. Let's call it. It's a bad door.

No, it's a bad door. Don't walk through that door. So the good door, bad door. And this is really an assessing. Just black or white here.

There's no in between, good or bad. That's an easy question to answer. The second door is also, I think, pretty easy. Is it an open door? Now, the open door is the opportunity.

Does the opportunity exist for me to do this? Did the college invite me to come? Did they give me. Did the university give me a scholarship? Wow, that's a great.

That's a great open door. Now, will I walk through that door? Maybe, maybe not. But the door is there. In Reno, I had an invite from the camp, from the pastor there, says, we would love for you to come.

Like, oh, that's an open invitation. That's pretty. That's very clearly an open door. Yeah, I could walk through that door. But that's not the only question we ask.

You know, we got good door. And as an open door. But then the second one, though, the third door is this one. Is it a wise door? Anyone ever wrestled with the wisdom of a good decision?

Either way? Either way you can go. God's good with it. Either way, it's a good. It's an open door.

But is this wise? And wise is not about right or wrong. Wise is about better or best so the better or best thing is this door. Is this opportunity something that will. That will make me a better person?

Will this door put me in a position to better serve God, better care for my family, better build community relationships, better serve others, or does this door serve other interests? Maybe it just gratifies me in some way. So one of the questions that my buddy asked, he goes, you know, I've got this opportunity to be a. To be a bartender. It's going to be good money.

Now, I have obvious feelings about that door he had. I ran it through my quickly through my own door one, door two list. But then I got to door three, and I said, okay, well, now let me tell you something. You've struggled with alcohol abuse. So what do you think?

He goes, well, I don't know. It's really good money. It's really good money. I get that. But is that a wise decision for you?

No, that's not a wise decision for you? How about this one? I'm considering a change in job. It's a little less money, but it's less

travel and I can be home with my kids, my wife and kids, a little bit more. Is that a wise decision?

Probably. It's a wise decision. Yeah. Yeah. You gotta weigh the factors.

Door one, door two, door three, wisdom. Yeah. Will you do it? I don't know. There's still some more doors out there.

Let's see what the next one is. Is this a door that I want to go through now? We feel weird about doors like this, don't we? We're like, I don't know, should that be a factor? And whether I do it or not do it, just like my own sense of wanting to do it.

Yeah, I think it should be a door. Here's the. The scripture says that God has given you the desires of your heart. What that means to me is that God has built into you certain passions and talents and even aspirations. And so it's not a bad thing to lean into the way God has designed you.

He's put those desires and aspirations in your heart. He's given you those. So that's not a bad criteria for evaluating the next step in what God wants to do in your life. Honestly, I wanted the challenge of working in a different church with different people. I wanted the challenge of living in a different place, far from family and friends.

I needed that opportunity. I wanted the adventure of starting something from scratch, really. Planting a church in a faraway place. The income, yeah, that was a little scary. I didn't.

There was no guaranteed income. I was going to have to work a couple of different jobs. But there was nothing wrong with any of those other desires. The desire for adventure, the desire to try something new, the desire to live in a new place, meet new people, take on new challenges. Those are all very great desires.

I like to think of myself as a fairly adventurous person. So none of those are bad. So is this a door I want to go through? Yeah, okay. Okay.

So there's your four doors. There you go. What were they again? Is it a good door? Is it an open door?

Is it a wise door? Will it serve you and your family well? Is it something you want to do? And if it's something you want to do, if you have those stories, you're like, okay, yeah, I feel like I got a pretty clear green light on this. But there's a fifth door, and this is a door that I've learned a couple years back.

So I remember coming back from Reno for the visit and going to see my

dad, who was in the hospital sick for some reason. He's fine now, so it wasn't life changing or life altering for him, but it was for me because I told him about it and he said, well, well, you know, what do you want to do? I said, I kind of want to do it. So there's door four. And I said, but, but what about all the other stuff?

And what if it goes really, really bad? Because, of course, that's the nature of doors. Things never turn out the way you think they're going to turn out. He goes, well, can you just not come home? And when he asks me that, I'm thinking, well, yeah, I can just turn around and go back out the door and come back home.

And realizing that that decision did not mark me for eternity, freed me up to walk through that door. Now, there are some questions, some opportunities where that question is, no, once I walk through that door, I'm in it for good. I can't walk out of that door without severe, severe repercussions. But the ability to walk back out the door can be freeing to make otherwise risky decisions. So let's get to Paul.

So Paul has this open door. In Second Corinthians, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13, Paul on his missionary journey, sharing the gospel of Jesus. He says this about his time in a town called Troas. He says this when I came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, meaning God cleared the way. God cleared the path for me to go to Troas, he says, my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I took leave of them. I walked back out that door and went to Macedonia instead. Now, when Paul was making this decision. Let's just use the door metaphor. The door metaphor goes like this.

It was a good door. Sharing the gospel. Is God going to say no to sharing the gospel? No, That's a good door. Door two wasn't an open door.

Well, Paul tells us himself it was an open door, that he had an invite. He was. He was at. It was a clear path for him to go. Door three, was it a wise door?

Well, there's nothing that indicates that it was an unwise door, so we'll assume it was a wise door. Door four, is it something Paul wanted to do? Well, no one forced him to go. He went of his own accord. In fact, the scriptures say he goes back to Troas four other times.

He actually likes Troas. Troas is not the issue. And yet he didn't hesitate. When things weren't quite the way he thought they needed to be or quite what he expected them to be, he didn't hesitate to walk back out the door. Door five reminds me that God gives us a lot of

freedom to readjust, to realign.

And for me, I really wanted to experience the challenge of church planting. I'm so thankful I took that opportunity. But when the opportunity came back to Indiana and work with Sherwood Oaks came up, I said, yes, in about four heartbeats. Like, yeah, I want to do that. I want to do that.

Now. My pastor there said, I think it's a great opportunity. I think you should do it. I'm like, okay, well, you've just given me the green light. I was worried about you and how that would affect the ministry here.

And you said, go for it. And I'm going to go for it. I'm going to do it. So we do that. We seek his guidance.

So that's what seeking his guidance is all about. And then. And then in the process, we are also just trusting God's goodness. I think this is the place where oftentimes we get real hesitant. We're real nervous, like, what if we make the wrong decision?

What will happen? God will be mad at us. But I will tell you this. I have made some very foolish decisions in my life, and God has never failed me yet. Never failed me yet.

That old. It's an old song. Greatest thy faithfulness. Even when I have been unfaithful, God says he's still Faithful again. If you're like me, you can look back and just shake your head and go, why does God waste his time and energy and effort on me?

Instead, he invites me to live in the goodness of God. And I can look back over my life in Reno and otherwise, even when times were horrible, even in decisions I've made that like, ugh. And I still can say, he's never failed me. Yet great is his faithfulness. I live in the goodness of God.

Proverbs 3, 5, 6. We know this. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and all your ways. Acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. In other words, trust God.

Trust God with the big stuff, with the small stuff, with the big decisions, the small decisions of your life. And even if they're decisions you later regret, know this, that God's God's got you on the track. He's not going to let you get too far off the track. You'll bump up against that rail at some point and reposition. Let me give you an example of how this works.

So Reno was a decision that I made and it cost me a lot financially. Otherwise, that was a hard decision. God's redeemed all of that. When I look back on that, I never regret for a moment Reno, because if I

hadn't been at Reno, I'm going to be honest with you, I would not have had the opportunity to accept a position at Sherwood Oaks. My position here was dependent upon me leaving, going away so I could come back.

That's just how. That's just oftentimes how life works. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't gone to Reno. I wouldn't be at this campus if I hadn't been part of the Sherwood Oaks church. Being part of this campus then connected me deeper to the larger Bedford community.

Being connected to the larger Bedford community meant that I had lunch with a young man and woman who had a just a really rough and tumble ministry with at risk teens. And after that lunch, they started attending here with their two little cousins and they came here to church. And because they came here to church with their two little cousins, I was at the piano that day and got a phone call. And I picked that phone call up and my friend Melissa said, hey, I got a big question for you. I got two teenagers that need a place to live and they're connected to your church.

Is there anyone in your congregation who would have the room and the space in their lives to take these boys in?

And I was all by myself in the building. But I swear I felt this on my shoulder. And as clear as anything, I heard a voice saying, this is my will for you.

Now, if you're like me when God says, this is my will for you, you have plenty of excuses ready. I had plenty of excuses ready. Oh, my word, Lord. I know I've got room, plenty of room now in this new house. But I have other plans for those rooms.

I'm not sure I'm in the financial place to pull this off, Lord, that scares me a little bit. What kind of training? I don't have any training to do this. I'm an old man. I'm a grandpa age.

I don't need to be doing this. At my age, I should be winding down. Any of you there. At this part of your life, at this part of your life, you are ready to wind down, not wind up. Whose crazy idea was this?

Plus, I'm single. DCS isn't going to let a single guy take two teenagers. That's just weird, Lord. Even I'm thinking it's weird. No.

No. And yet, as I said, sometimes God gives you months to ponder and pray and peruse the crowd's opinion. And sometimes he says, no, you need to make a decision. Now, when God called Abraham to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him up on the mountain, God told him. And the very next morning, before the sun came up, Abraham had things, the luggage packed and they were setting out on the journey.

Sometimes you gotta make the call then, right then.

So I ran it through the list again. In a matter of seconds, you do this. Good door. Yeah, it's a good door. It's an open door.

Well, obviously she wouldn't have called if it weren't. Is it a wise door?

Is it a door I want? Yeah, I do. I like those kids. I've known them for a while. I like those boys.

Is this a door you can back out of if you walk through it? Big N O. If I'm in it, I'm in it. But someone told me this once and it again changes everything. When it comes to pursuing God's will, I don't know who told me it might have been you.

It sounds like something Monda would say. If God leads you to it, God will lead you through it. Can I anyone say amen to that? If God leads you to it, God will lead you through it. And I live in the goodness of God, so why shouldn't I invite other people to live in God's goodness too?

Amen. So we trust his goodness we seek his guidance, we trust his goodness, and then finally we just accept the gifts that he brings into our lives. Now I'm not just talking about that little boy right there and that one back in the back somewhere, right there he is back in that corner. They are gifts. But anyone, anything, any place that God puts you and positions you is his gift to you.

So don't be afraid to accept God's gift to you. Now I'm telling you again, there's a billion thoughts going through your head when you're processing this. And I know as I'm saying, well, what if I take them to Melissa implied in that, what if I do this was this question, what will happen if I take them? Is this gonna turn out good or is this gonna turn out bad? That's a fair enough question.

Will they be all right? Will I be all right? Will we be all right? I don't know if you asked yourself this question, but will I be enough? You ever wrestle with that question when it comes to what God calls you into, will I be enough?

Will I have enough? That's a question. But will I be enough for what they need? And then the also thing is, what are the further ramifications outside this circle? How could others lives be impacted by this?

Would there be an opportunity for God to receive glory just beyond even the three of us living in the will of God? What could be the ramifications of this? And again, I don't know. But I know this, that God really doesn't care whether you live in Reno, Nevada or in

Bedford, Indiana. What he really cares about is how you serve and love and glorify him wherever he puts you.

He cares an awful lot about the people that he brings into your path. Those people are gifts to you, gifts that he entrusts to you. Now this has been a very personal testimony this morning, but I hope that you've sort of applied some of this stuff as we've been walking through because I think this is a good question to ask. What would happen to us and others if we said yes to the opportunities that Jesus puts right in front of us as gifts? He goes here, this is an opportunity.

What would happen if you said yes to serving a meal to some men and struggling families on Thanksgiving Day? What would happen? What would happen if you approached Brandon after Sunday morning and said, hey, I want you to point out a student in your youth group that needs some one on one attention that I could help mentor? I don't know that I'm enough, but I'm willing to step into that role and invest in some youth. What if you were to go up to.

To Heather and say, hey, I've got some time on Sunday morning, and these kids need to know about Jesus. What an amazing opportunity. What a gift to be entrusted with the opportunity to share Jesus with these little kids. What might happen if we actually say yes to getting the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven? What if we said yes to that?

I'm not sure I've got what it takes. I don't either. I do not either. But I know that the one who gives me the gift will provide me with the resources to live that out. The gift giver knows what we need.

Philippians says this, my God shall supply all your needs. I love that. Just a quick detour. So here's what Paul says to these Philippians. He goes, I know you've got some uncertainty about God.

Maybe you've not walked with God long enough to know this about God. You may have some questions yet. You're still trying to figure out who God is. You're trying to figure out what it means to trust him. And can you really trust Him.

So here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna ask you, don't rest on your own experience with God right now. Let me tell you about my experience with God and let that encourage you. So Paul says, listen, if you don't believe that your God can do it, let me tell you, my God can supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. Amen.

My God can do that. And then when you believe and you trust that God can use you with all your nonsense to do some amazing things, then you say, lord, I'm gonna pray. Just like Paul prayed in Hebrews, or the

writer of Hebrews teaches us to pray. Now, may the God of peace equip us with everything good that we may do, his will working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom he glory forever and ever. Amen.

So let's just pray that, Lord, may you, the God of peace, equip us with everything good so that we may do your will. Work in us all the things that which are pleasing in your sight. Do it through Jesus Christ. And we pray it gives him glory forever and ever. Amen.

Amen. Seek his guidance, trust his goodness. Accept whatever and wherever and whoever he puts in front of you as a gift from Him. If he leads you to it, he will lead you through it. Now, I don't know how this story will end for us.

I've got some ideas. I have some hopes and prayers. But God leads us in interesting ways. And so we don't know, none of us. But I know this.

I know that if I keep prioritizing his kingdom, if I pray for his kingdom to come, and I step into a willingness to live out the prayer, thy will be done, seeking his direction, his guidance on questions and challenges that life brings to me, and then trusting his goodness and his faithfulness enough to say yes to those opportunities, then I know that we will have a front seat at the grand unfolding of his kingdom. Power and glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, as we prepare to take a time where we take a cup and bread, it reminds us that your will begins with us saying yes to you.

And those of us who are going to participate in this moment have said yes to you. We've turned our lives over to you. So we take the bread and the cup in recognition that you. You gave your life so that we might come into that perfect relationship with you. But Lord, I know that we also are in living life with you.

You take us down paths that sometimes only you know where they will go. And it's natural that sometimes we feel. We feel concerned or we have questions. And so I pray that as we take the cup and the bread this morning, that we lean into your goodness. We trust you.

And in taking the bread and taking the cup, we say yes to the next step of living out the will of God. Your will be done is our prayer and our commitment in this moment. In Jesus name, amen. Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel.

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