

My Desire - God's Desire – (Psalms 37 ) 7 June 15

Psalm 37 verse 4 is our text today. I heard this story of a man whose plane crashed in the heart of the Indonesian jungle. As he cried to himself for the wreckage and he began to fight his way through the dense jungle, he came to a clearing. When he came to a clearing, he met face-to-face what he believed to be a hunting party of cannibals. When he saw these men there with their spears in hand ready with a hungry look upon their face, he said to himself: "I am a dead man." Then instantly he heard a voice out of nowhere that said, "No, you're not a dead man. Look at your feet, you'll find a spear. Pick it up and thrust it into the heart of the chief! And so he obeyed the voice. He raced down, picked up that spear and there, he thrust it into the heart of the chief, and then he heard that voice again say, "Now, you're a dead man."

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You know all of us want guidance, we all want direction in life. In fact, we all want to hear the voice of God, especially concerning the important questions of life, such as: Who should I marry, what job should I take, what college should I go to, or what decision should I make in life. The good news is that our God is still in the business of guiding and directing the lives of people. In fact, it is important to know that God's voice can still be heard, and that voice gives direction. That Jesus Himself put it this way, in that great passage in John chapter 10 in verse 27, Jesus said, "my sheep", and the reference to sheep simply refers to those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. If you are a child of God today, this is directed towards you. He says, my sheep, my children, notice: They hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

(John 10:27 ESV)

In other words, God's voice can still be heard, and that voice still gives direction today. In fact, the Bible over and over again reminds us that it is the desire of God to guide our lives and to direct our paths. In fact, we could give you a string of verses, but let me just give you one. I think you know this verse, it's found in Proverbs chapter 3 verse 5 and 6. It says:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

(Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. But in all of your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path." It is without a doubt God's desire that we would hear his voice and we would follow that voice, that he would guide us and direct us, that we might know his perfect plan and will for our life in every given situation of life. In fact, one of the most important questions of life and is a question that everybody will eventually ask, is this: What is God's will for my life? Because most people, and I would venture to say most people in this room today, would say, "Yes, God has a plan. God has a purpose for my life." But sadly, very few people know what that plan is, and few know how to discover that plan, and as a result, we come up with some really strange or may I say it this way, harebrained ways of discovering the will of God. You know what I mean? Let me give an example. I heard the story once of a lady who had this lifetime ambition. She wanted to go to the holy land. She had the time, she had the money, she wanted to visit Jerusalem, she wanted to follow the steps of Jesus. But she didn't know if it was God's will for her to go, and so she, one night had the pamphlet and she was reading through the pamphlet and she recognized or noticed that she would be flying from her city to the city of Jerusalem on a Boeing 747 aircraft. Well, she slept that night and when she woke up in the morning, the first thing that she did was, she looked at her digital alarm clock and there it read 7:47. And she took that as a sign from God, that because you're going to fly in a 747 and she woke up at 7:47, it must be God's will for her to go to Jerusalem.

Now that's what I call a crazy, harebrained way of discovering the will of God. In fact, it's about as crazy as this story. I heard once of a man who likewise was seeking God's will for his life and so, he was driving his car, and his car ran out of gas in front of the Philippine embassy, and so he reasoned that God must want him to be a missionary to the Philippines. I wonder what that man would've done if he, being single, found himself stuck in an elevator with another young lady who was single. Could you imagine the rationale? I'm stuck, she's stuck. I'm single, she's single. Her name is Mary. This must be God's sign that I should marry Mary. I mean, there are all kinds of crazy ways of discovering the will of God, but God's will can be known. Discovering his plan and purpose for our life should not be such a mystery, alright?

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So the question is this: How is it we can know God's will? God does have a plan. God does want to guide. He does want to direct our life. His voice can be heard and that voice should be followed. So how can we hear his voice, how can we know his will? Well our passage here, in Psalm chapter 37 and verse 4 gives us the answer, or let me say it this way, gives us some help, alright?

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

(Psalm 37:4 ESV)

Notice what it says. It says, Delight yourself also in the Lord and He, that is God, shall give you the desires of your heart. Delight yourself in the Lord, and the Lord will give to you the desires of your heart. In other words, we can interpret that verse this way: If God is your heart's delight, then God will give you the delights of your heart. In other words, if you're living right with God, God places upon your heart his desires. So as you begin to follow the desires of your heart, you're doing what God desires for you. Did you get that? If you didn't get it, don't worry, I'll say it a 100 times before we're done alright? You'll walk out of here saying it like little robots. No I'm just kidding, alright. But please notice as we go back for a moment to Psalm 37 and verse 4. Notice what it's not saying. The Lord is not saying that He gives you all the desires of your heart, but he gives to you the desires that he places there. You see, so as you are living right with God, God places upon your heart right desires. And as you begin to follow the desires of your heart, you begin doing what God desires for you. Are you with me, that's pretty quiet out there, alright? Are you with me? You're thinking, I don't know if I should say anything. Alright, are you getting it?

(Congregation says Yes) Good job.

Let's go to another verse then, alright, so we kinda get this together. Paul, in fact, kinda gave us the same concept here.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

(Philippians 2:12-13 ESV)

Notice he says, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And yet notice carefully this last phrase. He says, "For it is God who works in you." It is God who works in you both to will, that is the word "desire", to do for his good pleasure. In other words, God places his desire on you that you might do his desire, which is your desire, and bring about good for His glory. In other words, as we live right with God, as Psalm 37 and verse 4 says, then God places upon our heart right desires, and as we fulfill the desires of our heart, we are doing what God desires for us. So if we're right with God, alright, as far as you know. We don't

have to get crazy and introspective about this, but as far as we know we're right with God, then do what your heart desires, and you'll be doing what God desires of you. Did you get that? Let me give you an illustration. Sometimes people say to me, why did you marry your wife, Lisa? Why did I marry Lisa, and sometimes in a cavalier fashion, I'll say this, "Because I wanted to." And so people who are kind of hyper spiritual will say, "(Gasp) Didn't you pray about it?" And I'll say, "Well, of course I prayed about it." I said, but as I prayed about it, my heart's desire didn't change, and based upon Psalm 37 verse 4 and Philippians chapter 2 verse 12 to verse 13, I followed my heart's desire, which I believe was a desire God placed here, to marry Lisa and here we are 33 years later and we're happily married, thank you. (Congregation claps) You don't have to clap. Okay, I was not.. but you know I'll text my wife, "They clapped for us today, 33 years!" But I know some of you are thinking, looking at me and say, "You don't look old enough to be married 33 years." Thank you. You can see me afterwards, alright. (laughs) That's healthy living right? Or that's being married very young, which is actually what happened, okay. Now, where was I? (laughter in congregation) I got caught up in my wife, you know? Picture please.

If we live right, if we're right with God, if our delight is in God, God gives us the delights of our heart. Why? Because, as we live right, God placed upon our heart right desires. As we follow the desire of our heart, we end up doing what God desires for us. Are you getting it? Now, having said that I can hear your thinking. I can hear somebody out there saying, wait a minute, wait, wait, wait, wait! I hear you. You say, what about Jeremiah 17 in verse 9, which says this,

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

(Jeremiah 17:9 ESV)

it says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Wow, how can we trust our heart? The Bible says the heart is deceitful, it is desperately wicked, how can you trust your heart? Somebody thinking that way?

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Yes, in the 1st service I said, "Someone thinking that?" Hands went up all over the place. Man, this guy is heretic, he's teaching us something crazy, you know? Wait a minute, how can you trust our.. you're telling me, "Listen if you're (trying) real hard to live right, you can trust your heart and as you follow your heart, you wind up doing what God desires you to do!" And I say yes, that's what I'm saying! Well, what do you do with this verse, the heart is deceitful above all things desperately wicked, who can know it? The fact is the heart is deceitful and it is desperately wicked and we can't

trust it. Now that creates a problem, doesn't it? So then how do I know? How do I know that if this desire on my heart is God's desire and it is not the desire of my own design? How do I know if this desire is God's desire and this is not my own selfish ambition speaking? How do I know that this is God's will, His desire and not just my own whim? Good question right? Well, that takes us to another verse, and that is found in Romans chapter 12 in verse 2, that says this.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:2 ESV)

It says that we are to prove, or we are to put to test, what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In other words, we need to test the desire. You see, as we live right, God places upon our heart, his desire and we need then, at that moment, to check that desire to make sure that desire is God's desire and not the desire of my own design. Are you with me? We need to put to test the heart to the test. The Bible lays out for us four tests that help us to prove whether or not this decision that I am about to make is God's will for my life, alright? So as you live right, God places upon your heart right desires. As you begin to follow those right desires of your heart, God leads you to do those things that he desires, but because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, we need to step back at times and check that desire to make sure that desire is God's desire and it is not the desire of my own design. Are you with me? I don't want to lose you. Are you with me? Okay, so here are 4 simple tests that you can apply in any situation in your life. It doesn't matter if you're asking yourself, "Should I marry this person? Should I take this job? Should I go to this college? Or what decision should I make? Whether be it in my family, in my business or my personal life." Here are 4 principles that will help you to make the right decision so you're going the right direction for the glory of God, alright?

Principle number 1: How do I know that this desire is God's desire and not the desire my own design? Well, first of all, we need to test or we prove this desire by the Word of God. Now, I know this is a simple truth, but it is one that we oftentimes violate and that's why sometimes we take a wrong step in this game called life. You see, if this desire that I have in my heart is from God, then this desire will not, in any way, violate a clear scriptural truth. In other words, if this desire is from God, it will not violate the Scripture. You see, God never leads us contrary to the Word of God. Did you catch that? God never leads you contrary to his word. You say why? Because the Bible is truth. You see, it's the Bible that tells us what is right and what is wrong. It's

the Scripture that tells us what is good and what is bad and what is helpful, or what is hurtful. It is our baseline in life, and so if there's a desire in my heart, a desire to do something, as far as you know I'm living right with God. So I checked that desire. Where? I check it according to the Scripture, and if this desire in any way contradicts the Word of God, then truth wins, desire loses. Why? Because the truth is our baseline. All right? Are you with me? Let me give you a statement: Truth always trumps desire. Truth always trumps desire. You see, if this desire of mine, no matter what it may be, by the way, it doesn't matter how strong you may feel about something. It doesn't matter if your hormones are raging within this relationship, it doesn't matter how fervent you may be about this thing that has gripped your heart, this desire that you have. If that desire, no matter how strong you feel about it, is contrary to Scripture, then truth wins and desire loses. Truth wins, desire loses, because God will never lead you to do anything that is contrary to his own word. Are you with me? Paul made a great statement for us in 2nd Timothy, he put it this way, talking about the value of Scripture. Scripture being our baseline, scripture teaching us what is right or wrong, keeping us from- what is helpful rather than what is hurtful.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

(2 Timothy 3:16 ESV)

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He says that all Scripture is inspired by God. It is God-breathed and it is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we're wrong, it teaches us to do what is right, and so, this desire must always be checked in connection with the Word of God, and if this desire is contrary to the Word of God, then truth wins and desire loses. I've been pastoring for probably about almost 30 years and in my years of pastoring, whether it be here or other places, invariably, I've had over years, young people coming to me and it's usually young ladies, and they say this to me. They say, "You know what? I feel led of the Lord to begin dating this unsaved young man." Invariably, that happens to me. "I feel led of the Lord to date this unsaved young man." And as I begin to talk with this person, they.. the reasoning kind of goes like this. "You know um.. pastor, um.. nobody in church ever invites me out. I mean all the guys in our church never invite me out. In fact, most of the guys I know in church are jerks anyway, you know, and.. but there's a lot of cute guys in the world and, you know, they're nice guys and I met this cute nice guy, and he asked me out and I prayed about that and I feel God wants me to

date this unsaved man." And then, invariably, I say, "But wait a minute." "Pastor, I'll witness to him, don't worry." And they try to kiss me or stick my Bible in their face. And it usually ends up this way, a few days later, of course, I don't hear from that person, I hear from a secondhand source, that you know, he tried to kiss her and she let him, and next thing you know, she's in love and telling everybody, "It's God's will for me to marry this unsaved man." Now that being the case, what do you do with this verse found in 2 Corinthians 6, in verse 14,

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

(2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV)

"Do not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever." Are you with me? You see, it doesn't matter how you feel, young person. It doesn't matter how raging your hormones may be. It doesn't matter how intensely you say you love this individual. Truth always trumps desire, are you with me? You cannot say, "It's God's will for me to do this. You cannot do it. You can say it is your will, it is your desire. So how do you know whether this is your desire or God's desire? Truth. Truth. Truth always trumps desire, and yet invariably some of you will say to me, "But wait a minute. You know I dated this unsaved man, this unsaved young lady and they got saved! There, it was God's will!" No, it wasn't, it's God's grace. It's grace that touched that the heart of this young man or this young lady and brought them to salvation. It wasn't God's will for you to date. Why? Because God never violates his own truth. He doesn't lead you that way. You lead yourself that way. But God doesn't. God's gracious. God is merciful, and in the midst of that witness, that person rubbing with God's people are coming to church or whatever it is, they get saved. That is God's grace, that's God's mercy. But you see, truth always trumps desire. So if this desire of my heart is God's desire, and is not the desire of my own design, then this desire will not, in any way, conflict with the truth of God's Word. Principle number 1, alright?

Now here's principle number 2: We prove the will of God by the peace that the Holy Spirit brings in the life of the believer. You see, if this desire of mine is God's desire, then peace will be ruling in your heart. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God leads the believer. Please notice, the Holy Spirit lives within you if you're a child of God today, and He's there to lead you. Alright, He's leading you in truth. He is there to lead you to know, so you might do God's will. In fact, Paul put it this way, in Romans chapter 8 in verse 14.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

(Romans 8:14 ESV)

He says, "But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." So as a child of God, the spirit of God leads you, we see that throughout Scripture. Remember, in Acts 13, the Bible says that the Spirit of God said, "Set apart for me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work in which I have called you."

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Acts 13:2 ESV)

And there, the Spirit of God led Paul and Barnabas on that first missionary journey. In fact, if you're here today, a child of God, you're the result, ultimately, of the spirit of God leading Paul out of Jerusalem out into in the uttermost parts of the earth. We're all recipients of that spirit leadership. That same Holy Spirit, remember, led Paul to Philippi, and in Philippi the same spirit lead him to Lydia, and there Lydia trusted Christ, and in her home- a church was started within her home. So the Spirit of God leads us, but please know this, the Spirit of God always leads us through inner peace. The Spirit of God always leads us through inner peace.

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Of course, he leads us through the Word of God. He would never lead you to do something contrary to the Scripture, but He does lead you through inner peace. You see, the spirit of God guides our life by giving us an inner peace, and that inner peace confirms to us that this desire, that has gripped my heart, is the will of God. In fact, Paul said in Colossians 3 in verse 15,

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

(Colossians 3:15 ESV)

speaking of the leadership of the Holy Spirit through peace. He says, "And let the peace of God rule in your heart." Now, are you a.. any sports fans here today? I got the same response in the 1st service. Any sports fans, anybody likes soccer? Guys, yeah soccer right? You're shy to raise your hand. This word is a cool word. "Rule". It's a word.. from this word we get the word "umpire" or "referee". And so it says, "And let the peace of God umpire, let the peace of God referee in your life, and those who love words, we know that the game of soccer or basketball or whatever it is, it is actually run by the referee or the umpire right? He's the man that calls the shots. In



fact, he is the final word. And when that game is playing and somebody upon that team does something that you're not supposed to do, you know, they step out of bounds or you know, they foul somebody, what happens? That referee, that umpire, he blows the whistle and instantly, everybody knows something is wrong, and the game comes to a halt. Somebody has violated the rules of the game, thus saith the umpire, all right? He's there to rule that that game runs according to the playbook, alright? And just as that umpire guides and directs that game, and just as he keeps that game on course, the Spirit of God, the Bible says, is our umpire and he rules our game of life through peace. You see, when a desire grips our heart and when we feel like okay, I want to do this and I start moving forward, all of a sudden that peace is violated. That's the Spirit of God blowing his whistle, and he's saying, "Stop. You're making a misstep. You're out of bounds. You're going off course." You see, peace rules. If this decision that I'm about to make is in accordance with the Word of God, but it doesn't have the peace of the Spirit of God, then I need to stop. Why? Because the Spirit of God removes peace when we're about to do something that we are not supposed to do or when we're making a wrong step in this game of life. Are you with me? And so maybe you're about to make a decision and your decision doesn't contradict what the Scripture.. By the way, your decision doesn't have to have a scriptural verse to prove that you should do it. It just can't violate Scripture.

So maybe it doesn't violate Scripture, but all of a sudden there's this check in your spirit. All of a sudden you're about to make this decision and there's this uncomfortableness. Maybe you are about ready to make this decision and all of a sudden you just don't feel right about this. Listen, that's the Spirit of God blowing the whistle. He's checking your spirit, he is the umpire. He's saying, "Stop, don't go that direction. Step back, you're about ready to step out of bounds. You're about ready to make a foul." Spirit leads through peace, and when the peace is violated, we need to step back and say, "What now, Lord?" Because if the decision that you're about to make is God's will, and not a desire of your own design, that decision will be in accordance with the Word of God, and will also have the peace of the Spirit of God. Don't violate peace. The spirit of God checks your spirit, He gives you an uncomfortableness, He makes you uneasy on the inside. He disturbs that internal tranquility, that inner peace is gone. There is an uncomfortableness and that's the spirit of God saying, "Don't do what you're about to do. Step back, because God does have a plan. God has a purpose for your life. And so he asks us to prove or to put this desire to the test.

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Number 3 is this: We prove the will of God simply by the support of, I'll say, wise and godly people. Let me just stop for a moment and interject something. Sometimes Christians get hyper spiritual and a young person gets saved in our church, but their parents are not believers and we say to that young person, you know, you need to seek counsel from godly people. And the first thing that child says is, "Well, my parents aren't godly because they're not Christians." Let me tell you something, that's wrong, because when a young person is seeking wisdom in life, they need to seek the wisdom of their parents, saved or not saved. Because nobody loves that child more than their parent, are you with me? And when we're seeking counsel, we don't seek counsel from just anybody. We need to seek out counsel from people who love us and who are concerned about us. In fact, they're more concerned about us than they are even about themselves, and that equals parent. So that's why I said we prove God's will by the support of wise, and we can say as Christians, yes and (/)godly people. So you know, a young person, you know, who has parents that are not saved, they need to go bounce things off their parents. Parents are wise. So let's not get hyper spiritual about this, are you with me? Are you with me? (Congregation says yes) You don't have to agree with me, alright, but you just need to understand what I'm saying. If you don't agree with me just take it home and bring it to God in prayer. If you think I'm wrong, then so be it, but I just think that young people need to seek the wisdom of their parents. Well stop, now, if maybe somebody is a little older and they know the Lord, they need to seek counsel of people, yes, who have wisdom, and people who know the Lord, and people who are concerned for them. But we prove the will of God by the support of godly people, because God often uses people to help us to discover his will for our lives.

Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

(Proverbs 11:14 ESV)

In fact the Bible says in Proverbs 11 of verse 14, "In the multitude of counselors, there is safety." So it's a smart thing. It's a wise thing to seek the counsel of others before we make a big decision in life. And so if the desire that has gripped my heart, if this desire is God's desire and not the desire of my own design, then that desire will be in accordance with the Word of God. It will have the peace of the Spirit of God ruling in my heart, and I'll have the support and the encouragement of wise and godly people, alright? Wise and godly people. We need to seek the wisdom of others because sometimes we just need their input.

I remember when I was 25 years of age, I had been working in the hotel business for several years already. My wife and I were living in San Francisco and for about 6 months, I sensed God calling me to be a preacher, to leave the business that I was in, and to become a preacher going to full time Christian service. And so I called my pastor on the phone, I went to talk to him. I told him what was going on, that for the last 6 months, God has just been hounding my heart. I just feel that the Lord is calling me in to full-time service, and I want you know something. At 25 years of age, I was as shy as they come. I know it's hard to believe, okay, but it was a while ago, but I was really shy. In fact, you can ask my wife. I was shy.. I, at that point, had never spoken in public. I had never preached a sermon in my life, never taught a Sunday school class. In fact, when I was first saved, my church asked me to give a testimony of my salvation. I was so fearful I ran out of the church. They never asked me again. A few years later, I was asked by a pastor to read Scripture on Sunday morning. It took me 2 weeks to muster the courage and two weeks for my knees to stop shaking. Alright, so I was as shy as the day is long. So with that in mind, I'm sitting with my pastor, 25 years of age. I say to him, "Pastor, God is calling me to be a preacher. You know what I was saying? God is calling me to spend the rest of my life standing in front of people like you, and preach the word!" Terrifying. Terrifying right? You know what they say about public speaking, don't you? They say a person at a funeral.. a person would rather be in a casket than stand and give the eulogy. I felt that way. But I told him that I felt God was calling me to preach, and here's what he said to me. He said, "Mike, 6 months ago I told the elders of our church that I believe that God was speaking to your heart and calling you to ministry. I want you to know something. At 25 years of age, not only was it unbelievably encouraging, but it was also confirming, what God was doing in my heart, God had testified in the heart of another, and I was able to take that unbelievable step of faith and here I am today because I sought the council of godly people.

So God often uses people to help us to discover the will of God, because seeking counsel is violent and here's why. Because people oftentimes want things so bad, they want things so bad. They want things so bad that sometimes they deceive themselves in thinking that this desire is God's desire when it is simply the desire of their own design. You know what I'm talking about? Sometimes people want that new car so bad, that upgraded apartment so bad, you know? Or they want that second wife so bad, just kidding alright, (laughter in congregation) that they deceive themselves in thinking, you know, that this desire of my heart is God's desire when it was actually their own desire and in other words, they are blind to their own desires and they need the input of others to see what they don't see.

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Because if we don't get that counsel, here's what happens. In our own self-deception, we take a wrong step. We head down a wrong path. We find ourselves in unbelievable hurt and heartache, like this farmer that I once heard of. This farmer wanted to be an evangelist. He heard me preach once, I'm just kidding, and cos I'm an evangelist. Right, he wanted to be an evangelist, this farmer, and so one day in his corn.. in his farming, you know, he took a break, lay down on his back. He looked up in the sky. There he said he saw 2 clouds, one formed the letter 'P' and the other one formed the letter 'C' and instantly, he knew that God was calling him to Preach Christ. So he got up and he sold his farm and he went out preaching. The only problem was that he was a horrible preacher. So after one horrible sermon, his friend then came to him and said, you know, maybe that day when you lay on your back, looked up and you saw that 'P' and 'C', God was saying to you plant corn, rather than preach Christ. So we need the council of godly men and women to help us to stay on track, because if this desire that has gripped my heart is God's desire, it will be in accordance with the Word of God, there will be peace of the Spirit of God ruling in your heart, and you'll have the approval and the support of people you know, love and trust.

Principle number 4 and then were done in about 30 minutes. Ok here it is: We prove God's will by doors of opportunity that open before us. In other words, if this desire that has gripped my heart is God's desire, doors of opportunity will just open.

Obstacles kinda- will just melt away. God will just kind of, make a way. I mean, it stands to reason, doesn't it? If what you're about to do is God's will, then it doesn't violate Scripture, you have peace, people are saying, "Yeah do it, that's a great idea." and standing before you is an incredible open door, then you take that step of faith and you go forward believing that God has opened that way, and you can go forth in confidence that you are right where God wants you to be. God opens doors. In fact, Paul reminds us of that when he said in 1 Corinthians 16, in verse 9,

for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

(1 Corinthians 16:9 ESV)

"For a great and effective door has been opened unto you." God opens and God closes doors. And we can say that an open door is God's will, and a closed door is evidence that God is not in it. And friends, if we have to kick the door down, if we have to manipulate a person, a situation or a circumstance, to accomplish the desire of my heart, you can mark it down that that desire is not God's desire, but that is the desire of your own design. Why? Because God just opens doors when he is in it. If we have to kick it down, if we have to manipulate the situation, that is not his desire, it is your desire. I heard the story of a very large and overweight man who, on his way to work

every day, he would stop by like a "Breadtalk" (famous bakery in Singapore) and he would fill just a basket full of bread and goodies. He would take it to work to share with his colleagues. And well one year, he lost a lot of weight, and of course everybody was happy. So he stopped going by the bakery, alright? And sometime later, he had to run an errand for the company and so he went by this very same bakery. He thought to himself, "Wow, what if God wants me to stop by that bakery and pick up some goodies for my colleagues?" And so he says, "Lord, if it is your will for me to stop by this bakery and pick up some goodies for myself and my colleagues, then give me a parking spot right up front." Sure enough, there is a parking spot right up front.. the 8th time he went around the block. You know what you call that? It's called manipulation, right? By the way, that is not actually even a good story. Let me tell you why. We should never do that to God. God, if.. then I will.. God if.. then I will. That's not a good way to live your Christian life. You know what I'm talking about? You're a young guy thinking, "Should I take that job? Should I propose to that girl?" and you're driving, and (so you say) "Lord if you want me to, if you want me to propose to her, if you want me to take that job, then I'm not gonna stop and I'll trust you to give me a green light. Lord, if it's a green light, I'll know it's you! I'm not gonna stop!" And so you go through (dash past the red light) and bam! You get smashed. What a dumb way to try to figure out God's will alright. The point is, if we have to kick the door down, we've to manipulate a situation, a person, a circumstance, then mark it down: That desire, no matter how loud it is crying within your heart, is a desire of your own design and it is not God's desire for your life.

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So, if your heart has been gripped by a desire, how do you know that this desire is God's desire, and not your own selfish ambition? Number 1, it should be in accordance with the Word of God. Can't violate the truth of Scripture. Number 2, you have to have the peace of God ruling in your heart. Number 3, you'll have the support and encouragement of wise and godly people, people you love, you know and you trust. And fourthly, a door of opportunity just will be open for you and friends, when that happens, you can go forward with confidence that you are right where God wants you to be. I'm told that in Italy there is a harbor. In order to get to this particular harbor, there's a very very narrow passage, and this narrow passage is treacherous. In fact, many sailors and ships have lost their lives because it's filled with rocks and overhanging cliffs and so on and so forth. But in order to navigate that narrow stretch of water to get into the nice beautiful harbor, they established three lights on poles, and the navigator of those ships know that in order to navigate safely and not be waylaid upon the rocks, those three lights have to be as one. They have to be so perfectly lined up that the entire time down, they see those lights as

one, and only then do they know that they are going to safely make in to the harbor. But if the pilot of that ship all of a sudden sees two, or he sees three lights, he knows that he is off course, and he and the ship are headed for danger. In the same way, God has given us four lights, has he not? And when those four lights are lined up, friends, we can have absolute certainty that we too are heading in the right direction. You see, we don't have to worry, we don't have to wonder, we don't have to doubt, we don't have to try to manipulate the situation or circumstance. God's will can be known. How? By making sure your desire and this decision is in accordance with the Word of God, there's a peace of the Spirit of God, the support of godly people who love you and care about you and there's an unbelievable door of opportunity open to you. And when it happens, listen, you can go forth with absolute confidence that you are right where God wants you to be. God has a plan. His will and his plan for you is not a mystery. Live right, God will place upon your heart right desires. You can follow in the desire of your heart, and you will find that you are doing the very things that God desires of you. Isn't that good? Since we're early today, and all we have is the Lord's supper afterwards, can I give you one last thought? I think this is important. Do you know, God has an overarching will for all of us. It doesn't matter who you are today. Doesn't matter what you believe. Doesn't matter (what) background. God has a plan for you, and it's the same. His plan for you is the same for me and likewise. Here's his plan. His plan, is that you, and his desire, his will, is that you would know him as your Savior and your Lord. In fact, Peter put it this way.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

(2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

Notice he said in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 9 that God is not what? God is not willing. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. You see, God's deepest desire, his will, for every single person within this auditorium today, his desire for you is that you would repent of your sin and if they turn to Jesus and to trust him as Savior and as Lord. That is without a doubt his will for your life and so maybe you're here today and you're saying, "Hey, I want to know God's will for my life." You know, God's will begins when you place your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ to be Savior and Lord. That's God's will for you. It's amazing to think that the God of heaven desires to have a relationship with us, and He does desire. God knows that your place upon this planet is in the center of his will. And the center of his will begins by you placing your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ. You know, that's why Jesus Christ came, He left the glories of heaven and came to this earth to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. He came and

died upon that cross. You know why? He came to forgive you of your sin, that you might have the right to get to heaven. He did what you cannot do, you cannot wash away your own sin. That's why Jesus Christ came. It's why John 3:16 says,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3:16 ESV)

God so loved the world, that's you, that he gave his only begotten Son, that's Jesus, and that whosoever believes in him, the Bible says, shall not perish but have everlasting life. You see, Jesus lived a sinless life, and he came to this earth and died on the cross for your sin. He died, to do what you cannot do, you cannot wash away your own sin, you cannot save yourself.

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All of your good effort, all of your good works, as noble as they may be, friends, they do not wash away your sin and they will not get you to heaven. The Bible says it's not by works of righteousness that we have done that, but it is by God's mercy that He saved us. Jesus came because he loved us.

he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

(Titus 3:5 ESV)

God sent Jesus because He is merciful and He is gracious, He came because His deepest desire is that you would repent of your sin and turn to Jesus Christ to be your Savior, and to be your Lord. For Him to be your Lord, that you might have your sins forgiven, that you might have an abundant life now, and an eternal life in the future. the Bible says that you need to make a choice to believe. God so loved you that he gave his only begotten Son, that's Jesus, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. You see, you need to come to a point in your life where you recognize it. Yes, I am a sinner and I cannot save myself, but that's why Jesus Christ came. God in His love for me, God in His love for you, sent Jesus Christ to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. You see, Jesus died to save you from sin, death and hell simply because He loves you and that's God's will and God's desire for you. So maybe you're here this morning, and you're not certain that your sins are forgiven. You are not confident that you are on your way to heaven, that maybe God's desire for you today, right now, right here, is for you to place your faith and your

trust in Jesus Christ. If you're here this morning, and you are not certain, then I invite you today. In a moment we're going to have an invitation. I'm going to invite you to make a decision, to make a choice, to trust him as Lord and Savior.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

(Romans 10:13 ESV)

The Bible says, whosoever, that means you, shall call upon the name the Lord, the Bible says they shall be saved. That is God's will, that is His desire for you. God is not willing, God does not desire that any should perish, but that all, that is you, should come to repentance, and that's a choice, a decision that you make. A decision to trust Jesus Christ to do for you, what you cannot do for yourself. That is God's will for you. By the way, that's the start to know God's greater will, purpose and plan for your life. So let's bow our heads for prayer, shall we? With every head bowed and every eye closed, let's pray together. "Lord, we just want to say thank you this morning, thank you, for Psalm 37 verse 4, Lord, thank you that You have a plan and a purpose for our life. That plan, that purpose can be known. Lord, thank you that You're still speaking, Your voice can be heard, and that voice gives us direction today. Lord, I want to pray for Your people. Maybe there are some that are in the midst of having to make a decision. Lord, I pray You'd speak to their hearts today, I pray that You'd help them to align these 4 principles that they might then be right where You want them to be - in the center of Your will, bringing glory and honor and praise to Your name. Lord, I pray this morning, maybe there are some in this audience today that do not know You as Lord and Savior. Their sins are not forgiven. They have no hope that they're on their way to heaven. Lord, maybe You've spoken to their heart and they need to make a decision for You today.

If that's where you find yourself today, you are not saved, not sure, not certain, not confident that you are on your way to heaven, I want to give you an opportunity today to trust Jesus Christ to be your Savior and to be your Lord. You're here this morning and you know that Jesus died for you, and you know that you're a sinner and you know that you cannot save yourself, but in your heart, you say, "Yes, I believe that Jesus died for my sin", and you know that you need to receive Him as your Savior, but you've just never done that and that's a decision that you need to make right now. I'm going to invite you to make that decision. So if you're here this morning, and you're not certain that your sins are forgiven you, not confident that you're on your way to heaven, but you know you need to trust Jesus Christ to be your Savior, here's what I want you to do. I want you, right where we're sitting with every head bowed and every eye closed, I want you just to raise your hand, and say, "Would you please



pray for me?" I will not embarrass you, I will not point you out, but I will have a word of prayer with you, just at the end of this message. If you've raised your hand this morning, I invite you right now to call upon the name of the Lord, so you might be saved. I'm going to invite you to pray a very simple prayer of faith with me. Please know that this prayer does not save you, but Jesus does. This prayer is you calling upon Jesus and you asking Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. If you raise your hand in seriousness and honesty, pray with me these very simple words of faith. Say, "Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner, and I want You to forgive me of my sin. I invite You into my life to be my Savior and to be my Lord. Jesus, would You save me from my sin and be my Savior right now." Lord, I want to pray for anybody in this audience who has prayed that very simple prayer of faith. That You'd grant to them right now the witness of the Holy Spirit. Lord, bring into their soul that confirmation that You have done what they have asked You to do. Fill them with Your spirit and enable them to live not just You'd be their Savior, but that You'd be their Lord. Bless them Lord, and may they walk with You, and we ask it in Jesus' Name, Amen.