

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 16:5-9
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Anchored in Truth Ministries
1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Well, grab your Bibles and let's go to 1 Corinthians 16 as we continue to build on what we started last Sunday night and that is "Insights on Understanding the Will of God." Insights on understanding the will of God, and we're using a text because here we have the esteemed Apostle Paul who is acting very human-like yet as a full Christian or a committed Christian, I should say, that is, that he's making plans, he's seeking out to do something. I believe Paul's confident he's in God's will, um, but he ends the thing by saying, "Well, if the Lord permits this is what I'm gonna do." So sometimes we make, uh, serving God, honoring God, keeping God's will as some sort of mystical, uh, uh, thing beyond the, the realm of, of just reason and logic but often if certain prerequisites are there, God's will is not that complicated. It's not this mysterious, uh, uh, Gnostic level thing where you try to find these secrets and you discover this thing of God's will.

So let's read it again and notice how Paul talks about his plans going forward in his ministry. Verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 16.

5 But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; 6 and perhaps [notice he's not certain, he's just saying this is what I'm gonna head out and do] and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. [Once again, he didn't know if the Corinthians are actually gonna financially support him and send him on his way, he's just assuming that's what's gonna happen. He's planning for that to happen.] 7 For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;

So Paul does here what I call, and this will be the title of this part 2, he initiates a scripturally based plan. He decides, "This is what I'm gonna do." He takes the initiative but he initiates what, what I would call a scripturally based plan.

Now let's talk about as far as an introduction and then just a tad of review, um, scholars basically talk about God's secret will and God's revealed will. God's secret, uh, will is the fact that God is involved in everything that happens. Uh, you may leave church and say, "I'm not sure if I want an ice cream cone, maybe we'll just go all out and get a dipped

cone, a chocolate dipped cone, and I don't know if I wanna go get that at Sonic or I don't know if I want to go down to or get that at..." Sonic don't have those, do they? "Dairy Queen, or I don't know if I want to go down to Sonic and get something different." Well, I'm not saying you shouldn't pull over and pray about that, I'm certainly not suggesting that you do, but I can tell you this much, God's involved in that decision. He's working in everything. That's God's secret will. He, he's behind every single thing. I mean, if the tiny meaningless sparrow that falls from the sky God knows about it and is concerned, he's involved in everything. Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens; and He does whatever He pleases." And by the way, that means with every single thing that ever has, ever is, or ever will happen in all the universe. God's doing what he pleases.

So there's mysteries there we can't comprehend, God's secret will, and that he is behind everything. Even the evil that's done in the world though he does not author it, it achieves his perfect purposes. God's secret will. Secondly, God's revealed will and I would define God's revealed will as the word of God. He's revealed his will through his word. Like the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You." God's revealed in his word what his will is for his children. Um, and by the way, we talk about sin being falling short of the glory of God or missing the mark, well, it's also sin to fall short of the will of God if he's revealed his will.

So they talk about God's secret will, God's revealed will, uh, and by the way, Jesus held himself to God's revealed will, that is, the Scriptures. Luke 24:44, "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" Christ Jesus, God Incarnate said, "I will keep all the word of God." That's powerful. That's God's revealed will.

Now the third thing and I've added this, is what I would add and call God's specific will, and what I mean by that, what is God's will concerning the specifics of my life. God does have a will, a desire concerning your life. Now if you listen to some of the happy-jack, slappy on the back guys on tv, they'll talk about being in God's will means you're going to be wealthy, you're going to be healthy, you're gonna have kids that do great and all this other stuff. Well, that's not true. We just sang, sang a song that tells you that's not always God's will. Sometimes it is but not always, and certainly there are general promises in the word of God, uh, a lot of them in the Proverbs where if we will live certain ways generally our outcomes will be much better than if we do not live those ways. But there's no guarantee that you're gonna have this worldly definition of a good, happy, successful life. God is not some sort of, uh, demigod, as such, where he's more powerful than us and we just need to find a scheme and manipulate and check off the boxes and somehow appease him that he might bless us and let us have "our best life now." That's, uh, taking, uh, the Lord's name in vain. His name means his character, his attributes. That's, that's beneath the dignity of who he is. You shouldn't treat him like that. That's way below who he truly is.

But God does have a will for us. I call it God's specific will. What's God's will concerning my life? Where should I live? Who should I marry? Where should I go to

school? What should I major in? Should I start this kind of business? Should I go in that kind of business? Should I take this new job or should I keep my old job? What are some insights on how do I know God's specific will? Psalm 37:23 tells us, "The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his ways." The idea of established means directed. And so here's the point of my message tonight: if we will initiate a scripturally based plan for our major decisions, not necessarily where you're gonna get an ice cream cone though it's fine to pray about that, and matter of fact, if we're to pray without ceasing, that should come in there too, alright? But I'm talking about the more major decisions of our life, how can – now listen to me – how can we be like the Psalmist said here and be a man that God directs our steps – listen to me – so that God does not have to correct our steps. That's the goal. I want to flow with God on this thing so that, and now by the way, if you're, if you're as best we know right in the will of God, he's still, you know, guiding your way with stuff you don't, you can't understand and you don't see. But nevertheless, we want to make sure we're walking in the flow with God on this so that he directs our steps and he does not have to so much correct our steps. Don't raise your hands but how many of you have had God correct your steps before? Well, I think it's unanimous. I think I saw a sea of invisible hands.

But we want to strive, it's like I tell pastors sometimes, you know, one of the great weaknesses in pastoral ministry is pastors come out of this error, they have this kind of problem in the church and it's legitimate, and they sort of win that battle and get that fixed and they're so hurt and burned they over-focus on that one and they overcompensate and they get out of that ditch and go to a ditch on the other extreme, and maturity for a pastor and it's the same for you, is as you go along in life, God catches you as you start leaning toward the ditch before you actually get in the ditch, and he gets you back on track and you do pretty good, then you go the other way and he catches you again before you get in that ditch, and so your corrections are a lot smaller as you go forward. But generally speaking, how can we have a better certainty in our hearts and minds that we're in the flow of God's will so God will be directing my steps and not having to correct my steps.

Well, let's review for a moment because if these foundational things we talked about last week are not there, nothing else matters, and that is, let me remind you that you are to be striving that the purpose and the pattern of your life is to walk in the Spirit, live a Spirit-filled life, to love Jesus and to joy in Jesus. If that's not increasing in your heart, I don't care how many boxes you check off, I don't care how many Jeff Noblit messages or whoever else you're listening to out there and, and one of the reasons why I, I've shied away in the last couple of decades in preaching these 4, 5, 6 step how-to sermons is people that are very carnal and don't love the Lord think they can check off those 5 or 6 things and it's okay. It doesn't matter if your heart's not right. Matter of fact, the reason why we'll do the 5 or 6 things properly with the right motives is because we do love the Lord, he is our joy, we do want to walk in the Spirit. I'm not – listen to me – you, you are not to use God to get a better life. God is your joy. God is your life. God is your wealth. God is your treasure. Are you hearing me? But there are some things as that becomes an established seed, if you will, in our, the soil of our soul, then these things do make sense, these practical things. Now let me charge you again: are you striving to walk in the

Spirit? Are you striving to love Jesus more? Are you striving that Jesus would be your joy, not things, not the world, not accomplishments, though those are not wrong but Christ is your joy?

Well, let's again, let's think about the Apostle Paul's example. He initiates a plan. He says, "I'm going to Macedonia. I'm gonna stay with you guys. Hopefully I'll spend the winter there and whatever time I spend there, my plan is that you're gonna support me, financially help me to send me on my way and get my ministry out further." Verse 7, "I don't plan on just coming by and staying for a little bit, I want to wait until I can come by and remain for a while." Then he says, "But by the way, God may change all of this. If the Lord permits." And that's a great way to make your plans, and I do that very deliberately and very literally. It's not just a rote thing with me. I'll try to, when I decide something I'll say, "If the Lord wills." Yeah, you're to go for it. You guys out there who are building businesses and buying companies or whatever you guys do, all I can tell you is just keep bringing your tithes and offerings, alright? But whatever you're doing in building whatever you're building, you need to always tag onto that as a resolute conviction of the heart, "If God wills I'll go down that road. If God wills I'll be successful in that." I want, I want at the end of the day for my God to know I know my next breath depends on him. I'm, you're not the master of your own fate. You're, you're like that song said, you're a puny worm that God has chosen in love and grace beyond measure to pour his favor out on you and make you his child.

Well, Paul says, "I'm, I've got this plan." So he initiated a plan but secondly notice it's a scriptural plan. How do we know it's a scriptural plan? Because Paul's called to the office of apostle. Now we don't have apostles anymore. He had unique authority and unique gifting for this role. God used these men to write Scripture. So whatever else Paul's supposed to be doing as an apostle, it includes two things: preaching the Gospel and planting New Testament churches. Well, let me add a third thing: and building up the churches he plants. I mean, and by the way, that's all Paul did. If you want to know what missions is supposed to look like, look at the New Testament. If you look at the New Testament, you know what you find? Preaching the word, establishing churches and building up the churches you establish and then just keep doing it. And that's what he's doing. Everything he talks about here, traveling here, traveling there, is to encourage the works that are already there or to preach and establish new local New Testament churches.

So he's thoroughly biblical. He's called the apostle to the Gentiles. Well, it's the Gentile region he's working in. Jesus said our commission is to go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations and, and, and preach the Gospel to all the world. It's listed in five books of the New Testament, go into all the world. Well, that's what Paul's doing. I mean, it's very scriptural so he knows, he knows this is what the Scripture says I am to do. So we know he's being thoroughly biblical in this initiated plan.

Um, thirdly, we know he's praying as he goes. Well, it doesn't say that directly but it sure does imply it indirectly, "If the Lord permits." What he means is, "As I go along, I'm yielded to the Lord and I'm praying to the Lord and I'm communing to the Lord, and as

God ordains and as God permits, I'll do this or that, or I may change everything if the Lord shuts a door." On one occasion he said, "Satan thwarted me so I couldn't come." But what his implication is, God is behind anything Satan can stop, or actually God was doing that.

Now but here you are, you're, you're thinking, "Well, wait a minute, I'm not an apostle. I'm not even a pastor of a local church." Yeah, but you have decisions about your career. You have decisions about your home. You have decisions about your business life. You have decisions about what does God want me to be as a wife, what does God want me to be as a husband, what does God want me to be as a mother, what does God want me to be as a young person, what does God want me to do with my life? How do I honor him in these things? What, what should I do about my school plans? What should I do about my career? Well, let's talk about it now practically. How to initiate a scripturally based plan for major life decisions. Now again, I think some of you have never thought through this being 4, 5 or 7 things but you've basically done these things because your heart was centered in the Lord, but it's good to have it sort of outlined so that you can better remember the steps you want to take in making major decisions in your life.

Number 1 at the top of the list I would put pray continually. Pray continually. We know Paul was a man of prayer. He told the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to pray without ceasing. That's a lot of prayer. Well, how do you pray without ceasing? It means, look, folks, we have an – listen now – an unconditional avenue to commune with our heavenly Father. Unconditional. God knows what we are. He knows how fallen we are. He knows how wretched we are. And when we sin whether it's an attitude or a motive or a behavior, we throw that up before God in repentance and God forgives us, the fellowship is restored. We commune with God and we ought to cultivate a communion with God.

Pray without ceasing. That's God's will and that's one way you can be sure that your direction is being directed by God is because your communion with God is continual, and I don't mean perfectly continual. I mean that's the pattern your strive for and typically walk in. And I would advise you at this point about 90% of our prayer that we should be that we would remain Spirit-filled, loving Christ and joying in Christ, and about 10% of our energy should be spent on what the decision we're trying to make is. The question for us would be: do you want to know God's will or do you want to know if God will give you your will? I mean, see, that's what God really wants to know. God, God really wants to know, "No, is your heart with Me or am I just this supernatural force in the sky that may have the power to give you what you want?" "No, Father, I want Your will." What did Jesus do in the garden as he's suffering there? In his humanity, fully God, fully man, in his humanity, "Not My will but Thy will be done. Father, I would desire that I don't go through this torment and this horrid separation from You, bearing the wrath that I'm about to bear, but My chief desire is, God, what's Your will? Father, what's Your will?" Well, that's a great example for us as we pray about a particular decision. "Lord, I'd like to see this happen. Lord, I'd like to buy this company. I would, I would like to take this job. It's really exciting to me, Lord, but You know how I am, God, I can get excited about something that's gonna hurt me and those I love and it can hurt Your reputation. So God,

please if it's not right, shut the door." Are you praying that way? Are you prayerful as you go toward these things, putting God center and first? Do you want to know God's will or do you want to know if God will give you your will?

And remember the model prayer, we call it the Lord's Prayer. Jesus was giving an example of heart motive. That's what he was doing, he was giving an example of the truly godly or spiritual man's heart motive. How does he start? He said, "Pray this way, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." That means, "God, we want You to be hallowed, we want You to be glorified more than anything else. We want Your will and You to be pleased and You to be honored more than anything else." Then what does he say? "Then pray this way, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." You know what that means? "I'm committed to the building of Your church. That means I'm committed to my local church." So as you pray, you can say, "God, I want You glorified and make this to cause me to be better about what You're doing in the world and that is building Your church. God, I want You to be glorified. I want Your church to be built up in advance so would You bless this effort? Would You bless this decision? Would You bless this enterprise or this way I'm planning to go to that end?"

Listen, folks, you just can't miss praying like that. You say, "Well, pastor, I'm not sure I feel like that all the time." Are you listening? If you're saved, you want to feel like that. You may not feel like that but you want to feel like that. The old Puritan said, "The sins that my flesh loves, I hate." There are sometimes where our flesh wants to go those directions but something in us says, "Check up. Time-out. Put God first." And sometimes we have to pray the right things and get our heart caught up with the truth. Amen. Pray it until we feel it. You know, the Bible tells wives to love their husbands, the Bible tells husbands to love their wives, and sometimes you have to pray and act on that until you feel like it. Look, don't look at me spiritual. I used to say don't look at me like a calf at a new gate but nobody knows what that means. Everybody says, "What do you say that for?" I've heard it all my life. I grew up in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. What do you think I'm gonna say? It's kinda the way we talk. I mean, have you ever seen a calf? They'll just stand out there like this. We struggle there, don't we? But you can dive in and say, "Lord, this is where I want to be. So God, help me to flow with Your heart on this thing and that You'd be glorified and make this, make this just, Lord, if I can do this and it be to the end that You're glorified and Your church is built up, then it'll happen." That's exactly what that model prayer means, "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What's gonna happen when his will is done on earth as it is in heaven? The earth will be inhabited by us but we'll be glorified, we'll be his church on earth. Is this not simple? The Bible's so clear and easy.

Well, pray continually. Number 2 if you're gonna initiate a scripturally based plan for major life decisions: search the Scriptures. "Lord, is there anything in Your word that, that, that this violates? Is there anything in Your word that cautions me here?" We'll talk a little bit about green lights and red lights and turn signals maybe next week. "Is there anything in here, Lord, that in Your word that gives me concern on this?" Remember the Psalmist said again, Psalm 119:11, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You." Have you come to that place where you can really desire something

and be honest with God about it and he knows what you think, he knows what's turning you on, he knows what excites you so just get honest and say, "God, I'm really fired up about this but I'm stupid too." Just tell him that. He knows you're stupid. You need to know you're stupid. My point is we're fallen flesh and we can desire the, the most ungodly and unreasonable and, and hurtful things, hurtful to his glory and to our own good. "So God, I really am excited about this but, Lord, I want, I want You to, I want You to make sure that if there's anything in Your word I need to see, show me, Lord. Show me, Lord."

The Bible does say in Proverbs that the companion of fools will suffer harm. Well, if you're making a decision and it puts you in a cesspool of fools, now, uh, we gotta be balanced here and I know some of you businessmen, you do partnerships here and partnerships there, I'm not saying they're wrong but you gotta be careful. Sometimes a partnership can be okay. I, I would caution you to stay away from 50/50 partnerships unless that other person is committed to Christ because your values are very different. Uh, and by the way, if, if you've got any kind of retirement fund with anybody, you, you are a partner with lots of people because you, you own stock with a lot of companies through your retirement account and that's managed by somebody else and we can't control all of that and Paul did say you can't separate from all the evil in the world, if you separated from any association with evil, you'd have to leave the world. I get that but, but here's what I'm saying to you: whether it's a business deal or whether it's a new friend or whether it's somebody you want to court about being your life partner or whatever it is, the companion of fools suffers harm. Be careful. Be wise and say, "Lord, does this, is this going too far? That's what Your word says." And of course, there's many many many teachings in Scripture we ought to bring, um, into this. I don't know why I pick on our businessmen but I want to challenge you guys and that is be aware that some business partnerships may make you a lot of money but may cost you your testimony. Just be aware of that. And obviously we know the Scripture would forbid that.

So whatever it is. Young person likes this person but that person's not committed to Christ, they're not a growing Christian, well, the Scripture forbids that. You're not to be bound together with unbelievers. There's no question about that. You don't court that kind of person, period. Moms and dads, are you listening? It doesn't happen, period. "Pastor, that's easy for you to say." We live that at my house and you can live it at your house. You don't live it with a raw, an iron rod and, and harsh legalism. You, you do it with love but you do it with conviction. And on and on and on we could go. Search the Scriptures.

Alright, to initiate a scripturally based plan pray continually, lay it before the Lord and remember those precepts I brought out, search the Scriptures, number 3: seek the blessing of God-ordained authority. Seek the blessing of God-ordained authority. Now again I'm not telling you that if you leave this step out that somehow God's not in it, I'm just saying why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you? I can't tell you the number of men in my church, of course I've been here 40 years, who came to me when they first started in business and had, I mean, nothing. Just nothing. Just said, "Pastor, pray with me." And it's happened numerous times in a lot of their business careers as things would change and they'd be looking at a new thing, they'd say, "Do you think this would be right with the Lord?" And

I'm gonna tell you, if you're, if you're counseling with a man of God, he's gonna be extremely cautious to give you anything unless he's got clear Scripture on it. I'm not gonna tell our business guys anything unless I've got chapter and verse clear as a bell, okay? I'm gonna give, I'm gonna defer to your wisdom.

But why wouldn't you do that? When I've made my major life decisions, I always, this was when I was a younger man, I always went to my pastors and said, "Do you see anything here that you think would be unwise?" The Bible says in Romans 13:2, "Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God, and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." Young people should honor the authority of their parents. Wives should honor the authority of their husbands. That's God's ordained authority. Church members should honor the authority of their pastors. We're not talking about things a pastor's got no business talking to you about. I'm talking about major life decisions where you just want his wisdom and say, "Can you see anything here that ought to be a concern?"

And I know what to back up on. I was, I'm not gonna tell you the state but I was meeting with one of our church plants many years ago and there might have been 20 or 25 people at that time and I was staying in the home of probably the leader of the church plant at that time. They didn't have a pastor yet and, um, they had a problem that, uh, most of them were young couples that 6 or 8 of the wives of the church, in the church, were starting to meet in a community Bible study with a self-appointed lady who said she was the godly teacher of them, and she started bringing out, "You've gotta do this and you've gotta do that. You've gotta have this role, rule, and you've gotta have that rule." And pretty soon they weren't quoting the Bible, they weren't looking to their pastors and they weren't looking to their husbands, they was looking to this woman. Well, in my always gentle, patient, kind and compassionate way, I told them, "Stop. Now she may be a dear lady and she may be trying to do good but she's not a church elder, she's not your pastor, and she's not your husband, and most of you aren't mature enough to go to a Bible study outside the oversight of your local church anyway." And over time they pulled away from that and the dissensions and the problems because they were followers of this lady versus the rest of the church dissipated in the church.

You go to the right authority. You don't just pick one out. You go to, that's why I said God-ordained. What does the Scripture say is the person whom you can look to for guidance and oversight. You see, in, of all people, Bill Gauthier taught this principle and he thought some goofy stuff but he taught some good stuff, and his stuff on authority was generally very good, I think, and he talks about when you honor God-ordained authority, you're putting yourself under an umbrella of protection. There's lots of bad, evil, wicked temptations and schemes you guard yourself from, and that's, that's exactly why we have the feminist movement in our world today is Satan's gotten women out from under their protections and what do they do? They start doing stuff like killing their unborn babies. Vile, wicked, evil stuff that begins to ruin and destroy themselves, ruin their homes, ruin their families. As I said before, have you ever seen an old, joyous, sweet, happy feminist? No. They look evil. They look hard. They look worn. Got out from under their protection. And it goes for all of us, seek God-ordained authority as you make these decisions.

Now I'm not saying it's some sort of absolute dictator, but get their guidance. Look to their wisdom. I've told kids for years, some, some young person will say, "You know I, I feel called into the ministry and when I graduate from high school I'm gonna go to Bible college. But my dad's not a Christian and my dad has forbidden me to go to Bible college. He says I need to first learn a trade or a discipline to where I can get a good job and make some good money." And they come to me and say, "What should I do?" They're expecting me to say, "Your dad's a heathen. You, you do what God's telling you to do." And I'll say, "You submit to your father." Do you know why? Because even though that dad's not a Christian he knows, he knows his son's lazy, he knows he's not mature yet, he's not disciplined yet, and once that boy shows that he's got that kind of respect for his father and he will be, commit to something and achieve something, then that father turns around and says, "I don't care if you go in the ministry now, son." There can be exceptions but seek the blessing of God-ordained authority.

Number 4 to establish a scripturally based plan: establish accountability. Find some brothers and this would be ideally some folks who are further down the road. Ladies, it would be older ladies in the church. Men, it would be over, older men in the church. If you're a young businessman, find an older businessman. You older businessmen, you're not just here because you're here, you're here to help the younger guys. So we might ask you to help lead a younger men's small group, it's because you've done made a lot of decisions and you've made some mistakes and you've honored God too, and the young men need to hear that. Look to someone for accountability. "Iron sharpens iron," Proverbs 27:17, "So one man sharpens another." Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Um, in pastoral ministry, I have been super-blessed to have some men of God in my life that now I've known for decades, that I don't make a major decision unless I run it across those guys. Now certainly I run it across our elders and I have to have their blessing but those other men too are very very helpful and they are men who will tell me if they think I'm off track. Do you have somebody in your life that you've given permission to say, "Brother, tell me if you think I'm getting off track"? Ladies, do you have somebody in your life that you know has permission that you will welcome them giving you correction if they think you're off track? This is not super-spirituality, this is normal Christianity and when you've got a decision to make, tell that brother or sister, "Now hold me accountable that I stay on track with the Lord as I go forward in this."

When, uh, we, um, after I became your senior pastor, what 32-33 years ago, and, um, I was the only pastor here. The way we were structured, our polity was that we had one senior pastor and then we had deacons and we had biblically established that the deacons didn't do overseeing work, they didn't do the leadership work of the church, and I basically told you as a church it's not good for me to be the only one in authority. I need elders with me and you received that and it took eight years, did you know that? Eight years and we finally established an elder body here at Grace Life Church and we've had some wonderful wonderful elders for over 30 years, some of them have been on the team the whole time, and it's just a wise and important principle.

Number 5 to initiate a scripturally based plan: seek wise counsel. This is really an extension of 4, I guess you would say, but again older men, older women in your life. Now what I'm saying is find out someone who loves the Lord and has done what you're thinking about doing, has been involved in whatever enterprise you think you're gonna be involved in, and, and seek their counsel. "So how did this work for you?" We were regularly in the office when we have somebody going through a difficult season, we will find somebody that's been through that and we will get them with them, somebody we know loves the Lord and has been biblical in their response, and help them through that.

Proverbs 15:22 reminds us, "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed." Well, we don't want to be like Proverbs 18:1, "He who separates himself seeks his own desire, and He quarrels against all sound wisdom." There it is. You don't want to be like that, the person that says, "You know, I, I go to Grace Life and I think they love the Lord, we believe the Bible, but I'm gonna go over here and I've got me some buddies over here I'm gonna run with and I'm gonna make my own plan over here." Yeah, that's likely because you're separating yourself because you're not interested in the will of God, you've got your own desires and you know these godly brothers might hold you accountable on it. Don't run from that. Run to that. You need that. I need that.

Seek wise counsel, and by the way, some of the wisest counsel comes from folks who had made the biggest messes in their younger years. Isn't that good of God to do that? By the way, Isaiah said God gives beauty for ashes. Is it not wonderful that you may have dishonored the Lord, you may have failed greatly in the first half of your life and then God works on your heart and you consecrate yourself to him and you grow in him and you can spend the last 20 or 30 years helping the younger folks not to take that path. That's a wonderful thing. Oh, the grace of God is so good that he takes us and when we've blown it and then in his grace turns us around and uses us for good.

Alright, now what have we said so far? To initiate a scripturally based plan pray continually, search the Scriptures, seek the blessing of God-ordained authority, establish accountability, seek wise counsel. Number 6: do what you want to do. Then do what you want to do. Go for it. Take the initiative. Do something. My goodness, I've, I've seen too many in my life who, um, God was speaking in their hearts and God was guiding them and, uh, he was telling them to do something and they just sat around and kinda wanting a word from heaven like, like, "Well, God's gonna speak from heaven and it's just gonna come tumbling down out of nowhere and I'm gonna see these signs and wonders." No. Just, what do you desire to do? Go for it. Do it. Take the initiative.

I remember the story of Adoniram Judson, the great Baptist missionary. Adoniram Judson was a brilliant man, a godly man but a brilliant man. Matter of fact, he was valedictorian of Brown University in 1807 and he wanted to see the Gospel spread to heathen nations all over the world. He was committed to this and he left for Calcutta, India. He goes across the sea, he's prayed, he's gotten prayer partners, he's gotten support, he's got the blessings of authority, he's done all the things and he heads out for Calcutta

and guess what? He gets to the shore and they won't let him in the country. But he turns and they allow him to go east to Burma and there Adoniram Judson spent his life preaching the Gospel in Burma and left godly, local, New Testament churches all over that country before he died. He, he took the initiative. He made a plan and God said, "You're on track. You're doing good, but about a third of the way down the road I'm gonna give you a little left turn east." Now that's right, isn't it? "Right turn east and we're gonna go to Burma."

I love that about God. I just love that about him. That didn't disappoint Adoniram Judson, he just said, "Praise God! If this one's closed, that one's open, we'll go where God opens the door because what he wants is what I want." The key is if these things are generally true in your heart, take the initiative. As someone told me years ago, leaders are those who take the initiative and pay the price. If you stop taking the initiative and stop paying the price, you stop being a leader. Now not all of you are to be leaders. Thank God, we don't need all chiefs, amen? We need some Indians. Hope that didn't do some sort of social justice thing or something there. I like Indians.

Don't sit around and wait for a celestial crane to reach down and lift you up out of heaven. Go for it. Do something. I hope some of you guys make hundreds of millions of dollars and dedicate it to the glory of God to the ends of the earth. We need some guys on that side to counteract these Bill Gates and these other secularists evil workers, if you will, and support God's work around the world.

Years ago, a man joined our church and he joined our church because he moved here from Memphis, Tennessee, and, uh, he was the manager of Walmart. He was a good guy. I loved him. I mean, his heart, he loved the Lord. And, um, he came to me one day and said, "Pastor, I want you to pray for me." He came to God-ordained authority. He was seeking wise counsel. I don't know anything about running Walmart. That's not why he came though. He said, "Walmart has made a decision, they're gonna start selling alcohol." And he said, "I understand Christians can be at different places but for me, but for me I just have a conviction I never want to be a part of promoting alcohol in any way." I said, "Brother, I respect that conviction. Are you sure, though, because the Bible does teach we have to go out of the world if we divorce ourselves from all association." He said, "I understand that but just for me personally, that's, I just can't be involved in that." And he said, "If they go through and they put alcohol in the Walmarts, then I'm gonna resign." You understand he had a great career. He made a lot of money. Sure enough, you remember it, don't you? Walmart embraced alcohol. Maybe if Sam Walton hadn't retired they wouldn't have gone down those roads. Well, he actually got old and went to heaven. He was, resigned that position and after he resigned that position he got a call from a large congregation in Memphis and offered him the job of being the pastoral administrator for the church making very good money and doing what was the desire of his heart.

So if God gives you a conviction, you may have to say no to something before God opens the door you were really looking for. You may have to die to something before God brings the open door of new life and new opportunities that you really are looking for.

And I remember him moving off to Memphis. By the way, it wasn't Leland Johnson in case you're thinking. He ran the Sam's store in Florence. Leland was a good godly man but these are two different guys.

So initiate a scripturally based plan and we'll talk about this more next week but are you listening to me? It's highly likely, matter of fact, it's more common than not if you're in God's will, there will be death to division. You'll get down the road, it looks right, you're excited about it, and boom, it blows up and it's like, "What happened? It's not gonna work." And then God comes through in another way and that's what he experienced. I had this great career, I've given my life to this company, I'm making good money, I take care of my family, I, I found me a wonderful church. This is what I want but, boom, we're selling alcohol. I can't stay here. I think God opened up another avenue.

Initiate a scripturally based plan. You can't go wrong with what I've just told you. I'm not saying you take around these sheets with you, okay, and check the boxes off but I'm saying have it in your heart to do what the word of God says. You cannot go wrong honoring these principles.