

Jesus Leads

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Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 16,

Brother Boykin was sharing that beautiful statement in John 10. Turn to John 10, and then there is another one I want to put with it. The third verse says:

“The sheep hear his voice:...” John 10:3.

The shepherd’s voice.

“...and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” John 10:3.

Are you one of God’s sheep? Well, if you are, somebody is leading you. Who is it? Jesus. Jesus is leading you. Sometimes we sense His leading. Sometimes we have to take it by faith. And sometimes, praise His name, He leads us even when we don’t know what is going on. I am so glad for that.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” John 10:4.

Do you know His voice? He wants you to know His voice. Then the twenty-seventh verse.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand” John 10:27-28.

Isn’t that nice? No committee, no nation, no government officials, no problem of any kind can hinder God’s working out your program for you if you are willing. Nobody is able to pluck you out of your heavenly Father’s hands. Isn’t that wonderful, friends?

“My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand” John 10:29.

My, we are rich people if we know that, aren’t we? Yes. Mighty poor if we don’t. I would hate to be adrift on this ocean of a world without chart or compass, without a pilot on board. Wouldn’t you? Dear one, if there is somebody uncertain

here tonight, come, come, and listen as we study the evidence of God's willingness to guide us and learn more about how He guides us.

Now turn over to Deuteronomy the eighth chapter. You remember that God sent Moses down to Egypt to lead His people out of bondage and into the promised land. They had many experiences during those forty years from Egypt to Canaan, and I want you to see what God was trying to accomplish in it all. Deuteronomy the eighth chapter, verse two beginning.

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

There are two things in these verses that bear on God's leading and guiding in our lives that I want particularly to notice tonight. The first is the last point he speaks of, living by the Word of God. I will mention the other later. If we want to be guided, my friend, we must be students of the word. That is the Bible is for, it is to guide us. And the man who puts the Bible aside or gets so busy listening to the radio or keeping up with the TV or money making or anything else, gets so busy that he doesn't have time to feed on this word every day, he is going to miss some signals. He is going to miss some signals.

Do you want to be guided by the Lord? Listen to His word. In fact, this tells us to live by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.” Some people are on an impoverished diet. They are not living by every word. They get only snatches here and there occasionally. If they tried to live physically the way they live spiritually, they would be as puny physically as they are spiritually. Weak. Sick. Dear ones, if we want guidance from God, if we want to be led by God, let's feed on the word every day. And of course, do what it says.

I was thinking of this time of year when church elections are taking place and people are being asked to do certain things. Have you been asked to do something? Well, if you have, how are you going to be guided, led, in how you carry that responsibility. I suggest you study the Word of God on that point.

Suppose you have been asked to be a church elder. Is there anything in the Bible about being a church elder? Oh yes. Paul was inspired by the Spirit to write to Timothy and to Titus specifically about the duties and responsibilities of church elders, or bishops as they are sometimes called.

The same with the deacons. Are there instructions in those books for the deacons? Yes. If you have been asked to be a deacon, instead of just asking Tom, Dick, or Harry what you are supposed to do, why not get down on your knees and

study what God has written in His word about the duties of deacons or elders. What do you say? Will that be a good thing to do?

Suppose we were asked to do it a year ago, would this be a good time to renew our studies? And then, thank God, through the modern prophet He has given us page after page of precious instructions for all the different church and Sabbath school officers.

Suppose you have been asked to be a Sabbath school officer, superintendent, or an assistant superintendent, or lead out in one of the divisions, maybe a teacher. Why I suppose there are at least thirty people here tonight, there are more than that, that would be taking an active part in one Sabbath school or another. Now, you know we have a little book, an inspired volume that gives counsels on Sabbath school work. If God thought enough about Sabbath school work to send the highest angel in heaven down to this planet and give us scores of pages dealing just with Sabbath school work, and I am involved in Sabbath school work, wouldn't it be a good thing for me to study that counsel? And if I pray the Lord to lead me, to make me a good Sabbath school teacher, or a good Sabbath school officer, wouldn't one of the ways that God answers my prayer be to lead me to study what He has written? Wouldn't it?

Well, I could go on with many other illustrations in our church work. Everything that is important doing for God, there is divine instruction covering it in one way or another. Take this matter of parents. You know, there is a great deal of talk today about counseling, marriage counseling, counseling for parents over the problems of married life, and parents with children, and so forth. I suggest to you that we have two most wonderful volumes in the book *The Adventist Home*, and in the book *Child Guidance*, and in *Ministry of Healing*, and *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, and in the book *Education, Fundamentals of Christian Education*. Here is instruction for teachers and for parents. The parents have a great responsibility in teaching.

I say, if we are asking as parents or teachers to be led of God to do our job the way God wants it done, wouldn't it be a good thing to live by every word that He has give us? And the only way we can live by every word is to know what every word says. Right? Yes. Oh, what a shame it is to leave that golden grain and feed on the chaff of this world. Why, friends, even if somewhere in the bushel of chaff there is a few grains of wheat in the world's bushels, how much better it is to get it throughly winnowed from all the chaff. What do you say?

"Thy word is truth," Jesus said. John 17:17. We want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So man lives, not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. See Matthew 4:4.

May I suggest to you?, if you happen to be in some line of work that you can't find anything in the inspired instruction to guide you in that, I suggest that maybe you need to be in something else. There is literally a thousand things that need to be done in God's total program, friends. A thousand things. We are not all to be ministers, or physicians, or nurses, or teachers. God needs carpenters. Doesn't He? Yes. I am so glad we had some carpenters to build this chapel, aren't you?

But is there instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for carpenters? Certainly there is. If you are a carpenter, why not read and become acquainted with what God has written concerning the carpenter work. So with every other line of useful labor. You will find, among other things, that God lays on a man that knows a useful trade the responsibility of helping other people, children, young people, the unemployed, helping them to learn what he knows. That is part of your responsibility. Somebody taught you what you know, and God has given you the responsibility of passing that on.

Well, I say these are illustrations of this fact that we have a volume, in fact, fifty volumes of precious instruction giving us light from heaven on what it is that God wants His people to do.

Now this bothers some people. They get confused. They say, "How am I ever going to do it all?" Well, I notice that people come to a table that has ten times more on it than they can eat, and it doesn't seem to worry them. They manage to get something to eat, and most people don't try to eat everything on the table every meal, do they? But does it worry us because there is more on the table than we can eat in a meal? Why no, we say, "Thank the Lord! There is plenty for everybody, and enough left for tomorrow too."

And so it is as we study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. There is plenty to keep us all busy today, and tomorrow, and next week, and on and on. So we will not run out of information, counsel, direction, instruction. And we are to live by this word.

Now look again at Deuteronomy the eighth chapter. I want you to notice something else beside the word that God uses to guide and lead us.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" Deuteronomy 8:2.

God led the children of Israel for forty years through the wilderness to prove them to see what was what? In their hearts. Whether they would keep His commandments or not. Another name for this is providence. There is another name. It is circumstances. Are you acquainted with circumstances? Do you know anything about them? Oh yes. Everybody is well acquainted with circumstances. But are we fully aware that God uses circumstances to guide us? He uses His word, but there are ten thousand things, literally, that we can't find in the Bible. We must learn to read God's providence in the book of experience. We must learn to recognize His signals. And if we are studying His word to get the principles, then, as we meet the problems of daily life, we will recognize God's signals and know what His will is for to do.

I have been meditating recently on this grand fact, that God is far more interested in getting us done, then getting the work done. He is more interested in developing our characters, then He is in our always coming up with the right answer.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Some of you boys and girls are taking math. You are studying about how to add and subtract, multiply and divide, and all of that. And those of us who are older, it wasn't too long ago, we can remember some of those things. Tell me, what is the purpose of those problems that are in the math book? Is it to get those problems solved? Why no, they have already been solved. In many courses the teacher has an answer book in the desk.

"Oh, I would like to get hold of that."

Would you? What would you do with it?

"Well, then I would have the right answer on every one."

Would you? What good would that do? How would you learn anything? It is better, don't miss this, it is better to do the work in trying to solve problems even if you make some mistakes and get some wrong answers then it is to have somebody give you the answers out of an answer book and you write them down. Are you agreed with me? You all see that in mathematics.

Do you believe it when it comes to the real problems of life, my friends? You know, I will be honest with you, many people are looking for, wistfully, some people spend twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years looking, wistfully, for the time when God will guide them so certainly that they will know every day, every hour exactly what to do and have know question about it. They would like to have an angel bring a golden card. It says, tomorrow morning you do this, and nine-thirty you do the next. Ten o'clock, this is what you are to be doing. All day long. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

No. It wouldn't. If it were, God would do it. He has got plenty of angels and plenty of golden cards. No. He has got something better. He has given you and me something far more wonderful than golden cards. He has given us a brain that thinks, a mind that can reason, judgment to exercise.

Ah, but somebody says, "That is the trouble. I am not sure."

Well, God never required you to be infallible. There was a man here in this country recently that claims to be infallible. But you and I don't believe he is, do we? No. Well if we deny the gift of infallibility to him, why should we claim it for ourselves. If he could make a mistake then you and I could make a mistake, couldn't we?

Do you ever make a mistake in spelling a word? Well, have you quit trying to spell because you sometimes misspell a word? Do you sometimes make a mistake adding up a column? Have you quit doing math because you sometimes make a mistake? God lets us learn from every effort we make, my friends. And He lets us learn even from our mistakes. And did you know that He says, and He is the One that knows, that when we recognize our mistakes and learn from them, we thus turn defeat into victory?

Somebody says, "I don't like that kind of victory."

Well, I would a lot rather get the right answer the first time. Wouldn't you? But I tell folks that there is only one thing worse than not using foresight, that is not even using hindsight. We are to learn from every experience, and God taught Israel this way for how long? Forty years. It took them forty years to take a two year course. That is a long time. But the point is— the teacher never left. The teacher was with them all the way through, and He will be with us. Won't He? Yes.

Now notice what it was that God was trying to teach them to humble them. Worldly education tends to self-exaltation. Worldly education tends to make men confident in themselves. "Sure, I can do it. I can do it. Bring it on."

Moses had that, and when he was forty years old, he was ready to do what? To deliver Israel. But after forty more years herding sheep, and God said, "Moses, it is time now.", what did Moses say? "I can't do it. I don't have what it takes." And that was right where God wanted him to be. Of course, he overdid it there for a few minutes. But he soon got into line with God, and for forty more years he continued that precious experience of walking with God, and leading Israel like a flock of sheep. It is a wonderful experience.

My point is, friends, Jesus says, "Without Me, ye can do" what? Nothing. John 15:5. And when Moses had learned that lesson, God was ready to use him.

But in this experience where Moses was the visible leader, and God was the invisible teacher, I repeat, Israel took forty years to do what they could have done in two years. But God didn't forsake them. He was with them, and He will be with us. Some of us have been around here a long time, friends, it is nothing to be proud of. I am humbled by the fact that God has given me so many precious opportunities, and I have been so slow in taking hold of them. But I rejoice tonight, and praise my Redeemer that He has never forsaken me, that He loves me, and that He is still my Teacher and my Leader. What do you say? Aren't you glad?

"To humble thee." "To know what was in thine heart." "To prove thee." So circumstances are the proving ground in which we learn are weaknesses.

Now I want to read you something very interesting from Volume Four, page 218.

"You could never be aware of your deficiencies unless you were brought where these deficiencies were developed by circumstances" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 4, page 218.

Oh, I don't like that. I want to be in a place where my talents will shine. God is trying to get me into a place where my weaknesses will come to light. What for? So I can put them away. So I can strengthen my weak points.

Let me read this again.

“You could never be aware of your deficiencies unless you were brought where these deficiencies were developed by circumstances” *Ibid.*

Think of it.

I came across something just the other day in the *Review and Herald* of August 6, 1889.

“The Lord places us in different positions to develop us”
Review and Herald, August 6, 1889.

Why is it that God places us in different positions? To develop us.

“If we have defects of character of which we are not aware,...” *Ibid.*

What does that mean “we are not aware”? We don’t know about them. You have some deficiencies that you didn’t know about? Yes. You do. What is God going to do? If you ask Him to lead you, He will lead you into some Red Sea, or out into some desert, or some place where those deficiencies will be brought to view. You will become aware of the fact that you lack something. If you are not careful, you will blame it on the circumstances. But they are not to blame. I read on.

“If we have defects of character of which we are not aware, he gives us discipline that will bring those defects to our knowledge, that we may overcome them” *Ibid.*

Can we overcome these defects? Yes. Thank the Lord!

“It is his providence that brings us into varying circumstances. In each new position, we meet a different class of temptations” *Ibid.*

Now watch.

“How many times, when we are placed in some trying situation, we think, ‘This is a wonderful mistake. How I wish I had stayed where I was before.’ But why is it that you are not satisfied? -It is because your circumstances have served to bring new defects in your character to your notice; but nothing is revealed but that which was in you” *Ibid.*

Where was it? In you. All the time. If Peter hadn’t learned a precious lesson that night in Gethsemane after his failure, you know what he would have done. He would have blamed circumstances for what had happened. Tell me, if Peter had not been challenged by that maidservant, would he have cursed and sworn that night? Wasn’t it too bad that she challenged him? Wasn’t it too bad that she pointed the

figure at him? No. It wasn't too bad. It was the best thing in the world for Peter to find out what was in him. Right?

Now he could have found it out much better out there in Gethsemane with Jesus before the mob ever came. That is what God intended. But Peter wouldn't listen. He thought he was ok. And so while Jesus was praying, Peter was doing what? Sleeping. So he missed the lesson.

But oh, the point is this, while Jesus couldn't get him to use foresight, Jesus did help him to get some hindsight. And he recognized in the circumstances the hand of God revealing to him what was in his life. Oh that we may recognize that in the way that God leads us, friends. What do you say?

And so if our circumstances bring weaknesses, instead of blaming the circumstances, lets get down on our knees and say, "Dear Lord:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" Psalm 139:23-24.

Will He do it? Yes.

What was it that I read here?

"Nothing is revealed but which was in you" *Review and Herald*, August 6, 1889.

Suppose I have a glass up here and somebody knocks it out of my hand, and you see the water down there on the floor. Why is there? Well, you can give two answers. Both are correct. Because somebody knocked it out of my hand. But that is only half the answer. Do you know what the other half is? The water was in the glass. Right? Some other glass that has no water in it, somebody can knock that out of my hand, and there wouldn't be a drop there.

Do you ever get knocked around, friends? Somebody says, "Sure. Somebody did that to me last week."

What came out? Or is that a fair question? I will tell you what came out, friends, what came out was what was in there.

They knocked Jesus around more than anybody else that had ever lived on this planet. Right? And nothing but love, and mercy, and kindness, and forgiveness came out. He prayed for His murderers saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And my dear friends, some of us have problems forgiving people that have done not one hundredth part as much as that. What is our problem? Our deficiencies are being brought to view. And as long, don't miss it, and as long as we are content to blame those things on circumstances, and on other people, we will never learn our lesson and graduate from life's school. Never. Never.

We can spend our time getting up our defense. Somebody gave me several years ago a white paper which some president of a large institution had written proving that it was unjust the way he was removed from office, and all the experience that had led up to it. I got it up there in my files. I don't know the man personally. Somebody thought it would be good education for me to read, I guess.

But do you know the main thing I learned out of that, dear friends? It is this.

“Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts” Proverbs 21:2.

Listen, if my brethren, or circumstances, providences, bring to light certain weaknesses in me, then instead of trying to defend myself, shouldn't I be trying to learn my lesson? That is what God was trying to teach Israel for forty years. And over and over again they were brought into circumstances that brought out the weakness of complaining. Do you complain? Well, if you do, God will have to lead you again and again into the things that will bring out the complaining if there is any in you. Of course, when it is all gone, then the circumstances won't bring out the complaining because it isn't in there.

What is the answer? To learn to depend upon the promises of God and the providences of God.

“What should you do when you are tried by the providences of the Lord? -You should rise to the emergency of the case, and overcome your defects of character” *Review and Herald*, August 6, 1889.

Let's do it. What do you say?

Some of you have heard me speak of John Newton, or you have read of him. He was a man over two hundred years ago who was prayed for by his mother. He was a drunken profligate sailor. But God heard his mother's prayers and brought that young man to a full conversion. He has written some of our great hymns. Here is a little poem he wrote:

“I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith, and love, and every grace,
might more of His salvation know and seek more earnestly His face.
Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and He, I trust, has answered
prayer, but it is been in such a way as almost drove me to despair.
I hoped that in some favored hour, at once, He'd answer my request, and
by His love's constraining power, subdue my sins and give me rest.
Instead of this, He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart, and let the
angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part.
Yes, more, with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe,
crossed all the fair designs I schemed, blasted my gourds and laid them low.
Lord, why is this? I trembling cried, Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?
Tis in this way, the Lord replied, I answer prayer for grace and faith.

This inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free, and break thy schemes of earthly joy, that thou mayest set thine all in Me.

What do you say? Now that is from John Newton two hundred years ago. Let me read it to you from *Ministry of Healing* in this century. Page 471.

“It is because God is leading them that these things come upon them. Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them”
Ministry of Healing, page 471.

You know something about yourself. You probably think you know yourself better than any other human being. That could be true. It could be a mistake too. But in any event, there is somebody that knows you far better than you know yourself. Who is that? God.

“He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge” *Ibid*.

There it is again. God, by His wonderful leading, leads you and me into circumstances that show up our what? Our weaknesses. And we don't like that. You see, we have been trained in this foolish idea that it is a disgrace that we have any weaknesses and failures.

Well, too bad that we are not all perfect, but it is the lot of humanity. This is what the plan of salvation is all about. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but what? Sinners to repentance.

I tell students in my classes not to worry about asking questions or giving answers that show that they are ignorant. Every time a camera exposes a piece of blank film, it gets a picture. Doesn't it? Sure. So let's be on the alert to learn our lessons, friends, and recognize that God is leading us, not to get our names in the paper as winners of some trophy made of gold, or silver, or imitation. He is wanting to write our names in the Lamb's book of life as victors, triumphant. He is perfectly willing to go with us through the valley and share with us in the disappointments, and even the apparent failures. And so it is written:

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him” *Desire of Ages*, pages 224, 225.

Oh, let us let Him lead all the way! What do you say? But remember, His way goes through Gethsemane, up the hill of Calvary, and on through the resurrection glory and ascension. It is the way of the cross. Shall we go with Jesus?

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