

Follow the Shepherd

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Study Given by W.D. Frazee—April 8,

We have found that in looking to Jesus we were changed. We receive a repentance as we look into His face and begin to understand His love. Faith is generated in our hearts as we see that His love for us has led Him to make such a sacrifice.

This evening we are going to study how looking to Jesus enables us to meet every decision all day long.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” John 10:1-4.

In this beautiful picture, who is ahead? Who is in the lead? The shepherd is. The sheep are following him. If Jesus is my shepherd, and I am His sheep, where is He. He is ahead. What am I doing? I am following Him.

How many of you have ever had a dog take a walk with you? Some dogs are so well trained that they will stay back and follow you. But the ordinary dog will run ahead. He wants to be able to be with you, but he likes to run ahead. I suppose you have had the same experience that I have had many times when some dog would be running along with me and we would come to a fork in the trail and the dog knows which way to go. Does he? He thinks he does. He runs ahead and goes down the wrong trail. It doesn't bother him too much. He eventually finds it out and comes back running off down the other trail.

A dog is not a sheep. You and I are not to be dogs. We are to be sheep. Sheep do what? Follow. Follow who? The shepherd. Who is our shepherd? Jesus.

There are things about following Jesus as our shepherd that I would like to have us see clearly. One is the guardrail that Jesus has set up to keep us from the ditch. The guardrail is the plain statements of Scripture.

For instance, in the Fifth Commandment it says, “Honor thy father and thy mother.” The child that is honoring Jesus will keep within those bounds, and his

attitude toward his parents will be to honor them and obey them. The Sixth Commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." Does that set up some bounds? Yes. The Seventh Commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Does that set up some bounds? Yes. So with all the rest of the commandments. They set up bounds. And within those bounds the sheep stay, following the Shepherd.

But it is easy to recognize that all the verses in the Bible don't tell me which church or Sabbath School to attend on Sabbath morning. It doesn't tell me whether to go south or north or east or west. Nothing in the Bible tells me whether I will have breakfast at six o'clock or seven o'clock or eight o'clock. Nothing in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy tells me whether to wash next Wednesday morning or hoe corn or keep books or give a Bible study.

Does that trouble you? Did you ever wonder what to do and wish you had it just as clear as you have about keeping the commandments?

The only way we can be in the right place in the big decisions of life is to be at the right place in the little decisions that lead to it. In a sense no decisions of life are small. They are not unimportant. Every important decision should be guided by the Spirit, and that means all of them.

I want you to see how utterly impossible it is for us to be successful in the dog program of running ahead:

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" Jeremiah 10:23.

Do I know where I want to go? Have I already found out? No. Jeremiah says that isn't right. I know that the way of man is not in himself.

When I was a young man giving health lectures I learned that there were nine billion, two hundred eighty million brain cells. But later someone told me that there were forty billion. Later, I learned from a friend of mine that there were forty billion in one part of the brain. So there are quite a number.

In all those billions and billions of brain cells there isn't enough wisdom to help me to know where I ought to be tomorrow morning or tomorrow afternoon. Do you believe that? Then tell me, why do you get irritated when someone questions you? Or is that a fair question?

The first step in being guided by the Lord is to sense that we do not have the answers. Take a very simple question. Shall I read my Bible tomorrow, or go for a walk with my family, or go visit some sick person? All those good things are in harmony with the Ten Commandments. Which one shall I do?

Someone says, Well, you had better do a little of all of them.

Ok. In which order?

It is not in man to direct his steps. I am not a dog running ahead. I am a sheep, and I have to know what the Shepherd says. The sheep know His voice. But you have to be pretty close to know the Shepherd's voice.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” Proverbs 3:5,6.

This is a wonderful promise. Will Jesus do it? If He does we are all right. If He doesn't we are sunk, because we have already found out that it is not in man to direct his steps.

“Lean not unto thine own understanding.” Don't lean toward it. I remember my mother telling about a woman who used to say that the way she found out which way to go was to throw down a stick. Whichever way the stick pointed that was the way she was to go. But she said that sometimes she had to throw it down more than once.

There was a man by the name of Balaam that was like that. The interesting thing is that God lets people find a stick that is pointing the way they want it to be sometimes. He did with Balaam.

The wise man said, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Don't even lean in the direction of being guided by yourself. Say, Dear Lord, I want to be where You want me to be. I want to be doing what You want me to do.

Will God do that? Will He guide? He says He will. If He doesn't, we are sunk, but if He does we are all right.

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” Isaiah 30:21.

To some people this means to obey that impulse. Some people have the idea that any impulse they get is the Spirit of God. Eventually God leaves them to some foolish acting as a result.

You say, What does it mean?

That's what I want to study with you. It doesn't mean following every hunch that comes along. How does God lead? What is His voice? We have seen that it is the voice of God speaking in the Bible that keeps us out of forbidden paths. Beyond that God wants to give us wisdom.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” James 1:5-6.

This is wisdom we don't have. We lack. It is not enough to ask for wisdom. I must have faith that God is going to give it to me. What does it mean for God to give us wisdom. It does not mean that the angel is going to come down with a card that tells me what to do. It doesn't mean that I will get hunches all day long. It doesn't mean that without any sense, rhyme, or reason I will know what to do because I depend upon those impulses. Nobody can do that.

Wisdom is the guidance of God using our brains so we think through things so we come to the right conclusions. This is an experience in the school of Christ that takes a lot of time to master, because He is going to use it with us all through eternity. We should make room in our thinking for God to let us make failures.

Someone was talking to me the other day and said, "Brother Frazee, how could a Christian make a failure if he keeps close to the Lord?"

I said to him, "When you were in school did you ever misspell a word?"

He said, "Yes."

"When you learned mathematics did you ever get the wrong answer?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "How come?"

He said he was learning. That's exactly it. We are learning. We are learning in the school of Christ the science of guidance and wisdom. It is far more important for us to learn to develop these brain cells that God has given us than it is to always come up with the right answers copied out of the teacher's answer book.

In many schools a teacher has a book that gives the answer to every mathematical problem. Wouldn't it be nice to have that book and copy it down? Why don't we do that? Why doesn't the teacher encourage us to do it? Because there is something more important than getting the right answer in today's problems.

It is the development that comes in thinking through how to solve problems. God wants to give us the answer of our prayer for wisdom, not by hunches, not by signs in the heavens in which he writes out on the clouds the answer to our needs, He wants to guide our minds so we think through and come to the right conclusions.

Someone says, But, Brother Frazee, I don't see anything certain about that.

If by certain you mean infallible I agree with you. There is a man over on the Tiber that says he is infallible. Do you agree with him? Do you believe he is? Come now, if you deny him the privilege of being infallible, what makes you think you are going to be infallible? And if God has made some plan or promise whereby you always come up with the right answer, you are claiming even more than the Pope of Rome claims for himself.

You say, Then what good is it?

It is good to get done what God has planned for us to get done. He wants us to develop two things. Not only wisdom in thinking through things and coming to good conclusions, He wants us to develop unselfishness. And what greater way is there to develop trust in God than for us to get our plans all laid and then have them swept aside?

“Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed”
Ministry of Healing, page 473.

Are you willing to be in school on that basis? If you are not, you will be so disappointed that you will either skip school or won't be able to get your lessons.

This is not something that happens once in a lifetime or once in a year? When does it happen? Often. I wonder how often. It doesn't spell it out, but it is at least often. What happens? Our plans fail. Well then, should I quit laying plans? No. We are told to lay plans and lay them at Jesus' feet, and then lay them aside if His providence indicates.

Someone says, I don't like that. What is the use to lay plans if they are not going to work?

We are in school and we are learning. We learn by the things that we suffer, and we learn by our disappointments. I hope we do. And also God's plans for us succeed.

I love to study Bible history, both in the Old and New Testaments, and watch these principles work out. Did Abraham always have what we would say were the right answers? He wanted to please God, basically. He eventually saw worked out all the promises of God. So did Jacob. Jacob had many disappointments, but he was in school. He was learning. Thank God, he eventually graduated and was given the name Israel, which means Prince of God.

Oh friends, let's be willing for God to guide us. What do you say? Let's see how this program works:

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a word in season to him
that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He
wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” Isaiah 50:4.

What is a word in season? The right word at the right time. To say the right word at the right time I have to be at the right place at the right time.

There was a man who was holding a series of meetings in Samaria. He was a medical evangelist and was having great success both in health and spiritual lines. Hundreds of people were coming.

One day God saw that it was time for that man to leave that place and go to the desert near Gaza. He got there at the right time. One man was there riding in a

chariot. God thought that was important enough for this man to leave Samaria where so much was going on.

You say, The next time I get a hunch to leave a big work I am going out.

Oh, no. That isn't the lesson at all. We cannot read the stories in the Bible and decide we will duplicate them. If you study the Bible stories you will see that very seldom there was any of them duplicated.

How many men did God have to make an ark to ride the waves? Just one. How many men did God send up on a mountain with his son to put him on an altar? Just one. How many men did God lead to cause the sun to stand still for nearly a whole day? Just one. And I could go on with hundreds of other examples. The great lesson of the Bible is not to read something and say, I will do that same thing. The great lesson of the Bible is to say, Dear Lord, as You guided those men to do unusual things, so You will guide me day by day in meeting my problems and teaching me how to meet my situations. That is a precious assurance.

We are ready for a statement. Listen carefully because it links with what we are studying.

“When you rise in the morning, do you feel your helplessness, and your need of strength from God? and do you humbly, heartily make known your wants to your heavenly Father? If so, angels mark your prayers, and if these prayers have not gone forth out of feigned lips, when you are in danger of unconsciously doing wrong, and exerting an influence which will lead others to do wrong, your guardian angel will be by your side, prompting you to a better course, choosing your words for you, and influencing your actions” *Messages to Young People*, page 90.

Not only is Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit interested in all this, but ten thousand times ten thousand angels are interested, and one is especially appointed to be my guardian angel. A guardian angel guards me from what? He is the one that God may use to whisper in my ear and say, Be careful. I thank God for the guardian angel.

I had an experience not long ago when I was so glad that God helped me not to say something that I was about to say. God is good. He is wonderful. If we sense our need every morning and look to Him, He will help us in His wonderful love.

This bears upon another angle of our lives. Did you ever wish you could get more done? How many of you have ever come to the end of the day and see a lot of things that you planned to do that didn't get done? “Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed.”

If I am going to be a sheep and Jesus is my Shepherd, and I am going to have the joy and satisfaction of knowing that He is guiding, must I be willing to see a lot of things I have planned not get done? Notice a wonderful promise. It is worth a million dollars, but you can have it now and not pay a nickel.

"If every moment were valued and rightly employed, we should have time for everything that we need to do for ourselves or for the world" *Ministry of Healing* 208.

That is colossal. It is big. It is magnificent.

Someone says, I don't find it so.

It isn't intended that you should see it. It is in God's sight that it happens. We might get so inflated that we would be hard to live with if we could see it. But again and again God lets us be disappointed. Often our plans fail that God's plans may succeed. The things we plan don't get done. Nevertheless if we have faith, we have the satisfaction that God has helped us to do what He wants done. That should bring joy to our hearts. Joy not in our human accomplishments, but joy in His divine assurance. Joy in the fact that He is using us.

I had an experience that helped me with this just a few days ago. I was at the conference camp on an errand for the Lord, and in the afternoon I decided I would take a little walk. I enquired at the office where the trails were, and a man told me about a trail, but he said, You wouldn't want to go there. He looked at my tottering gait and my white hair and decided that trail wasn't for me. But he told me where it was, and I said I could go a little way. He said yes, but if you aren't back in two hours we will come after you.

Well, I found the trail. It went across the dam, and started up. It was steep. He didn't know that I had the habit of walking around the miles of trails here at Wildwood. I went on because it was interesting. Before I knew it I was way off in those hills and with the idea that I would walk clear around the lake.

An hour and a half went by and I found myself up on what looked to me like a big high mountain, and I looked down into the valley and thought, How am I going to get out of here anyway. The sun was going to go down in about a half hour or an hour. I knelt down and prayed way out there in those hills. I said, Dear Lord, you know where I am and how to get out of here. I would like to get down before night so people won't worry about me.

Within three minutes from the time I prayed I found a trail that let me out in just a few minutes and back to the camp.

Don't misunderstand. I don't mean it is always going to happen that way. No. That isn't the lesson. The lesson is that if we will cry to the Lord He will help us, and if we will do the best we know He will guide us. Even though our plans fail His plans for us will succeed. And if we are seeking to please Him, even if in our human wisdom we miss calculate He will not forsake us. The Shepherd is with the sheep.

I praise God that many a time in my spiritual life I have seen something similar. I love my Lord tonight. He is a wonderful friend. I am not big. I am little. But He is big. I am not strong. I am weak. But He has said He will make His strength strong even in my weakness. And I am not wise. I am ignorant. But I can be wiser than all the men in Wall Street and around this world, who don't know God if I will just put my trust in Him.

He may lead me to the dungeon like Paul. He may lead me like John the Baptist to have my head cut off. But that doesn't make any difference to the child of God. Paul says he was ready to be offered.

Day by day when Jesus wakes us up in the morning we say, Dear Lord, there is just one thing I want today. It is to be at the right place at the right time with the right word to the right person. And He will help us to do it.

Not that we will always see it happen, but He will. And we, by faith, know that we are learning our lessons and making Him happy. Praise God from whom all blessing flow.

If what I have studied with you tonight is so, we are the most favored people in all the world. It is true, and I know that many of you are learning it.

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