

Follow the Shepherd

#0755

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—April 8, 1983

The 10th chapter of John's gospel where we will find our opening text. You'll remember two weeks ago I had the joy of being with you. We were studying about looking where? Looking to Jesus. We found that as we looked to Jesus, we are changed. We receive a repentance, that makes us sorry for sin, as we look into His dear face and begin to understand His love. And 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. Brother Brown is going to read for me now, John 10:1–4.

“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 that Jesus gives us, who is ahead? Who is in the lead? The shepherd is. And the sheep are doing what? Following. And if Jesus is my shepherd, and I am His sheep, where is He? He's ahead. He is leading. And what am I doing? I am following.

How many of you have ever had a dog take a walk with you? Let me see your hands. Now there are some dogs that are so well trained that they'll do what? Follow and stay back. But the ordinary dog will do what? He'll run ahead. He wants to be with you, but he likes to run ahead. I suppose you've had the same experience that I have had many times when some dog would be running along with me, or with those that I was with, and we come to a fork in the trail, and the dog knows which way to take, doesn't he? Doesn't he? He thinks he does. He runs right ahead where he thinks, and if the one he is with is taking the other trail, it doesn't bother him too much. He eventually finds it out and comes back running off down the other trail.

Now that is not a sheep. And you and I are not to be dogs. We are to be what? Sheep. Sheep do what? Follow. Follow who? The shepherd. Who is our shepherd? Jesus.

There are two things about this following Jesus as our shepherd that I would like to have us see very clearly tonight. One is the broad guards that Jesus has set

up, the guardrails on the road as it were, to keep us from the ditch. And then something that is very sweet that we will notice later. The guardrails are the plain statements of Scripture.

For instance, in the Fifth Commandment, it says, "Honor thy father and thy mother." The child that is following Jesus will keep within those bounds, and what will his attitude toward his parents? Honor his parents. Honor and obey them. The Sixth Commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." Does that establish some bounds? Yes. The Seventh Commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Does that set up some bounds? Yes. And so we might go on with all 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 tomorrow morning. Whether I should go to the branch to the south or the one to the north or the east or the 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 will tell me whether to wash next Wednesday morning or hoe corn or keep books or give a Bible study. Am I right?

Does that trouble you? Did you ever wonder what to do and wish you had it just as clear, about what to do, as you have about keeping the commandments? This is what I want to study with you. Because I want to tell you something, dear friends.

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 decision of life is small. That is, it's not unimportant. Every important decision should be guided by the Spirit, and that means all of them.

Now turn to Jeremiah the 10th chapter, 23rd verse. And Brother Johnson is going to read that for me. 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.

Oh, but I know where I want to go! I've already found out. No. Jeremiah says that isn't right.

"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.

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's quite a number, aren't there.

I'd said all that to say this, 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. Not enough wisdom. Is that true? Do you believe that? Well, then tell me, why do you get so irritated when somebody questions you? Or is that a fair question?

Why my dear friends, the first step in being guided by the Lord is to sense that we do not have the answers. We don't have the answers. Take a very simple question. Shall I read my Bible tomorrow, Sabbath afternoon, or go for a walk with my family, or go visit some sick person? Are all of those good things? Are they all 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. Then my question is, "In which order?"

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.

I am not a dog running ahead. I am a sheep, and I have to know what the Shepherd says. We read there in John 10 that the sheep know what? His voice, His voice. You have to be pretty close to know the Shepherd's voice.

Proverbs 3:6, Brother Brown, let's see what that says. Oh, I think this is a wonderful promise.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" Proverbs 3:6.

He'll do what? He'll direct your paths. Will you all read the verse with Brother Brown, he's going to read it again and you're all going to read it with him:

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" Proverbs 3:6.

Will He do it? Well, if He does, we are all right. If He doesn't, we are sunk because we have already found out "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Read the fifth verse, Brother Brown:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" Proverbs 3:5.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding." Don't even 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.

[Laughter]

She knew which way she wanted to go, and she wanted to get some divine permission or divine ok. There was a man by the name of Balaam that was like that, wasn't he? The interesting thing is that God lets people find a stick pointing the way they want to sometimes. He did with Balaam.

And so the wise man says, "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, aren't we?

Isaiah the 30th chapter, and the 21st verse, isn't this a wonderful promise:

"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.

Now, to some people, this means to obey that impulse. Some people have the idea that any impulse they get, any hunch they have, is the Spirit of God. And eventually, God leaves them to some foolish action as a result of that.

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? First of all, as we have seen, it's the voice of God speaking in the Bible that keeps us out of forbidden paths. Beyond that, God wants to give us wisdom. Wisdom we don't have as we found in Jeremiah that we lack.

"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" James 1:5.

Isn't that beautiful? Next verse.

"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 1:6.

That man won't get it.

So it's not enough to ask for wisdom. I must have faith that God's going to give it to me, is that right? 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'll get hunches all day long without any sense, rhyme, or

reason. I'll know what to do just because I depend upon those impulses. That's not wisdom, friends. A robot can do that much better than I can. And he doesn't have any sense at all, does he?

Wisdom is the guidance of God using our brains to 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's going to use it with us all through eternity. We should make room in our thinking for God to even allow us to make failures.

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

I said to this young person, "When you were in school, did you ever misspell any words?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "When you learned mathematics, did you ever get the wrong answers in addition and subtraction and multiplication or division?"

She said, "Yes."

"Well," I said, "How come?"

She said, "I was learning."

"Exactly! 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.

You know, in many schools, a teacher has an answer book up there in the desk that gives the answer to every mathematical problem. Am I right? Yes. Wouldn't it be nice to get hold of it and just copy it down? We could go to recess early, couldn't we? 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—don't miss it—that comes in thinking through how to solve the problem. And so 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, but to guide our minds so that 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.

You hear of a man over there on the Tiber that says he is infallible. How many of you have heard about him? 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* answer—whether it's the stock market, or theology, whether it's when to plant your corn or what to have for dinner—you have some way you can get the inside track, so you always have the right answer infallibly, you are claiming even more than the Pope of Rome claims for himself. He only claims it in a certain area, you know.

Well, you say, "Then what good is it?"

Ah, it's 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, but He also wants us to develop an unselfishness. And what greater way to develop trust in God than for us to get our plans all laid and then have them swept aside?

Brother, will you read that one in *Ministry of Healing*? One sentence, eleven words, listen to them. I'm going to have you repeat them. I'm going to have him read it twice, and then you get to repeat them:

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

"Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed"
Ibid.

All together:

"Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed"
Ibid.

Well, are you willing to be in school on that basis? If you're not, you'll be so disappointed that you will either skip school or get discouraged and won't be able to get your lesson.

Well, is this something that happens once in a lifetime or once in a year? When does it happen? Often, often, often. I wonder how often. It doesn't spell it out how often, but it is, at least, often. What is it that happens often? Our plans fail. Why?

[Audience] "That God's plans for us may succeed."

[Elder Frazee] Well then, I guess I better just quit laying plans?

No. We are told to lay plans and then lay them at Jesus' feet, and then lay them aside if His providence indicates.

“Ah,” somebody says, “I don’t like that. What is the use to laying plans if they are not all going to work?”

Again, we are in school; we are learning. We learn by the things we suffer, and we learn by our disappointments. Don’t we? I hope we do. And it’s also that God’s plans for us may, what? Succeed.

I love to study Bible, the histories, 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? But did he wanted to please God, basically? Did he eventually see worked out all the promises of God that God had promised? Thank God. So with Jacob. How many disappointments did Jacob have? Many of them were of his own creation, but he was in school. He was learning. Thank God, he eventually graduated and was given the name what? Israel, which means what? Prince of God.

Oh friends, let’s be willing for God to guide us. What do you say? So what does it mean? Let’s turn to Isaiah the 50th chapter and the 4th verse and see how to have this program work:

“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.

Now tell me, what is a word in season? What does it mean a word in season? What does in season mean? 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, right?

You remember a man who was holding an evangelistic series in the city of Samaria? It was medical evangelism, and he was having great success both in health lines and spiritual lines. Hundreds of people were responding.

And one day, God saw that it was time for that man to leave that place and go where? Down on the desert near Gaza. Did he get there at the right time? Thank God. Who was there? One man riding in a chariot. And 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, I’ll do it.”

No, no.

That isn’t the lesson at all. We cannot read the stories in the Bible and decide that we will duplicate them. If you study the Bible stories, you’ll see that very seldom was there one 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 the 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.” Isn’t that a precious assurance? Glad for the assurance.

Now, we are ready for *Messages to Young People*. Now, listen carefully to this because it links with what we are studying in Isaiah 50, verse 4. The key to this is in the morning—starting the day right with Jesus in the morning, getting on course with Him and then watching for His guidance all day long and listening:

“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.

Oh, isn’t that a wonderful promise!

Not only is Jesus interested in all of this and the Father and the Holy Spirit, but ten thousand times ten thousand angels are interested, and there is one specially appointed to be my what? My guardian angel. What is a guardian angel? One who guards me. Guards me from, what? Ah, he’s the one that God may use to whisper that word and say, “Be careful, be careful.” I thank that Lord for the guardian angel. What do you say?

You know I had an experience in this not very long ago when I was so glad that God had helped me not to say something that I was about to say. God is good, brethren. He’s wonderful. If we sense our need every morning and all through the day and look to Him, He’ll help us. He will help us in His wonderful love.

Now, this bears upon another angle of our lives. Do 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? May I see your hands? Well, the rest of you, I don’t know where you’ve been. [Laughter] What was it we read from *Ministry of Healing* 473:

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

Must I be willing if I’m going to go to school with Jesus—if I’m going to be a sheep and He’s my Shepherd and I am going to have the joy and satisfaction of knowing that He’s guiding—must I be willing to see a lot of things I have planned not get done? But with that notice, this wonderful promise in *Ministry of Healing*. This

one's worth a million dollars. You can have it now if you just listen without paying 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.

What is that saying? What is that first word?

"If every moment were valued and rightly employed..."
Ibid.

We'd have what? Time for everything!! My, my.

"...everything that we need to do for ourselves and for the world." *Ibid.*

That's colossal, friends. That's big, that's jumbo. That's magnificent. Isn't it?

But someone says, "I don't find it so."

For it was never intended that you'd get the idea that you could see it. It's in God's sight that it happens, dear friends.

We might get so inflated that it 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 for us may succeed"
Ministry of Healing, page 473.

These two statements are in the same book. We have the disappointment of seeing our plans fail, which means things that we planned to get done don't get done. But nevertheless, if we have faith, we have the satisfaction of knowing that God has helped us to do what He wants to be done. Shouldn't that bring joy to our hearts? Joy not in our human accomplishments, but joy in His divine assurance. Joy in the fact that He's using us.

You know, 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 he decided that that trail wasn't for me. But he told me where it was, and I said, "Well, I could go a little way." He said yes, but if you aren't back in two hours, we will come after you. [Laughter]

Well, I found the trail. It went across the dam and started up. And just as he said, it was steep. He didn't know that I had the habit of walking around the miles of trails here at Wildwood. So I went on, and I kept going on because it was

interesting. And before I knew it, I was way off in those hills, and with the idea that I would walk clear around the lake, you understand.

An hour went by, and an hour and a half, and I found myself way 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?" And the sun was going to go down in about a half-hour or an hour. Dear friends, believe me, I knelt down, and I 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."

And do you know, I'm telling you the truth, 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. That's right.

Now don't misunderstand. I don't mean it's always going to happen that way. No. That isn't the lesson. The lesson is that if we cry to the Lord, He will help us, and if we 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 for that little experience and for what it has meant to me personally. And I praise God that many a time in my spiritual life I have seen something similar. Oh friends, 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'm weak. But He has said He will make His strength strong even in my weakness, hasn't He? And I am not wise. I am ignorant. But I can be wiser than all the men in Wall Street and the U. N. and around this world, who don't know God if I will just put my trust in Him.

It may lead me, like it did Paul, to the dungeon. He may lead me like it did John the Baptist to have my head cut off. But that doesn't make any difference to the child of God. Paul said, "I'm ready to be offered."

If day by day we will just say to Jesus when He wakes us up in the morning, "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."

Remember 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 blessings flow.

We have a wonderful friend. Now dear ones, if what I have studied with you tonight is so, we are the most favored people in all this world to have that kind of guidance, aren't we? And it's true, and I know that many of you are learning it. And if there is somebody here tonight that have never entered into that school and you want to enroll tonight, I'm taking enlistments.

[Testimonies and appeal follow]

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