

# LIVING ON THE EDGE OF DESPERATE

## Week Two Notes

### Moses: Desperate for Purpose

Exodus 3-4, Colossians 1:9-12, John 15:1-10

#### I. God's Purpose

Almost all of us have asked the question, "What is God's will for my life?" Certainly, Moses must be one of those people who asked the same question. Exodus 2 gives us the first 80 years of his life in a very condensed version. He is born into tumultuous times and yet the reader senses that God is at work (read Exodus 2:1-10). Exodus 2:11 however seems to be a shift in the life of Moses. He is around 40 years old. Evidently, he knows that he is a Hebrew and probably has some sense of obligation to his fellow Hebrews. Using his own authority, he intervenes into circumstances and kills an Egyptian. News of it spreads and Pharaoh wants Moses dead. He runs to the backside of the desert, Midian, where he will live as a shepherd for the next 40 years of his life.

We have no idea what is happening in the heart of Moses during his 40 years in Midian. He lives in the shadow of Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, always reminding him of the God of his forefathers. Somehow, God was at work in the heart of Moses, creating a hunger for things Moses could have never imagined. Exodus is a powerful encounter with God. A bush burns but is not consumed and Moses turns aside to see it. God speaks from the bush, calling Moses by name and warning Moses that this is holy ground. Whether or not Moses knew much about God at this point is irrelevant because God indeed knows Moses—and calls him by name.

Exodus 3:8 is important. God states HIS purpose. Not His purpose for Moses, but HIS purpose, period. "***So I have come down, to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.***" Look carefully at this verse. It is the picture of redemption. It is God's will, His purpose, His heart, His delight. Redeeming sinful people has always been God's will. Christ has come down to deliver us from the power of sin and the enemy, and to bring us into the abundant life (see Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 1:13-14). Redemption is a theme that runs through every book of the Bible. He redeems His people to have fellowship /relationship with Him.

**God's will, His purpose is whatever pleases God, whatever makes Him happy, whatever is in His heart, whatever brings Him joy. His will always brings glory to Himself/God!**

God's will is God-centered. Not man centered. When we ask the question, "What is God's will for my life?", I believe we are asking the wrong question. Our question should be "What is God's will? With no addition of the phrase "for my life." God's will is all about God. (Now, I am using the name God a lot, but as Christians we know God through our relationship with Jesus Christ.) God's purpose is eternal, and He will accomplish whatever He wills. (Isaiah 46:10).

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He instructed them to see the centrality of the will of God, ***Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** Jesus said over and over that He came down to do the will of the Father (John 6:38) PURPOSE for the Christian is God-centered, not self-centered. Pastor Tony Plummer said, "Our assignment is a subpoint underneath the will and pleasure of God."

But like Moses, we are always trying to make God's will about us. Look at Moses response to God's announcement of HIS purpose. Exodus 3:11 -4:13, Moses makes it all about himself. He is asking questions and making statements that put the emphasis on himself and not on God. Ex 3:11 Moses basically is saying, "who am I?" Exodus 3:13, He is asking God what he should say about God when they ask? Exodus 4:3 is paraphrased, "what if they don't believe me?" Exodus 4:10, I am not qualified. Exodus 4:13, Get someone else to do this job.

Can you see that Moses is making this all about himself instead of about the ALMIGHTY God? **But we do the same thing.** For me, when I read Scripture about the will of God, I often, maybe even subconsciously, add the phrase...*for my life. God's will for my life...* is the default that we all tend to lean toward when talking about *the will of God*. We need to reset the default. First and foremost, God's will, God's purpose is about GOD, whatever pleases Him, His heart, His delight, His purpose, His joy, His glory. So, our question is no longer, "What is God's will for my life?", rather it must simply be, "What is God's will?"

To get the right answer to the right question we must focus our attention in the right direction. We must join His will, His purpose. We do this by knowing Him deeply.

## A. Joining God's Purpose

Colossians 1:16 says, ...*all things have been created by Him and for Him*. Meaning we have been created by Christ and for His delight. (remember we only know God through Christ) God always initiates our relationship with Him. Scripture says the Spirit draws us. God initiates the relationship with Moses in Exodus 3. From that point on, Moses and God have a deep abiding relationship. In fact, Exodus 33:11 says, ...*Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend*". This is no causal relationship. And our relationship with God through Christ should not be casual either.

Our purpose is to know God's purpose. Period.

### 1. Abide

We can only know God's purpose, His will, His heart, when we draw near to Him. Jeremiah 29:13, *You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart*. God is not hiding from us, but He is inviting us to draw near, to take the time and make the effort to know Him deeply.

Jesus teaches this concept of drawing near in John 15. He uses the word, **ABIDE**, and He uses the illustration of the vine and the branch to make His point. Abide means to settle down and live there. Our relationship deepens as we stay connected to Christ, the Vine. We begin to know the heart of God. We also begin to bear fruit (fruit is anything that pleases God).

**Carefully read John 15:7.**

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Colossae, pens a beautiful prayer for these young Christians. In a city inundated with false religion, he wants them to be clear about the will of God and the centrality of Christ. Read Colossians 1:9-12. As you read, let's briefly explore the meaning of each word and phrase.

*We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled (controlled)*

*with the knowledge* (this is not head knowledge. It is knowledge that we appropriate/apply to our lives, it is intentional spiritual participation)

*of His will* (God's desire, God's purpose, His heart)

*in all spiritual wisdom* (truth about God applied to people and circumstance)

*and understanding* (the ability to appraise, to see its value, 1 Corinthians 2:15)

Colossians 1:9 is a wonderful description of ABIDING. Both in John 15 and Colossians 1, it is clear that God's will and God's wisdom are inseparable from God's Word. We cannot know either without having God's Word, the Bible, in our hearts. We only know God as He reveals Himself to us, and He reveals Himself to us primarily through His Word. Henry Blackaby says, "The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to teach us the will of God and the ways of God". Read Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:1-2.

Abiding is not just checking off a quiet time. It is falling in love with Jesus. Brother Lawrence wrote a little book called, **Practicing the Presence of God**. In it, Brother Lawrence says we must cultivate the mindset that we are always in the presence of Christ. Abiding is the greatest work we will ever do. It is our ultimate purpose...to know God. (Matthew 22:36).

### 2. Walk

The Christian life of abiding is not remaining in a meditative state. We go out and live! Look at **Colossians 1:10-11**. The first two words are "so that"—these are hinge words. We know the will of God (vs9) and then we live it. Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord. The word "worthy" means in perfect balance. We are not attaining to some level of spirituality or doing great things for God so that we measure up. We are simply living a life that reflects the deep relationship with have with Christ. WE are to please HIM in everything we do, say, and think! As we live each day in this manner, we begin to produce fruit. (Fruit is anything that pleases God). We are connected to the VINE (John 15:5) and the result is fruit. Fruit is not necessarily the outgrowth of some great ministry. It is the overflow of Jesus in the normal every day encounters we have with people.... the kindness we demonstrate, the care and love we show for others, the encouragement we offer, the selfless

acts of service we do...these bear fruit! All the while we continue abiding in Christ, living in close communion with Him, always gaining knowledge of HIS will.

Thankfully, verse 11 reminds us we are not operating in our own strength. Compare Colossians 1:11 with Ephesians 3:16-19. The Holy Spirit is strengthening us in the inner man, doing a work inside that is lived out in our daily lives. Colossians 1:11 says we are gaining/learning steadfastness which means *patient enduring*. It is not passivity, rather endurance is the quality of a soldier who does not surrender to circumstances.

### 3. Worship

A life lived in deep communion with Christ, and whose greatest purpose is to know the heart of God, while living daily in the power of His Spirit cannot keep from praising the Lord. Every word we speak, action we do, thought we think, and breath we take is an act of worship. We are not earning something from God. He has already qualified us for this incredible relationship. He has qualified us to receive everything God has to offer us in Christ. I love verse 11! It takes the burden off of me to measure up to some impossible standard. Christ has done it all, and now my participation is to know Him intimately, walk in a way that reflects His heart, and worship joyfully!

Colossians 1:9-12 is what we yearn for, what we pray for in the lives of our children and our families, what we desire above all else for ourselves...to know the will of God deeply, live it out fully, worship joyfully.

Listen carefully. Knowing God's heart is our purpose. Our primary purpose will never change. *It supersedes* any job, role, or ministry you may have. *It is also compatible* with any job, role, or ministry you may have. We cannot skip intimate communion with God and expect to receive assignments or direction from HIM.

### B. Receiving God's Assignments

Back to Exodus. God established a relationship with Moses. Moses spends the rest of his life in communion with God, abiding in Him. But God also gives Moses a special assignment. God gives Moses the assignment of joining HIS purpose of leading the people to a new land. Like Moses, our assignments will always line up with the will of God and the Word of God. Perhaps this is the point where can cautiously add the phrase, "for my life" when speaking of God's will. God does give us assignments, but they are always given *when we are already communing with Him, knowing His heart and His purpose*. WE cannot skip to over abiding. Not ever.

### 7 principles to keep in mind about assignments from God.

1. **God initiates all assignments.** He is not asking our opinion nor is He asking to us to come up with big ideas for God. Look at Hebrews 11. Not one of those people came up with a big idea for God. God told them what to do, they believed God and obeyed. Assignments are not achieved, they are received.
2. **Assignments will require something from us.** God will always give us an assignment that is bigger than us. WE will have to trust Him with the unknowns, and our insecurities. We will most assuredly have to adjust something in our lives to fulfill the assignment. There may be a wrestling match with God for a while as we grapple with His assignment for us.
3. **God equips us for assignments.** God equipped Moses all along the way for the assignments Moses was given. God equips us as well.
4. **God is always in charge of fruit.** He never asks us to produce results. Results have no eternal affect, they cannot reproduce, they are man-centered. Fruit is God-centered and only Christ can produce fruit in us and through us.
5. **Assignments can change.** Our purpose never changes, but assignments are often for a season.
6. **Assignments may or may not be a vocational call to full time Christian ministry.** Assignments can be given right where we are, in the context of everyday life.
7. **There are no small assignments.**

How do we discern assignments? The simple answer is ABIDE. God will use His word to teach and guide you. His Spirit will lead you into all truth. Look to see where God is already working in your life. He usually builds upon the things He is already doing or cultivating in you.

### C. Seeking God's Direction

God cares about every detail of our lives. He cares about the everyday decisions we make. What car to buy, what church to join, what person to date or marry, what job to secure, ...every detail. We need God in the everyday decisions of life. But again, we cannot expect God direction in the everyday decision and somehow skip the deep communion of abiding and knowing His heart and will.

#### Principles for making decision.

1. **God usually uses four elements to help us make decisions. His Word, His Spirit, His people, and our circumstances.** Psalm 119:105 tells us His word guides our steps, John 16:13, and John 14:26 reminds of us of His Spirit's leading. Other Christians can give us wise counsel—but it must line up with God's word! He also works through our circumstances as we seek His direction.
2. **Do the will you already know.** When you sense an impasse, do what is right in front of you. Do the next thing.
3. **When you have no clear direction, wait.**
4. **Peace is the greatest indicator that you are heading in the right direction.**
5. **God is not micromanaging us!** He is not waiting for us to blow it., making one wrong move and boom... we have ruined the rest of our lives. God's grace is always at work in us. He knows we cannot see around the next curve in the road. He knows there are consequences we cannot grasp. Our purpose and our responsibility is to know His heart. That simple but huge purpose will keep our feet on a good road, and our minds in a good place, and our lives in a state of trust and obedience.

Read Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 12.

What is God's will? That is the question. That is our purpose. Ponder and pray through this very difficult lesson. Ask the Lord to keep you God-centered instead of self-centered.

Books I read as I prepared for this message

1. Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby
2. The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren
3. Practicing the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence

If you are new to this idea of abiding, it is good to have a tool to help you in your journey. For over 30 years I have used a Bible reading guide to help me in my devotional life. It is a yearly subscription of \$25 to get a book every three months, but the material is also available as an online tool.

Scripture Union

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