

**SHARING LIFE AT FBC ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2019 BY PASTOR BOB BENDER**  
**“CHOOSING YOUR GPS” FROM JOHN 7:14-18**

Navigating through life with confidence can be challenging. Now it is easy for the person who doesn't care as he throws caution to the wind drifting downstream—que sara sara—whatever will be will be. However, for the Christ-follower who is intent on following God's will for his or her life, it can seem difficult. Today, I want to make it easier as I feel we have made it more difficult than it really is to navigate through life on target with God's will. I have a GPS or global positioning system receiver built into my smart phone with its dumb user giving me guidance to my next destination. We have them in our cars as well. Check this out (play video of directions). Wouldn't it be nice if we had one of these to guide us through life spiritually so that we never make any wrong turns?

Well, I am here to tell you that those of us who follow Jesus Christ do indeed have one such **GPS=God's Positioning System** or better yet--**God's Plan for Success** (Jer. 29:11; I Cor. 2:9). Our God's will and purpose for your life is **GAP--Good, Acceptable and Perfect** (Rom. 12:2). Today I want you to choose **God's Plan for Success** to guide you through life.

Jesus in John 7 is again teaching in the Temple which He often did (Mt. 26:55). Let's check out what's going on <read verses 14-18>. He was teaching them about Himself—that He had come from God and His teaching was not His own but given by God. His words fell on deaf ears--not because His teachings were hard to understand--but because of the hardness of His listeners' hearts. So their problem wasn't an intellectual problem; it was a spiritual one.

That's why in our key verse of the passage (v. 17) Jesus says, **“If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.”** Jesus was trying to guide them into all truth—mainly the truth about Himself so they would believe in Him (v. 38). Jesus is likewise inviting you today to respond to Him. Obviously, the principle of life here is this: **Everyone who truly seeks God finds Him.**

But what about those of us who have already come to Jesus and believed in Him? How can I know God's will? Wrong question. How can I **do** God's will? Right question. We need guidance as God's children as well. I want us to pray the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 27:11—“Teach me Your way O Lord and lead me on a level path...”

Are there principles from God's Word—His teaching--that daily guide us? Remember, the way we get in is the way we go on with Jesus. Once we get in the kingdom doesn't end our need for guidance. As we navigate through life, it is important for us to know that not only is there someone who knows what's out there, but our loving Heavenly Father is intent on guiding us into God's Plan for Success. Therefore we can have confidence as to not only doing God's teaching as in this verse but following His leading in all other areas of our lives.

What we are really talking about is God's will, isn't it? What does God's will look like? There are several different models of God's will. There is **the maze model** that basically says God's will is trial and error until you get it right and find your way to the winner's circle--not a very encouraging model to follow. There is **the blueprint model** which says you begin in one corner and God only has one path for you to follow to get to the other corner of the blueprint. If you make the wrong decision as to which university to go to, the Trinity has a heart attack and tries to get you back on the right track because the whole rest of your life will be messed up—you'll marry the wrong person, have the wrong children, and mess up God's perfect will for you!

The biblical model is **the scroll model** which leads us to our first truth of the day—**God's Plan for Success is like a scroll—dynamically unfolding day by day on a need to know basis**

**(Ps. 37:23).** Our GPS is not to be grasped once for all but is to be lived out daily as the Lord reveals it to us. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas make their way from Antioch through Galatia having already been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to the west coastal province of Asia Minor. Now 400 miles later in Mysia, they try to go northward into Bithynia but the Lord once again did not permit them. So they kept moving westward to Troas—a jumping off place--where they are joined by Dr. Luke and receive direction through a vision to cross the Aegean Sea to Macedonia. Now God could have shown them at the very beginning what His plan was, but He didn't. They had to discover the truth that God reveals His will on a need to know basis. God evidently had some more work to do **in** Paul and Silas before He had to do more work **through** them. God can't guide parked cars. Just keep moving forward so your spiritual GPS can function.

This scroll is uniquely suited to guide each one of us. A myth we need to dispel is that God only uses certain limited methods to guide His children. If that is the case, then all of us need to keep talking donkeys in our back yard and wool fleeces on our back decks because these are two of the methods God used in the Old Testament. God has used a variety of methods in the book of Acts: visions such as the one in chapter 9 where Ananias was led to minister to Paul; light and a voice as in Saul's conversion and call in Acts 9; angels in Philip's life in Acts 8 to guide him to Gaza; miracles as Philip again was snatched up in "beam me up Scottie" style at the end of Acts 8 and transported to Azotus from Gaza; and prophets with direct revelation as in Acts 13 to tell the church who to call into missions. Wouldn't it be nice if God spoke to us so clearly today?

God spoke in unique ways to His servants in Scripture and He leads in unique ways in His children's lives today; we will consider some in a moment. Have you noticed that your children are different? They need to be led in different ways; one size does not fit all. Our heavenly Father does not lead in the same child's life the same way every time. Just because God led you using method A in 2012 does not mean He will use the same method in 2019. Sometimes God guides me through one of my memory verses; at other times through the advice of a friend and still another through the leadership of His Holy Spirit.

(Interview with Shawn Blankenship). "Shawn, as a pilot what guidance do you have as you land a plane especially at night? (A: three sets of lights—ones on the plane; ones on the ground and papi lights). So the more lights you have lined up, the safer your approach and landing? We are going to discuss several of these spiritual "lights" or guidance today.

I want to give you some assurance at the outset. To those seeking the Lord, you have to work at missing God's will as stated in our key verse. So don't ignore God's "lights" along the way or you will get lost. To the person who is not seeking the Lord, it is easy to get lost. Proverbs 3:5-6 challenges us not to lean on our own understanding but to trust in the Lord and He will guide us. What are some "lights" guiding us through life to fulfill God's Plan for Success?

**God's Word is a light—read it (Ps. 119:105).** 90% of God's will is already revealed to us in His Word. The lamp referred to in this verse only gave enough light for the next few feet in front of them—all you need to see. God's GPS is primarily found in His Word made alive to us by His Spirit. God has already spoken through His Word—let's do what we already know to do. God is under no obligation to guide us in other areas when we are reluctant to follow Him in the areas in front of us. Mark Twain who was not a Christ follower said, "It's not the things in the Bible I don't understand that bother me; it's the things in the Bible I do understand that bother me." So let's begin with what we know; not what we don't know. May our hearts resonate with David's in Psalm 40:8—"I delight to do Your will O my God; Your Law is within my heart."

What is His will already revealed to us in His word? God's will is for you to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). God's will is for you to be sanctified (I Thess. 4:3). God's will is for you to be Spirit-

filled (Eph. 5:17-18). God's will is for you to possess a spirit of thankfulness (I Th. 5:18). God's will is for you to live a life of submission (I Pet. 2:13-15). God's will is for you to serve (Eph. 2:10). God's will for most if not all of us is to suffer (I Pet. 4:19).

Be careful when applying Scripture to your life to avoid capriciously seeking a word from God. "Judas went out and hanged himself"—no; that one's not for me. "Go and do likewise"—missed it again. "What you must do, do quickly"—boy I really must have missed it!

**God's Holy Spirit is a light—follow His leading (Is. 30:21).** He will confirm His will by His Spirit. A young man desired to take the relationship with a girl further and faster than the girl did. He said to her, "God had told me that He wants you to marry me." She responded, "That's funny, because I just spoke to Him and He didn't mention a thing about it." But how exciting when His Spirit guides us in evangelism, application of His Word, job opportunities, or victory over sin! That is why it is so important for us to be filled with the Spirit or under His blessed control. Just recently, His Spirit led me to stop twice at people who had fender-benders or were stuck and I got to minister to both of them. Daily He leads; would we daily follow. Begin each day by praying, "Lord guide me by your Holy Spirit today." Sometimes the Holy Spirit's leading is nothing more than a "holy hunch."

**Common sense is a light—use it (2 Tim. 1:7).** Dawson Trotman once said, "God gave you a lot when He gave you a brain." We don't need to have spiritual indigestion on whether to go to Sam's or Costco or whether to buy white or wheat bread. We just go with the flow using the common sense God gave you. Did you hear about the proverbial guy who was trapped on top of his house because of a flood? He knew God was going to deliver him supernaturally. Along came a canoe, but he refused to get in saying God was going to save him. As the waters rose a speedboat came by but he refused to get in using the same logic. Finally a helicopter came by because the waters were up to his rafters and he again refused trusting in the Lord to save him. However, the flood waters engulfed his house and he drowned. In heaven, he protested to the Lord as to why He didn't save him. The Lord responded, "You fool! I sent by two boats and a helicopter!" Sometimes we are so heavenly minded we are no earthly good.

**Prayer is a light—pray it (Phil. 4:5-6).** Pray about every major decision and it will keep you from making impulsive decisions as in Joshua 9:14 with reference to the Gibeonites when the people of God "did not ask for the counsel of the Lord" and it was their undoing. Proverbs 28:5 says, "Those who seek the Lord understand all things." If you are seeking the Lord regarding a matter, it is difficult to miss God if you are sincere, have no agenda and are patient. But what if there is a deadline regarding my decision and I do not feel I have enough time to take it before the Lord for an extended time? Try to extend the deadline and if it can't, then make the "rightest" decision and move ahead. If you are seeking God, He won't misdirect you.

**The peace of God is a light—let it rule (Col. 3:15).** This word for rule means to act as an arbiter or an umpire. God's peace will tell you "Safe" or "out." What is your heart telling you? What I like to do is to make a decision mentally/emotionally and assume that is the direction I am going to do and see how it fits for a day or two—much like wearing a new suit. Then you might want mentally to make the opposite decision for a while and see how it feels. God has led me in many a right decision allowing the peace of God to rule.

**Godly counsel is a light—seek it (Pro. 11:14, 20:5).** I have avoided many a wrong decision by asking others, "What do you think?" And why don't we seek other's counsel enough? Pride and self-sufficiency. You would be proud of your Admin Team as we discuss all options regarding difficult decisions and frankly discuss all matters openly and forthrightly to determine what God is saying to us. Just this week one of our good and godly deacons called me as we

discussed options regarding a difficult situation. Once my mentor, Gene Warr, advised me against taking another church position that I had already gone in view of a call and gotten a unanimous call. I reluctantly called them back and turned it down because he said he didn't feel good about it. Had I taken that church, I never would have married my beautiful bride.

**Circumstances are lights—let them guide (Pr. 16:33).** Don't resist or react against the circumstances of life—let God speak through life's situations. When Beverly contracted life-threatening cancer years ago, we were following our oncologist's chemotherapy protocol—a less aggressive approach while keeping the “big gun” as he called it in our hip pocket for when the cancer reoccurred which could only be used once. My secretary whose daughter had had cancer said, “If I were you I would go to MD Anderson and get a second opinion.” We did and they suggested a more aggressive protocol immediately which we followed and it paid off along with persistent prayer. I don't know if we had gone to MD Anderson had circumstances not dictated it.

**Your desires are a light—follow your heart (Ps. 37:4).** This to me is one of the most exciting road signs dispelling that myth that if you desire it, it can't be of God. There are occasions when God's will is cross purpose with our own selfish ones, but oftentimes God—our good, good Father--gives us the desires of our hearts. When we were considering taking this church, I sought the Lord using the above resources. The thing that encouraged me to come here was simply answering the question the Lord asked of me: “Bob, what do you want to do?” It was as if He was saying, “Go where your heart is leading because I can use you anywhere.”

As we navigate through life, we have the confidence that God's Plan for Success will take us to our intended destination. Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purposes that prevail.” His purposes are good, acceptable and even perfect. Isn't it comforting to know we have our loving heavenly Father on our team guiding us through the valleys and mountaintops of life? To apply the principles of this life message is to keep us from second-guessing ourselves regarding our past decisions and allows us to have great confidence in life. We go through life looking through the windshield rather than the rear-view mirror.

God's question to you today is; “**Are you willing** to let Me guide your life?” Will you use the GPS tools made available at your disposal? Willing to do comes before knowing (Jn. 7:17). If you are willing to do God's will, you will not only know of His teaching, you will know of His leading—the same principle of willingness applies to both learning and being led. Are you willing to do His will? God is waiting for you to say yes. In of our interviews with a prospective deacon, he began the interview with these words, “I want you guys to know at the outset, the answer is ‘Yes.’ Just tell me what you need me to do.” That's the spirit of John 7:17 and the attitude God desires from all of us.

Again using our flying illustration, one the pilot's most important instruments in an airplane is the attitude indicator indicating his relationship to the horizon. Your attitude determines your altitude. How's your attitude with reference to your willingness to do God's will? Say “Yes” to God's Plan for Success. You will be so glad you did for His will is again GAP--good, acceptable and perfect. The result will be your story that honors God and encourages others.

Would you pray this prayer with me? “Lord, I am willing to do your will. Show me.” At the very least you can pray, “Lord, I am willing to be willing. Lead me.”