Getting God's Guidance — Delivery Transcript

Psalm 25 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, January 9, 2022 · *Standalone Sermons — 2022*

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You're either like super pumped because you're ready for the year or the outcomes of the year prior had just worn you out to the degree you're like, oh no, not another one. And I don't know where it is that you find yourself this morning with either side of the pendulum or maybe somewhere in between, but I want you to know you're not alone in that. And one of the best things for you in either case, is for you to get a fresh word from the Lord and a fresh vision for what God has for you in 2022.

I was struck by this kind of in a fresh way while the staff and I were on a staff retreat this last week down in Livingston, Texas. And the goal of that staff retreat was twofold. One, we wanted a strategic plan for 2022. One of the things that we're entrusted with as a staff is leadership and helping lead our congregation towards what we believe God has for us, and the Bible gives us the mission to make disciples. But what is a disciple and how are they made in the context of this local church?

And how can our staff help move the ball forward and lead the way in everybody becoming more and more like Jesus as a disciple and making other disciples? And so we wanted some strategic planning, and we did that. But that was almost secondary to the primary goal, which was to be refreshed in the Lord and to spend time in God's presence through worship and prayer and be rejuvenated spiritually. And I was struck in the times of worship and prayer by how good the Lord is and how eager God is to give you the gift of his own presence, to give you the gift of himself.

To give you that renewal and refreshing. He wants to pour that out into your life. He wants to give you an idea for what you are supposed to do for 2022. But for us to receive from the Lord what he wants to give, we've got to come to him on his terms and not our own. And there is a temptation, I think, in every human heart, especially here in the West, because we're very self-sufficient and get-'er-done kind of attitude, which I love about the West, but that spiritually is a little bit counterproductive because the Lord calls us to come to him poor in spirit, with an open hand, as we just prayed, and with an acknowledgment of our need.

And so God wants to pour out his presence in our life, but we've got to come to him on his terms and not our own. And so this morning, that's how we're going to come to the Lord. We're going to come to him on his terms. And Psalm 25, which is our text today, gives us a little bit of a blueprint for how that is done. And so if you have your Bibles, you can turn to Psalm chapter 25. And before we read our text, let me give you an idea of who this message is for and who this message is not for.

This message is not for the person who says of the Lord, you know, I trust Jesus for eternal life. I want to go to heaven when I die. You know, I prayed the prayer when I was a kid and I'm going to church and I'm doing all my thing. But I don't really want God messing with my business when it comes to certain areas of my life. I don't think he has any business telling me how to spend my money or what to do with my sexuality or my body or where I should work or what kind of friends that I should have.

And you kind of want God to rubber stamp your plans for X, Y, and Z thing and maybe be there as a therapeutic support system for you when you need him, but by and large to be separate from your life and kind of at a distance. This psalm is actually a warning to that kind of mindset, and I'm not saying that you have that mindset, but there's this tendency of the human heart to drift to that place. Rather, this psalm is a psalm for someone who has come to the Lord in an attitude of absolute surrender.

When you talk about coming to God on his terms, his terms are to come to him from a place of absolute surrender, and we're going to see David come to him needy, with an awareness of his own weakness and brokenness, and saying, Lord, I don't know what your plans are, but the answer is yes. I don't know where you want me to go, but the answer is I'll go. I don't know what you want me to do, but the answer is I'll do it. And when you come to the Lord with that kind of attitude and that kind of a mindset, then he is eager to reveal himself to you and show what it is that he has for you to do, and that's how I want us to come this morning.

So let's read our passage, Psalm chapter 25, starting in verse 1. Lord, I appeal to you. My God, I trust in you. Do not let me be disgraced. Do not let my enemies gloat over me. No one who waits for you will be disgraced. Those who act treacherously without cause will be disgraced. Make your ways known to me, Lord. Teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth

and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation. I wait for you all the day long. Remember, Lord, your compassion and your faithful love, for they have existed from antiquity.

Do not remember the sins of my youth. Or my acts of rebellion, in keeping with your faithful love, remember me because of your goodness, Lord. The Lord is good and upright, therefore he shows sinners the way. He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. And the Lord′s ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep his covenant and decrees. So, Lord, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense. Who is this person who fears the Lord? He will show him the way he should choose.

He will live a good life, and his descendants will inherit the land. The secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he reveals his covenant to them. My eyes are always on the Lord, for he will pull my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am alone and afflicted. The distresses of my heart increase; bring me out of my sufferings, consider my affliction and trouble, and forgive all my sins. Consider my enemies, they are numerous, they hate me violently.

Guard me and rescue me, and do not let me be disgraced, for I take refuge in you. May integrity and what is right watch over me, for I wait for you. God redeem Israel from all of its distress. So this is really a psalm about how to know the will of God for your life. And I don't mean the basic will of God that′s already revealed in the scripture. Certainly we know God has put his law on our hearts. We know right from wrong in a general sense. Everybody has a conscience.

As Jiminy Cricket used to say, let your conscience be your guide, except for the sociopaths among us, of course, who have a wounded conscience, but by and large we have a general sense of right and wrong. And a general awareness that there is a God in heaven and even for Christian people that he′s revealed himself through his Word, and we′re vaguely familiar with God′s commands in the Scripture. But what about those secondary questions of should I marry this person or that person? Should I go to this college or that college?

Should I start this business venture or should I not start this business venture? Lord, what do you want me to do? Have you ever had those kinds of questions? Have you ever labored over whether or not what you were doing, the decision you were making was the right decision or the wrong decision in God′s eyes? Have you ever prayed to God, Lord, just show me what am I supposed to do? If you′ll tell me what to do, then I′ll do it. How do you know the will of God on those kinds of questions is really what this Psalm is dealing with and the answer that it offers is maybe a little bit counterintuitive to what we might think it would be.

So what I want to do with the time we have is to show you how to come to the Lord, how to ask for his guidance on those kinds of questions. Secondly, I want to show you how God guides on those type of questions. And then finally how to receive his guidance into your life.

So how to come, how he guides, and how to receive it into your life. And the first thing that you see just right on the surface of this psalm is that when it comes to how to ask for God's guidance in your life on those questions or any other questions, the Lord invites us to come as we are.

The Lord invites us to come in a way in which we are open and honest about our struggles and our sin in life. And it's counterintuitive. There is a temptation in every human heart to say, I don't know if I can come to God. I don't know if I can ask for God's help unless and until I'm kind of tied up and fixed up and put together. And most people would say, I don't have to be sinless, but I got to be better than what I am right now. And I don't know if I'm the only one who ever thinks this way.

I certainly remember growing up as a teenager, needing the Lord's guidance, desperately craving for the Lord to deliver on some things that I was going through. And I felt this hesitation to pray. I would start praying and feel like, never mind, God, I know you're mad at me, you know, because of all these things that were going on in my life. And I knew I was sinning against the Lord and grieving his heart. And I think that temptation, even though it's intuitive that your sins have offended a holy God, yes of course they have, but nowhere in Scripture are we discouraged from drawing near to the throne of grace until we clean ourselves up.

That is not the gospel message. The gospel message is to come as you are. Warts and all, weaknesses in tow. And that's exactly how David comes to the Lord. And look at some of the things that he struggles with. You see these emotions just kind of flying off the page. He struggles with sin. He starts out describing his fear, which is an emotion and sinful expression. Fear is a sin that a lot of people struggle with. And David's no exception. He says in verse 2, don't let me be disgraced. Don't let my enemies gloat over me.

That's a sense of a fear of failure, a sense of a fear of physical safety. He says in verse 19, consider my enemies, for they are numerous, and they hate me violently. And so David is surrounded by threats. Physical, emotional, professional, I don't know what all the kind of threats that he felt, but he was struggling with fear. And it's something that you and I struggle with all the time. If you're honest with yourself, many of us are motivated by fear, controlled by fear, anxiety, COVID-19, 2020, there's a lot of fear out there in our culture.

I don't know how much of it's in West Texas, but there are people who are just crippled by a fear of what may be or what could be. And so it's not a foreign thing to the human experience. And yet David comes with that fear in tow and draws near to the throne of God. He struggles also with loneliness. If you look in verse 16, he says, turn to me and be gracious to me because I'm alone and afflicted. And it's not uncommon for people who want to follow the will of God to feel alone in your life.

I think about the Apostle Paul in prison, all alone. He said, everybody's deserted me. Nobody comes to visit me anymore. He was persona non grata. All the churches that he had planted, all the Christians that he had discipled, they'd kind of checked out. And there is a sense in which if you want to follow the will of God for your life. There will be many people, people that you love, friends that you used to have, who would say, I can't go with you anymore, I can't do that thing anymore, I don't want to be associated with that anymore.

The whole idea of cancel culture in our culture, you know, just give it a little bit more time until the whole idea of following Jesus or being a Christian is canceled in our culture and there will be an extreme sense of loneliness. And not just Christians, I mean everybody in our culture is lonely right now, feeling isolated and detached from what's going on. And yet David, feeling those feelings, probably sinful expression of those feelings, comes as he is anyway, open and honest about his sin. He struggles also with guilt. If you look at verses 7 and 11, he says, don't remember the sins of my youth or the acts of rebellion.

In verse 11, he says, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense. And so I don't know what David is thinking about when he's thinking about these sins in his youth. It could have been his affair with Bathsheba. Could have been some of the things he did as a war general or, you know, a military person. It could have just been other sins that aren't recorded in scripture, but certainly David was no, you know, pure lamb. He had a lot of sin in his life. He did a lot of terrible things.

And he says of the Lord, I'm struggling with that guilt. If I'm honest, Lord, I don't even want to speak with you right now because I feel ashamed. And I know a lot of you struggle with that. I know I struggle with that. Sometimes the decisions you've made in your past, even though you know you're forgiven, even though you know that person doesn't hold it against you anymore, you hold it against you. You haven't forgiven yourself and you're carrying it along with you, and you're allowing that to cut you off from drawing near to the throne of grace and receiving God's help.

David felt alone, he felt guilty, he felt afraid. And then finally, he senses this extreme emotional distress. If you look in verse 17, he says, the distresses of my heart increase. Bring me out of my sufferings. So not only is he suffering physically, he's suffering emotionally as well. Some people might call this being in a funk or just everything's right in the world, but nothing's right in the world. Has anybody ever had this kind of experience where you're just not in a good place? And it's not because of any one thing that's wrong.

It's not any one person, what they said or what they did. It's just it's like you woke up and your happy place was broken. And you can't fix it. It's just broke and you don't know how to make it better. And that's what David's going through. He's saying my distress increases. The distress in my heart increases and it's like I can't control it. It just gets sadder and sadder

and sadder. Bring me out of my sufferings. A lot of psychologists, if it goes on for a long time, would say that's something like depression.

Extreme discouragement, emotional distress, and many people, maybe even you would say, yeah, I can identify with that. Sometimes I feel depressed. And that depression prevents me from wanting to draw near to the Lord, from even wanting to go to church, from wanting to worship or receive what God has for me. All of those things are true of David. He was an artist, so he feels a lot of things, right? Artists love to feel their feelings. And yet he draws near to the Lord anyway. And so what I would encourage you to do in 2022, however it is you're feeling right now, whatever emotions you're struggling with, whatever sinful expressions of those emotions that you're dealing with.

Do not let them prevent you from drawing near to the throne of God's grace and receiving what he wants to give, from receiving the instruction that he has for you in 2022, from receiving his guidance. It's not just you; everybody has these struggles. When we were on our staff retreat, one of the first exercises we did to refresh ourselves in the Lord was a sins list. We wrote down our sins on a board and we confessed our sins to one another. The book of James says, confess your sins to one another and you'll be healed.

And so we took God at his word on that. And if you could only see some of the things that we wrote down, one person said after we were done, well if anybody else saw our sins list, they would say anyone could be a pastor. That's it. And it's true, there's nothing special about being a pastor or staff member. We're just human beings like everybody else. And as I was reading the psalm and I was looking at that list, I thought, you know, that's really crazy. I wonder if it would encourage anybody to know what people like staff people struggle with.

So we saw what David struggled with. I want to show you some of the things that we wrote down. You can't read my handwriting, so I wrote them down. If you go to the next slide, whoever's running the notes back there says you can see I write like a doctor. I'm smart like a doctor as well. But you can't read them. The first one on the list was fear. And this was before meditating on Psalm 25. Fear of failure, fear of not being good enough, fear of not being accepted, doubt, unbelief.

Somebody said busyness, and not busyness like I got so many things to do because I'm so awesome at doing things, but I'm undisciplined with my time. I don't manage my emotional capital well. I don't manage my energy well, and therefore I'm always behind the eight ball, always discouraged, failure-focused, a critical spirit, always Negative Nancy about everything, an Eeyore attitude, unforgiveness, bitterness, discouragement, overthinking, OCD, pride and self-righteousness, this is a temptation for a lot of Christians who've been in the faith for a long time. You somehow get this holier-than-thou attitude. I would never do that.

Why can't they just figure it out? Why can't they just get better? How can they not get this? The losing the compassion of Christ and the mercy of the Lord. Distraction, angst, hardness of heart, tiredness, exhaustion, people pleasing, apathy, indifference, discontentment. All of these things were on our list just like they were on David's list. Not that he felt all of these things, but my point is he came as he was. And you'll never receive God's guidance in your life if you're not open and honest about who you are and what you're dealing with.

Because you'll be concealing, you'll be hiding, you'll be trying to one up, you'll be trying to prove yourself. You'll be in a place that prevents you from receiving the grace of God in your life. So be open and honest about your sins. I can't remember who said this, but I love this quote. If dependence is the goal, and it is, if dependency on God is the goal, then weakness is the advantage, which means your weaknesses in life, whether they're emotional or physical or your sin or otherwise, are actually an advantage.

It's a counterintuitive truth. You would feel like weakness would be a disadvantage, but when it comes to your spiritual health and receiving God's power in your life, weakness is actually an advantage because it is the poor in spirit who receive the kingdom of heaven. It is those who realize I'm not enough. I don't have what it takes who actually receive the mercy of the Lord. And so be open and honest about your sin. And then the second thing, almost more important than being open and honest, is ask for God's help.

After you've been open and honest about your struggles and sin, ask God for his help, which is exactly what David does. He kind of sprinkles it in and out. He says don't let me be disgraced. Don't let my enemies gloat over me. So I'm having this fear, God, I'm asking you to not let those fears become realized in my life. In verse 6, he says, remember your compassion and your faithful love. In verse 7, do not remember the sins of my youth or my acts of rebellion. In verse eleven, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity.

I realize my sin is immense. I'm asking for your forgiveness. Verse 16, turn to me and be gracious to me. I'm alone and afflicted, so I'm asking you to turn and give me your grace. The distresses of my heart increase, therefore bring me out of my sufferings. He's asking God to do something in his life. Verse 20 says, Guard me and rescue me. Do not let me be disgraced, because I take refuge in you. So having been open and honest about our struggles, we should ask for God's help. And you may think, well, duh, ask for God's help, but how many people say, duh, ask for God's help, but you never pray?

You never ask. You just kind of assume, well, God knows and I know and we both know what I need, so do I really have to ask? Yes, you have to ask. The book of James says you don't have because you don't ask. And then when you do ask, you ask with the wrong motives. You've got to ask. You've got to ask from a place of awareness of your need, awareness of your weakness and dependency. Ask for his provision. And he'll give it. But you've got to ask. Those who seek, find.

The only people who find are the ones who seek. It's the ones who knock who have the door opened for them. And so you've got to ask God for his help. As the old song said, oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pains we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. You'll never get an answer to a question you never ask. You'll never get understanding if you don't request it. So that's how we come. We come with an awareness of our need and with confidence that God will help us if we ask.

The second question is, how does God give us guidance? How does God guide? How does God give us answers to those unanswered questions so that we know not what's right and wrong or is it your will or not your will in the general sense? But in this particular case, at this particular time, for this particular season, is this wise or unwise? How does God give us guidance? And there's an answer to that question in this psalm, I believe, by this play between two kinds of paths. You see, at first he says, Lord, teach me your ways, show me your paths.

Guide me in your truth, and so he's talking about God's paths, God's will in this general sense, and this revealed sense. And then later in the Psalm it says that the Lord, for the person who fears the Lord, he will show him the way he should choose. So it's talking about our paths. So you have God's paths on the one hand, and then you have our paths on the other hand. You have God's revealed will on the one hand, and then you have his secret will on the other hand. What's his particular will for this particular situation?

Let me show you both of these. In verses four and five of chapter 25, you see God's paths. David prays in verse 4, make your ways known to me, Lord. Teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation. And I wait for you all day long. You skip down to verses 12 and 13, the theme shifts. No longer is it David praying for an awareness of what God says in his word. But now God is turning to David and he's saying, who is this person who fears the Lord?

He will show him the way he should choose. He will live a good life and his descendants will inherit the land. So David's saying, God, show me your word, show me your way, show me your truth. And then it's as if the Lord looks at David, who has this hunger and desire to know God, and he says, who is this person who fears the Lord? That's the kind of man I'll show my secret counsel. That's the kind of man I'll show him the way he should choose. And so there is a direct relationship between your knowledge of God's revealed will and your understanding of God's particular will for your life.

The more you know and understand the revealed will of God, the more you'll come to understand his particular will for your individual life. I think the way I put it, if you're taking notes, is that the secret will of God is unlocked by familiarizing ourselves with his revealed will. And I know that isn't maybe what you want to hear because there's all kinds of, you know, people out there who think, well, to get the secret will of God, maybe you got to like

test God and you do these little bargains with God, like, God, if you want me to marry this person, then make it rain tomorrow.

Has anybody ever done that? Besides me. Just kidding, Audra. I didn't do that. No. Some people do that. God, if this is the job you want me to take, then show me a sign. You know, have lightning strike the earth at this place. And the scripture never encourages that kind of testing of the Lord or sign-seeking, and yet a lot of us do it. Or we wait for this warm fuzzy feeling or this kind of confirmation bias or have somebody say something or do something? And I'm not saying those things are always out of the question.

Sometimes the Lord does respond in those ways. You had Gideon and his fleece and it got wet, but the Lord didn't commend that. He wasn't saying that's a great way to go about it. So instead of thinking of getting the particular will of God through a quest of sign seeking, I want you to think about the quest for God's guidance as a quest for sanctification more than anything else, which is a big 14-letter word.[1] It's a quest for holiness. It's a quest for becoming a particular kind of person so that you can get God's word for particular unanswered questions.

God transforms you into a different kind of person. And when you become that different kind of person, that puts you in a position to hear his voice on some of these unanswered questions that you would really never understand otherwise had you not become that different kind of person. It's a quest for holiness. It's a quest for sanctification more than it is sign-seeking. And if you don't believe me, I think you see that in this psalm, but you also see this principle elsewhere in the Scripture. There's a passage in the book of Hebrews that says the same exact thing.

The author of Hebrews is basically chiding the Christians there because they were old in the faith, but they were young in their spirit, right? You're immature Christians even though you've been Christians for 25 years. He says, what's wrong with you people? You know, you're still on the milk of the word when you should be on the meat of the word. Here's how he says it in particular. Everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message. In other words, you're not familiar with the Word of God. And so you're still on the baby stuff.

You don't know the message about righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature. In other words, if you really want to know what God's will is on the secondary questions, if you want wisdom on the unanswered questions, that's for the mature people. And the mature people are those, look at this, whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil. That phrase, your senses have been trained, that's talking about a dynamic in which you have become so familiar with the Word of God, you have become so acquainted with the character of God and the truth of God, that you're able to take those principles and truth and bring them to bear on these nuances of life and these unanswered questions and these secondary types of matters.

Maybe an illustration would help. If you've ever gone to a different country or spoken to a group of people who didn't speak your language. And you didn't know the language, the best you can do is either get a translator or get one of those little dictionaries, right? English-Spanish dictionary or whatever. So imagine if I went to Brazil, I've never been to Brazil, I don't know the language, I know some Spanish, but I think they speak Portuguese. What do they speak? Portuguese. And so the best I could do is take one of those dictionaries and learn certain words like, where's the toilet?

Or you know, too hot or too cold or whatever the case. If I understood the language, I would be able to pick up on some of the more important things that were going on. Like, oh he's using those words, he's using that kind of pronunciation, he's leveraging the language in this way. You pick up on things you otherwise wouldn't pick up on if you really knew the language. Whereas if all you have is the dictionary and you can look up and translate one word by the other word, you're very limited in your application or your life application of dealing with that situation because of your limited knowledge.

So the way that works with language is the way I think it works with scripture. There are a lot of people who treat the Bible like it's a little language dictionary. And, oh, I've got this need, I've got that need. I want to know what God has to say about X, Y, or Z matter, so I open up my dictionary and I read a little Bible verse and it gives me this little therapeutic pick-me-up so that I can kind of figure out what God wants for X, Y, or Z matter.

But it's very limited and you don't know the grand story, you don't know the meta-narrative, you don't know how it all fits together, you don't know the overarching themes, you don't really deeply understand the character of God and the will of God because you haven't really spent time with God in his word. And so it's like using that little dictionary, say, how do I get to the bathroom? How do I get the bare minimum of living life in this destination where I don't know the language? Whereas if you did know the scripture really, really well, and if you did know how it all fits together in the meta-narratives and the themes, and you deeply understood the character of God because you've seen his character revealed in the story of the Exodus and the preaching of the prophets and the story of Jesus and how he did XYZ thing with XYZ person and how the disciples took that message and applied it to their lives and applied it to the church.

When you know those kinds of things, deeply understanding them, then it's like deeply understanding a language. And so you pick up on the nuance here and there and you pick up on the deeper things and you're able to bring that nuance to bear on difficult questions that are hard to answer that you would never be able to answer without that deep familiarity. Does that make sense? And so that's what Hebrews is saying. He's saying, if your senses have been trained, if you're mature in the faith, if you know the word, then you'll be able to distinguish between good and evil what's right and wrong, what's wise and unwise.

Is it now or is it later? Is it him or is it her? Is it this way or is it that way? So God makes you wise. He informs you. He gives you guidance by making you into a certain kind of person. It's about sanctification, not sign seeking. So the best commitment you can make if you want to be someone who gets guidance from the Lord for 2022— the two best commitments you can make for 2022 is to learn what the Word of God says and to live it out. To learn it and live it.

And you say, well, of course you would say that you're a preacher, but I mean it. I mean make this the year where you finally figure out what the Bible's about. Stop using it as a therapeutic pick-me-up or a self-help book or a give me a promise for my anxiety today and start figuring out what does the whole thing say? What is Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, how do they all fit together and what's the big story? And what's God like in those stories and how does he interact and who's the main character and who's not the main character and what's the main plot and what happens and where's the climax of the story and what does that teach me about who I am and who God is and attach those themes together and figure out what the whole Bible says so that you can take that knowledge and bring it to bear on some of these secondary questions.

If you profess to be a Christian, you believe Jesus is the Messiah, that God raised him from the dead. Then you want to know what Jesus knew. You want to believe what Jesus believed and he was a Jew. He believed the Old Testament. Familiarize yourself with the Word of God. And today there's so many tools to do this. I mean there are, man, there's so many countless— on RightNow Media there's this new series called the Bible Project. And it basically does this. It says here's 10 minutes, 10-minute video, visually stimulating, to show you the big overview of this book of the Bible and then go book by book by book by book and get the whole thing together.

It would kind of be like watching the Avengers series. You watch all the Avengers series back to back to back to back to back so you can see how everything fits together. You remember the new Spider-Man movie that just came out? Am I about to give some spoilers? I probably shouldn't say this. Sorry, never mind. Anyway, you see how everything fits together but you'll never see how everything fits together if you don't see it, if you don't study it. So learn the word. Secondly, live the word. It's not enough to just know what God says.

You've got to do what God says. Why would God tell you the answer to a question you don't have an answer to if the question you do have an answer to, you refuse to put into practice. Why would he do that? Why would he give you extra grace when you refuse— why would he shine more light on the path if you refuse to walk in the light that you already have? That's not how God works. So learn the word, live the word. Be obedient to the truth that you do know.

David ties all this together under this banner of knowing God in verse 14. The secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him. He reveals his covenant to them. So what does it mean to fear the Lord? How do you receive it into your life? Well, it's not by sinless obedience. Fearing God is not sinless obedience. You know that because David has already confessed his many sins. My sins are immense. So for God to say, here is a man who fears the Lord, even though his sins are immense, we can't think fearing God means sinless obedience.

It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean sinless obedience, it means humble surrender. It's a recognition that God's ways are best. Look at what he says in verse 8. The Lord is good and upright. And therefore he shows sinners the way. That's what it means to fear the Lord. Lord, I know I'm not perfect. I know I don't have everything figured out, but you do. You are good. You are amazing. So how do you receive God's guidance? If you're taking notes, God's guidance is received through humility, repentance, and covenant-keeping faith. He says in verse 9, he leads the humble in what is right.

Humility is a prerequisite for receiving the guidance of the Lord. Sin does not disqualify you, but pride will. Being perfect is not a pre-qualification of receiving God's guidance, but humility is. And not only humility. But repentance and faith. Repentance is just agreeing with God. God, you're right, I was wrong. Your way is better than my way. And then faith is putting into practice what God says to do. Covenant-keeping faith is essentially saying, God, I trust you enough to believe your promise. Even though I don't have all my questions answered of how it's all going to pan out, I trust you enough to do what you're asking me to do.

And David says in verse 10, all the Lord's ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep his covenant and decrees. God's guidance is given to the person who says, I know I'm far worse off than I could have ever imagined, but because of your love, because of your covenant, because of Christ, I'm far more loved than I could have ever dared to hope. And so even though I may not have all of my questions answered on this matter, I'm going to walk in the light that I do have.

I'm going to humbly submit myself to your way and wait patiently until you reveal to me the secret counsel of your will. He says in verses 11 and 12, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense. Who is this person who fears the Lord? He will show him the way he should choose. So it's simultaneous humility and repentance over sin, accompanied by a faith that God will show him the way he should choose. The secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him. And those are the people to whom he will reveal his covenant.

And so as we bring this thing to a conclusion, the order is important. You will not receive the secret counsel of the Lord by just asking. It's not enough to just seek for a sign or to come to church or to do the thing. It is the person who has a heart that is fully surrendered to the Lord. It is a person who has their mind absolutely shaped by God's word. It is the person

having his mind shaped by the word and his soul surrendered to the Lord that waits patiently for the Lord to reveal his secret counsel, those are the people who will receive God's guidance for 2022.

And I know it's probably not what everybody wants to hear. It's not a quick fix. It's not an easy answer. It is the Lord making you into the type of person who can hear his voice. Now, when he tells you what you should do, how he tells you, that's between you and the Lord. But I'm here to tell you, if you want to be a person who receives that gift, this is the pathway. Become familiar with his word. Have a heart that is surrendered to his will. Develop a posture of absolute dependency and humility.

And wait on the Lord. Reject the temptation of concealing and hiding because you're not good enough. Reject the temptation of self-sufficiency and self-reliance and pride because you think you can do it better. And instead humbly wait on the Lord. Allow his word to transform your mind. Allow his holiness to humble you before his throne of grace. And then with confidence ask him for his help.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "a big 10-letter word"; "sanctification" has fourteen letters. Source: the spelling of the word (s-a-n-c-t-i-f-i-c-a-t-i-o-n). ↩