

Toxic Faith
(Part I: Mixed-Up Theology)

***“God Has a Blueprint for My
Life”***

January 23, 2011

Let's pray together, shall we?

God thank you for the opportunity to gather here this morning to worship You and to learn more about You. I pray that your Spirit would guide us into the truth about Your will for our lives. Help us to see where some of what we believe may not be accurate and even toxic to our souls. And grant us freedom as we let that stuff go.

We ask in Jesus name for the sake of the advancement of His Kingdom, Amen.

A little over a month ago, a friend and I met for lunch. He was facing a tough decision; one very similar to what we just saw in the drama. Because of downsizing, his position was being phased out and he was told he would have to apply for another job within the company.

Fortunately, for him, he was a top performer so he had two options. One was to stay here in KC and take a job that would be “okay” – as in “I could do it and be okay with it.” The other option was to move halfway across the country and take a position that would be much more in line with what he really wanted to do in his career; much more in line with what he knew he was really good at doing. And he had to decide between the two within 48 hours.

But his dilemma wasn't so much about what he should do for himself. He felt sure the

best thing would be to move. The real issue that concerned him was his children: specifically “what does God want me and my wife to do with our kids? Does He want us to stay here in KC where they’ll be stable throughout their high school years? If we move,” he said, “it could make it a lot more challenging for them at a critical time in their lives. So, Rick, what do you think God’s will might be in my situation?”

Tough question. I’ll tell you what I told him ... a little bit later in this message.

What We Believe (and Why)

But, first, I want to start out by looking at what most followers of Jesus believe about this issue ... and why.

I think there are three basic ideas that capture the essence of our thinking about

God's will and decisions we make in our lives. And as I quickly go through these, you might just keep score on how many of these are characteristic of *your* thinking.

1. Most of us believe that God has a very specific plan for our lives, especially in the “big things” ...

... like, whether or not we should uproot our families and move across the country.

Larry Osborne describes this as “blueprint thinking.”

And by the way, as I said last week Larry is the author of the book “10 Dumb Things Smart Christians Believe” which is the inspiration for this series. We have his book available in the bookstore if you're interested. It's a very easy read.

Anyway, Osborne says that most followers of Christ believe that there is a blueprint somewhere in the mind of God that, instead

of describing how *a house* should be built, describes how *our lives* should be built. It specifies in exact detail things like ...

- Who we should marry (or not marry).
- Whether we are supposed to buy a particular house in a particular neighborhood when we're 30 and then when we're 40 and then when we're 54.
- Whether we should go to college at MU or KU or not go to college at all.
- Whether we should drive or fly on our next vacation.
- What preschool our children are supposed to attend.

There's a very specific plan, we believe ...

2. And the secret of being blessed by God is to discover that plan – the blueprint – and then follow it.

... which is the second thing that most of us

believe about this issue. And we believe it because it makes sense that if God has a plan, *following* that plan is going to be a lot better for us than *not* following it!

Again, it's kind of like building a house: it would be foolish for a contractor to put a bathroom where there isn't any plumbing or to build a flight of stairs that leads to nowhere. For the house to work the way it's supposed to, you have to follow the blueprint to the letter. Otherwise you wind up with a lot of wasted effort and a big mess.

"And that's how it is with God," we think. "You have to figure it his will at every step of the way and then try to follow it out; try to get smack in the middle of it because that's where the blessings will be."

Now, here's the third belief – and it's the one that causes us the most consternation.

God has a blueprint and you have to discover and follow it if you want Him to really bless you, *however ...*

3. It's not easy to discover the blueprint.

God typically doesn't leave notes on pillows. He doesn't often send angelic visitors in the middle of the night. And the many competing voices – like those we saw in the drama – sometimes they *sound* like they might be speaking for God but it's really hard to tell.

On top of all that when you finally do make a decision, very often you're still not sure you've made the right one – the one that was God's will. For me, in every major move I've made, after about three months I concluded I'd just made one of the worst decisions of my life. And I wondered "did I really hear from God and follow his will? Or was I just

hearing what I wanted to hear?"

It's kind of hard to discern the plan.

So, do any of these beliefs sound familiar to you? Do they represent *your* thinking?

The question is ... where did we get this concept of God's will – the blueprint idea?

Well, I think we have to say that it comes from reading the Bible and trying to take it seriously ... in particular, verses and passages like these:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

I'm sure you've heard that before.

The same thought is echoed in the Psalms.

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you."

Psalms 32:8 (NLT)

And then, of course, there's the one that always seems to come up whenever we think about whatever plan God might have for us.

Jeremiah 29:11 ...

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

In addition to encouraging us to look to God for plans and direction, the Bible seems to

chastise those who *don't* do that.

The Apostle James writes:

*Now listen, you who say,
"Today or tomorrow we will
go to this or that city, spend a
year there, carry on business
and make money."*

James 4:13 (NIV)

*Instead, you ought to say, "If
it is the Lord's will, we will
live and do this or that."*

James 4:15 (NIV)

Then, of course, there are many verses in the Bible indicating that God will speak to us specifically for the purpose of revealing the blueprint we're to follow.

The OT prophet Isaiah wrote:

*Whether you turn to the right
or to the left, your ears will*

*hear a voice behind you,
saying, "This is the way; walk
in it." Isaiah 30:21
(NIV)*

And Jesus himself once said:

*"My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow
me." John 10:27 (NIV)*

But, then again, the scripture also tells us that it's not quite as easy as it sounds.

Jesus also said:

*"Keep on asking, and you will
receive what you ask for.
Keep on seeking, and you
will find. Keep on knocking,
and the door will be opened
to you. For everyone who
asks, receives. Everyone who
seeks, finds. And to everyone
who knocks, the door will be
opened." Matthew 7:7-8*

(NLT)

But, not immediately. Jesus is saying the door doesn't open up on the first knock. The prayer isn't granted on the first ask. And the direction we seek isn't given on the first request. We have to keep seeking it because it's not easy to discover.

Now, lest I be misconstrued in my purpose here, let me say that I believe everything we just read is true. The problem is that it's not *the whole truth* about God's will for our lives. The Bible has other things to say about this issue which we *need to hear* yet we *don't often* hear and so we end up having a warped perspective on this matter.

Toxic Damage

Of course, at this point someone could ask “so what? What difference does it really make if we’re a little bit ‘off’ on this thing about God’s will?”

I think it makes a big difference. I think when we buy into “blueprint thinking” as the primary way of understanding God’s will, our faith becomes toxic to us in at least one of three ways – if not all of three.

1. First of all “blueprint thinking” typically leads us to be more self-focused than Kingdom-focused.

Remember what Jesus’ main message was? We’ve talked about it on many occasions.

The Gospel of Mark says that after his baptism ...

*Jesus went into Galilee,
proclaiming the good news of*

God.

And, here's what it was:

*"The time has come," he said.
"The kingdom of God has
come near. Repent and
believe the good news!"
Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)*

In other words, "God's presence and activity on this Earth is near and it's now. Stop believing and living as if it's not; as if it's something reserved only for the future in some kind of spiritual afterlife."

Later, he told his followers to pray that the name of God would become hallowed – or held in high regard – among all people, and that God's way of life would become as real on Earth as it is in the Kingdom of Heaven. And we just sang about that this morning.

This was so important that He told them to “seek first the Kingdom and all of the other concerns in your life will be taken care of as well.”ⁱ

If you’re a follower of Jesus, that’s where your focus is supposed to be. And every decision you make, every decision I make, is to come out of that perspective.

Yet, very rarely do Christians these days say, “You know, I’m struggling. I’m just trying so hard to figure out what God would have me do that would produce the best result in terms of bringing Him glory and expanding His Kingdom on Earth.” We don’t think of God’s will in those terms. Instead, we think of it in a much more narrow sense, almost as if the will of God for our individual lives is somehow isolated from or elevated above what God has already said matters most to Him in this world.

But it's not ... which is why that kind of thinking - "blueprint-thinking" – is not healthy long-term.

Another reason why I think "blueprint thinking" is toxic – and this is huge – is that ...

2. It often creates fear and despair that somehow "I will miss (or I have already missed) God's perfect plan for my life."

Think about it: if God has a blueprint, then that means *there is only one right choice for every area of your life and mine*. That's how blueprints work – every single detail is completely spelled out.ⁱⁱ So, if you get it wrong, well, "too bad, so sad."

Have you ever had that thought, about missing God's will, either past or present? I know I have. And I've seen other people who

become so fearful of making the wrong decision because it might not be on the blueprint that they're afraid to do anything at all. They're paralyzed by fear and so they hesitate, over-analyze and, quite often, they let lots of good and acceptable opportunities go by them.

I've also seen people who, after agonizing over "what is God's will in this?" make a decision that didn't result in "blessing" (however they would define blessing), and then concluded that they just missed God's will. They tried their best to discover the blueprint, but they got it wrong. And then they wallow in despair because they think that the rest of their lives are destined to be a "plan B" or a "plan C" or D or W, X, Y or Z – and none of those plans can ever be as good as God's original "plan A."

And whenever I see people in that condition, I just want to say, "Are you kidding me?"

What in the world would ever make you think you're going to be able to discover the blueprint of God exactly, every single time? Do you think God Himself really expects that of you?"

I don't. I think the answer to that is "no" ... because, if there is anything we know for sure, it's that God loves us just as we are and not as we should be ... which is good news because in this life we are never going to be as we should be. We're never going to get *anything* 100% right and to have the pressure to do so concerning God's will for our lives ... that's just toxic. It really is.

OK, one more reason that blueprint thinking is toxic and then we'll move on ...

3. "Blueprint thinking" short-circuits the biblical imperative to develop wisdom (which is "the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based

on knowledge and understanding."iii).

Blueprint thinking short-circuits that imperative. And nowhere is that imperative more clearly stated than in the second chapter of the book of Proverbs, which along with the OT books of Job, Ecclesiastes, Psalms and the Song of Solomon makes up a huge section of the Bible known as "Wisdom Literature." It's a really important thing.

Proverbs 2 says ...

*Tune your ears to wisdom,
and concentrate on
understanding.*

*Cry out for insight,
And ask for
understanding.*

*Search for them as you
would for silver;
Seek them like hidden*

treasures.

*Then you will understand
what it means to fear the
Lord,
And you will gain knowledge
of God. Proverbs 2:1-5
(NLT)*

*Then you will understand
what is right, just, and fair,
and you will find the right
way to go. For wisdom will
enter your heart, and
knowledge will fill you with
joy.*

Proverbs 2:9-10 (NLT)

*Wise choices will watch over
you. Understanding will keep
you safe. Proverbs 2:11 (NLT)*

And there are many other passages like this one sprinkled throughout the whole Bible. The point is - Wisdom is a really big deal to God ... and here's how blueprint thinking

short-circuits it: if God really does have a blueprint with every detail of our lives all planned out, then who really needs to develop wisdom? All we really need is the ability to tune in somehow to whatever God might be saying about whatever decision we need to make at any given time, no matter how big or how small.

For example:

- It's cold outside. Should I put on my coat? Wisdom says "yes" but if everything is already in the blueprint, then what I really need to do is to wait on a word from God.
- My kid is sick. Should I take him or her to the doctor? Common sense and wisdom say "yes." But, if God's blueprint covers everything, then I need to wait to hear a "yes" from Him before

I do.

Now, please don't hear what I'm not saying. There is a time and place for waiting on a word from God.

But if the primary way God's will functions is as a blueprint for all the decisions we have to make, then we don't need wisdom in our day-to-day lives. But according to the scripture, that's a dangerous way to live. And it's toxic faith.

Clarity About God's Will

Now, at this point, some would say, "OK, Rick, I see what you're saying. Maybe thinking of God's will primarily as a blueprint isn't the best way. But what's the alternative? I mean, according to a lot of those verses we read earlier, God *does* seem to have a plan for our lives. How does this all work?"

I'm glad you asked.

I'll use Larry Osborne's analogy on this because it's so vivid. Think of it this way:

1. God's will is a lot more like a game plan than a blueprint.

In a blueprint everything is decided, even down to the smallest details, and you shouldn't mess with it, especially if the designer of that blueprint is perfect, like God!

But, a game plan is different. Rather than spelling everything out in exact detail, it sets forth general guidelines and strategies, with lots of freedom and flexibility as the game unfolds, as long as you stay within the rules.

Take a football game as an example. Each offense typically comes in with an idea of

how they are going to go about attacking the other team's defense. For instance, with the Chiefs, "we're going to give the ball to Jamal and then we're going to give it to him some more" (which, in my opinion, is what they should have in the third quarter of the playoff game against the Ravens. But, I digress). And during the week, they may even design and practice brand new plays with that goal, that strategy, in mind.

But, during the game, if for some reason the defense stops Jamal, the team is then free to adjust and choose a new strategy ... such as "let's throw to Bowe" (which, in my opinion, is what they should have done in the ... well, never mind). And if that strategy doesn't work, they are free to think up another one on the spot.

What they aren't free to do at any point in the game, is to change the rules. They can't put

in an additional lineman so that Jamal has more success at running. They can't start throwing the ball to linemen because Bowe isn't open. Those kinds of adjustments aren't allowed.

And my contention is that God's will is a lot more like *that* than a blueprint ... which means there might not be just one perfect person out there for you to marry; there might not be just one place where you should live between the ages of 22-26 and 1/2;

Or, as Osborne puts it:

"We worry about things when the Lord says 'I don't really care. Play whatever game you want to play in the backyard – just stay in the backyard.'"

Now, that thought is a little unsettling,

maybe, especially if you can look at your life right now and you can look at the history of your life and you can see how it all came together. And, you can see God's hand in bringing you to where you are right now. (43:45)

For instance, Jetta and I have pretty dramatic story of how we met in the summer of 1978 and it surely seems as if God arranged the whole thing. It seems now like we were pre-ordained to be together. In fact, I'm pretty sure that God did arrange for us to meet. *But* there was a point about six months after we met and had been dating where Jetta was very hesitant to permanently hitch her wagon to mine, so to speak, for a number of really good reasons (like, I had been academically dismissed from the U of MD, had no job and was living in a dump) – you know, just not very good marriage material at the time.

So what if she had gone with her first impression concerning those reasons and we had parted ways at that point? Would that mean that we had both missed God's will for our lives?

I don't think so because of game plan thinking. See, we were playing by the rules of the game at that point in our lives. And the rules of the game when you are a single follower of Christ looking for a spouse are very clear, in fact, I think there are only two of them:

1. Look for someone who already loves and follows Jesus and who is going to help you to love and follow him better. Don't spend a lot of time getting romantically involved with people who don't. (The Bible calls this not being "unequally yoked together" with

someone).

2. Don't have sex with someone until you're married to them.

It's pretty clear from the Bible that if a follower of Jesus stays in bounds on these two simple rules, you're pretty much free to pick anyone you want, and obviously, anyone who wants to pick you.

Now, it's true that not everyone would have been as easy for Jetta to live with as I was (not), but here's what I realized after about 10 years of marriage – when our “match made in Heaven” was a lot more like hell because I was an arrogant, self-centered, obnoxious, insensitive, demanding jerk (and I'm being nice to myself) – here's what I realized: there's no guarantee of success in marriage regardless of how much God did to bring you together.

... which made me realize on the flip side, that pretty much any man and woman who love Jesus and who are seriously committed to following Him can have a successful marriage because, in the end, that's what it took for Jetta and I to make it – not some mystical divine intervention that we were pretty sure happened years before. See, what it takes for a marriage to work is two people who ...

- Realize that they are under Christ's authority and can't just do whatever they please. They submit to one another out of reverence to Christ, the scripture says.
- Hang in there when it's tough.
- Repent when they are wrong.
- Deal with conflict constructively even though they never saw it modeled correctly while growing up.

And they do that kind of stuff because Jesus says “thems the rules, kids and if you trust in, cling to and rely on me, I’ll give you the power to live by them.” That’s what it takes to be married and stay married – not some preordained path that you are unable to depart from even if you wanted to.

And I know, since I just raised the issue, some of you are probably thinking, “well, we didn’t play by the rules before we got married, as you described the rules, but now we are married, so what about us – were we not supposed to get married?”

The answer is ... “it doesn’t matter because the rules of the game according to the Scripture are that, now, once the ring is on the finger, that’s the backyard you get to play in. That’s now God’s plan for your life – and what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

And I know, since I just raised that issue, that some others of you are thinking, “Well what about me? My marriage didn’t make it. We got divorced, so now what? Am I outside of God’s will?”

The answer is ... *of course you are.* Welcome to the human race where every single one of us – including me, including my wife, Jetta, including every happily and unhappily married couple in this room – are, in countless ways, outside of God’s will. Welcome to the reason Jesus gave his life for sinners. Welcome to the good news that God loves you just as you are and not as you should be because in this life you are never going to be as you should be.

What matters now for you, as it does for all of us, is that you figure out the rules of the game, as God has defined them for your

situation in life, and you play by them. And whatever happens in that backyard, that's fine. Just stay in that backyard.

Of course, someone could say, "Wow, Rick, the game plan analogy may sound good, but is it really biblical? What about all those people in the Bible, where God directly told them to do something? Their experience sounds like there might be a blueprint out there."

That's a really good point. And if we're discussing how God's will works in our lives, we certainly have to say that ...

2. Sometimes God does call an audible – but not on every play!

Sometimes God steps into your life or mine, and in mine, He said, "I'm sending you to Los Angeles for the summer because there's

someone I want you to meet." But that kind of thing, when you look at the scripture, is the exception, not the rule. It's not the daily experience of the people in the Bible.

For instance, we read the story of Abraham in the Old Testament. And Abraham was an incredible man of faith. He was a very rich man who had lots of stuff. He had a huge family; he had distant relatives who were living with him. And, one day, in the middle of it all, God knocked on his door and said, "Hey, Abraham, I want you to start going. Just pack everything up and go." And Abraham wondered, "where am I going?" God said, "I'm not telling you until you get there." So, Abraham does it. And we read that and we go, "oh, that's the normal Christian life. God is always telling us to go here and to go there." But it only happened once in his whole life. Most days, when you look at the story of Abraham, he just kept his

head down and played in the backyard where God had placed him. And then one day God said, "we're going to a new backyard and I'll tell you when we get there."

We look at the story of the Apostle Paul and all the things that happened in his life where God just intervened and moved him around and all these amazing things happened and we think, "oh that's the normal Christian life." But the truth is, Paul had a unique calling – unlike any other person who has ever lived, other than maybe Jesus himself. See, when we read the story of Paul, we never think about all the ordinary people in all those churches that Paul was called to start, who never made a missionary journey; who never saw a vision from God. See, their experience was the normative experience of the Christian life, not Paul's.

And I say this and am confident of this because of how human beings were created in the first place. Remember the story when God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "now, here's the deal, son. I've created all this really cool stuff for you and your wife and your eventual offspring to enjoy. And what I want you to do is to figure out how to cultivate what I've made and make it even better. Be creative with it. Heck, you can even name everything if you want. And I'll stop by every evening and we can take a walk and hang out, and you can show me everything you've done and I'll tell you some things you need to know that'll help you."

See, God didn't hover over Adam's shoulder all day long telling him exactly what to do about the geraniums, or where to put his little love shack with Eve. And Adam didn't spend all day seeking the Lord's guidance

about how much corn to plant. God gave Adam a mind and tremendous freedom to use that mind as he saw fit – as long as he played by the rules of the game. You can't miss that if you read the story of Adam and Eve. And I'm pretty confident that this is how it works with you and me.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying: does God want us to consult him in the major decisions of life? Absolutely. Does God always have a preference in those situations? Not necessarily.

Does God sometimes whisper to us and prompt us to do something, maybe even something small? Absolutely. Does that happen all the time? I don't think so. I think God tells us to study his Word and to reflect on His character and what we learn about Him and what we experience from it. Reflect on our own lives, and between all that

coming together, to develop wisdom so that we pretty much know what we should do 99% of the time.

And that kind of leads to the final point I want to make in clearing up some of the toxic belief we have about God's will for our lives ... and it's going to sound completely contradictory to everything I've said so far, so get ready.

God *does* have a blueprint for your life and mine.

3. God *does* have a blueprint for your life. But it's more about *who you are to be* than *what you should do*.

See, we obsess on the little things – which apartment to get, which car to buy, what career path to take – what we should do – and we think that's what God obsesses on to. But, it's very clear from the scriptures that

God is far more concerned with who we are becoming – with the character that is forming in us.

Paul writes about this in Romans 8 ...

*Those God foreknew he also
predestined to be conformed
to the image of his Son.
Romans 8:30 (NIV)*

If you want an absolute airtight scripture that talks about the will of God in your life that you can build your whole life on – that’s the one. Paul is telling us that Jesus is the blueprint for you and for me and for every follower of Jesus – that we become more like Him and less like ourselves in our character. It’s more about who we are becoming than about what we do.

In fact, that’s exactly what I told my friend that day at lunch as he wrestled with what

God wanted him and his wife to do about their children. I said, "The most important factor in your kids lives isn't *where* you and your wife live; it's *how* you and your wife live. I think you can live anywhere – and in fact, I think God may be saying that to you – 'look, son, I am giving you two great choices' – and I think you can choose either one with confidence as long as the two of you are becoming who you're supposed to be in Christ. *That* – not figuring out if God has a preference concerning where you live – that is what gives your kids the best chance."

He said, "I never really thought of it like that. Thanks for helping me see a new perspective."

Two days later, he told me he took the out of state job and I said, "What??? That wasn't God's will for your life!!!"

Just kidding. I didn't say that. I was just sorry to see another friend leave.

So where do we find out about who we are to become? We find it in the Word.

As King David of Israel once wrote:

Your word, God, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

The point is, God, in the Scripture, very clearly spells out for us the character he desires from us in everyday life. In fact, sometime if you want to do a study on this, just look up everywhere in the Bible that it says "God's will" (you can go to these Bible websites and google "God's will") and you'll notice that it almost always has to do with who God wants us to be and how we're to live – the rules of the game, so to speak, in

everyday life – not some grand destination for life.

And it's kind of interesting, too, again back to this thing about "light to my path," whenever the Bible speaks about "the path" – like in this verse and the ones we read at the beginning of this message - it has to do not with major choices or major decisions, it has to do with moral choices; it has to do with character issues. See, when James was telling those people who were saying "we're going to go here; we're going to go do this," he said, "no, you need to say, if it's God's will, we're going to ..."

The issue was, if you read back before that, it was people who were arrogant, who were trusting in their own strength and living as if God didn't even exist, as if God had no care in the world about what they did in their lives. And James is saying, *that* is a

character issue. You need to remember that you can't even make your life an hour longer if you wanted to. And then, when you read the context of that passage from Isaiah we read earlier:

*Whether you turn to the right
or to the left, your ears will
hear a voice behind you,
saying, "This is the way; walk
in it." Isaiah 30:21
(NIV)*

The context of that comes a few verses before when Isaiah writes ...

*These are rebellious people
(speaking of the nation of
Israel), deceitful children,
children unwilling to listen to
the LORD's instruction. They
say to the seers, "See no
more visions!" and to the
prophets, "Give us no more
visions about what is right*

(not about long-term direction for life)! *Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path* (they said to the Prophets), *and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!*" *Isaiah 30:9-11 (NIV)*

See, the deal was, they didn't want to hear anything else about their moral choices. So when Isaiah, a few verses later, starts talking about this hearing voices and telling them what path, what he's doing is foretelling of a day that's coming when God is going to restore his people so completely that they will hear a voice reminding them, "this is how I want you to live. This is the thing that I want you to do in terms of your moral choices." The idea was, if somehow they were inclined to go astray, God himself would recall them to the path of truth and obedience.^{iv}

Applications

Well, I suppose there are many more things we could say about this subject, but that's probably enough for one day.

1. God's will is a lot more like a game plan than a blueprint.
2. Sometimes God does call an audible – but not on every play.
3. God does have a blueprint for your life. But it's more about *who you are to be* than *what you are to do*.

But I feel like I need to say two things in the way of personal application before we close; two ways that I think this stuff can immediately be applied to our lives.

1. Never forget that the one thing you can be sure of concerning the will of God for your life is that you believe and keep on

believing in the Gospel.

Believe and keep on believing in the good news that God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten son that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life. The scripture says that it is God's "will" that none should perish, none should go away from Him. So, I would say to you, if you're struggling with "what is God's will for my life?" start there. The very first thing is, if you've not ever come to this point in your life, "let's look at my life and measure it against the life of Jesus. I'm not measuring up (that's what the bible calls sin – I don't measure up). So Jesus, I believe you died for me. I believe your blood atones for every sin I've ever committed and every sin I'm going to commit. Thank you. I want to receive that into my life instead of pretending I'm good enough and that God's

going to grade on a curve (because that's not true)." You come to that point in your life – you believe in the gospel. And then, after you've reached that point, you keep believing in that gospel. As you fall and stumble in this life, it's *still* what Jesus did on the cross, because it's never going to be perfect as long as you're in this life. You believe and keep on believing – that is God's will for you. Take it to the bank.

I think the second thing, the way you can apply this into your life is:

2. Wherever you go and whatever your circumstances, concentrate on becoming conformed to the blueprint that you know about – the blueprint that is Jesus Christ himself.

Stop stressing out about all the things you can't control and start focusing on what you can control – yourself and your obedience to Jesus. Because wherever you go, he will be

with you, and you can do that.

Let's pray.

Endnotes

ⁱ From Matthew 6:33

ⁱⁱ See cpbooks.christianpost.com/Interview:-Pastor-Osborne-on-Dumb-Things-Smart-Christians-Believe/Pastor-Larry-Osborne/11/

ⁱⁱⁱ See <http://www.christianbiblereference.org/introduc.htm> for this definition.

^{iv} See Barnes Notes on the Bible at <http://bible.cc/isaiah/30-21.htm>