

John 14:7-11 Faith Anchors

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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Many of us have to make difficult decisions about what to do next in life or about how to respond to something that has happened, is happening, or is about to happen. I've had three different conversations in the past week or so about how people can know God's will for their lives or their situation.

If you have ever been the kind to wonder "where is God in all of this?" or to think and pray that if He would just show up you'd know exactly what to do, then you're going to appreciate this morning's message. Because it turns out that sometimes God does show up and give us guidance, or provide for our needs, and sometimes in RADICAL ways – but not all the time. Because God isn't just in the business of doing miracles in the here and now – He's in the business of readying us for the hereafter. So, more than just being wowed by some circumstance or sign, or experience today, and then negotiating more "if-then" contracts with Him, He wants us to know Him and trust Him and obey Him because of what He has already said and done.

Let's jump right in and you'll see what I mean. Remember we're looking at Jesus' instruction to the disciples in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem on the night before He is crucified. He's giving them last minute instruction on things and they're kind of freaking out as they try to understand what He's saying.

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

Jesus is reaching out to them and they're reaching back to Him, but they're just not connecting. Peter has spoken, Thomas asked a question, now Philip is about to make a request, they're all trying to understand what is going on.

[8](#) Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

Do you see the contract he’s trying to negotiate? We do the same thing at some point. We say, “You know, if I could just see God, that would make it all better.” If He would just burst onto the scene, or come out of hiding, we think all of our questions would be answered if we just had a better look at God.

[9](#) Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [10](#) Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

[11](#) Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Instead of doing something new, Jesus points back to what He has already said and done. Philip wants to see the Father and Jesus says, “you already have.”

There’s no better way to understand the Father than to understand Jesus. If you want to know more about God, learn more about Jesus. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. He was the walking, talking, sleeping, breathing, eating manifestation of God on earth. He was like no other before and none other since. He was fully God and yet fully man.

And, He came to do two things – to speak and to act – both were done because of His relationship with the Father. “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me,” he said.

So Jesus’ words were from God – the things He said, the sermons He preached, the messages He gave, were all from God the Father. And the things that He says are amazing – you can’t put them on the lips of any other man. They just wouldn’t make sense. At times they are barely believable from Him. And *that’s why* He did so many works – to prove the almost unbelievable things He said were true.

His works, the things He had done, were intended to be proof of His reliability. Remember that no one ever doubted His miracles. Whether they were for Jesus or against Him, no one doubted the fact that He had done mighty things; they only debated *how* He was able to do them or *what* they meant.

And that’s the thing you have to know, you absolutely must understand, about His works – or about miracles in our own lives – they still require acceptance and faith – they point us back to other things He has said and ask us, “do you believe now?” The things Jesus *did* were not enough to keep the religious leaders from wanting to arrest Him, and they weren’t enough to keep Philip from asking to see the Father. Powerful religious experiences rarely truly change people – they might have a short-term effect, but they rarely change who we really are. True change *might* include the soul being moved, but it definitely *demand*s that the will be involved. You must choose to change.

Philip had been with Jesus since the very beginning when John the Baptist endorsed him, he had certainly seen Jesus work many miracles, but they weren't enough *all by themselves*, to lock Philip into place spiritually. They were evidence, and there was a lot of it, but Philip still had to make a personal judgment about what they meant and then take action based on his judgments.

So, let's think about that for our own lives for a minute, because again, I think there are times when most of us, whether you have accepted Christ or not, want to see more of God. We echo his words, "show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." And miraculous events and miraculous circumstances still occur in our lives today, in big and little ways. They get our attention if we are going astray, or reassure us that we are on the right track, or assure us that God is a part of what is happening. But those miracles are supposed to help us see what He is doing and then put faith and trust in Him as a result.

I'll give you a pretty long story as an example of how this played out in my own life and then share some thoughts with you.

Mady and I moved to Virginia so I could go to seminary because I needed a seminary degree in order to go back into the military and serve as a chaplain. We did not move here to pastor a church. In fact, the church had been started a few years before we moved by another Pastor Jeff, Pastor Jeff Cuzzo.

But, when I graduated, there were some huge bureaucratic problems that had nothing to do with me, but which prevented me from being able to go back into the military full time. So, Mady and I had no idea what was going on. Most of our family is from Southern California, we had no reason to be out here except to go to school and then to move on, but that wasn't playing out the way we thought it would.

And then the call came asking me to please come up and pastor this church. I actually turned it down several times because I was sure that sooner or later things would open up with the military and we'd be back on track. But it never came to pass, so I accepted the fact that it looked like God was changing my plans for the way my life would turn out and in June of 2008 Mady and I moved up here from Lynchburg, a few hours Southwest of here.

We actually moved in to the house the former pastor was leasing. We lived there for two years while we got a feel for the area and tried to figure out how to pastor a church – something I'm still trying to figure out. The couple that owned the house were in the State Department in Vienna, Austria and they were getting ready to come back, retire, and sell the house to buy something smaller for themselves. So, we needed to start looking.

And as you all know, housing out here is incredibly expensive and difficult to find. So, we listed our criteria – we wanted something in the center of the area where people who attend the church live, we wanted something with enough space so that we could have people over and for me to be able to work out of since we don't have a church building. And, if people were coming over, that meant we would need a place where all those people could park.

And, of course, there is the issue of cost – how much could you afford? We were trying to do this on just one income. The one thing we had going for us was that we had bought a house in California when we first got married near the beginning of the housing bubble. And then, in order to move to Virginia to go to seminary, we sold it – in 2005, at the peak of the real estate market. And the price had gone up, way up. So, we had something to use as a down payment. Which is really cool, because when you think about that – it wasn't an investment, it wasn't a strategy, it was just us trying to serve the Lord and He gave us something that He knew we were going to need eventually, even though we didn't know it at the time – remember we were just moving here for a few years to go to school.

Anyway, we started looking at the market and we looked at everything available in our price range in Annandale, West Springfield, Burke, Falls Church, Arlington. And nothing was coming together. It got to the point where we were looking at the MLS each day to see what new homes had come on the market because we had already looked at everything else out there.

One Friday morning I saw a place that looked like a good fit, so I shot it over to Mady and she looked at it on her computer and said, "Oh I know that house." And I thought to myself, "how do you know that house? It just came on the market?" She said, "I've been to that house." And again I thought, "what are you talking about, we've looked at all the houses together and we haven't been to that house." Then she said, "that's the Fitt's house." And I said, "huh?"

Well, Mady and I met and married in California, but she actually grew up in Alexandria until she was a freshman in high school. And when she lived here, she and her family attended Barcroft Bible Church over off of Little River Turnpike. And Mr and Mrs Fitts attended the church with their family some of which were leaders in the youth group. So, when my wife was a little girl, she would go over for dinner to home of Mr and Mrs Fitts. She even had sleepovers there.

And now, 17 years later, I, who have never known these people, just found their house for sale on the Internet. Well, we looked up the last time it had been sold, and it was sometime back in the 70's – in other words, Mr and Mrs Fitts still owned that house! We called our realtor on Friday and went to go to look at the house on Saturday and while we were there Mady was convinced – this is our house.

So, we wrote up an offer and we included a cover letter to the family in case they might remember Mady. We sent them in on Monday and on Tuesday – only four days after it came on the market, their realtor presented them with five offers, including ours which, at full asking price, was the lowest and worst of the offers. The house right next door was listed at the same time for much, much more, but we were at the top of our price range and had no room to go any higher, which we explained in the letter.

Well, the family received our offer and our letter and remembered Mady and her family, and they told the realtor they wanted to sell the house to us. We drove by a few days later

and there was a car in the driveway so we stopped and Mady got out and it was the Fitts family – they had moved out, Mrs. Fitts had died and Mr Fitts had just retired, so he was looking to downsize and move to a retirement home. But he was bringing a few of his grown children over to see the work that had been done to prepare the house for sale – redone hardwood floors, new carpet, new windows, paint, the works.

It had been seventeen years since Mady had seen them or they had seen her, but they reconnected in the empty house and we all rejoiced at what God had done.

So, it's our needle-in-a-haystack story. It's a miraculous work that God has done in my life. And when there are times that I get depressed or wonder what I'm doing here, when I wonder how this is all going to turn out – or when a bunch of you go on vacation at the same time and I wonder if you've just left the church and the whole thing's going to fall apart – I sit in my front room and I look out the window and God reminds me of what He did to give us our house.

And listen - it doesn't change anything else, but it gives me something to hold on to, some way to reassure myself that He is real. That He really did call us here. And that He really does want to do something in your lives, in our lives, and in this city.

It's what I call a faith anchor. Because, like I said earlier, seeing miracles happen, even living inside a miracle-house, doesn't make everything else in life better, it doesn't always change circumstances, it doesn't answer all your questions, but it helps you stay put when the winds of doubt begin to wail and the waves of uncertainty begin to pound you.

Now, you know what I would love to tell you? I would love to tell you that that's just one instance of a miracle in my life and that I have a hundred more to share, but you know what? I don't. Oh, sure, I've seen a lot of great things happen, and there are definitely at least a hundred times that I have seen God move miraculously, but none of them compare with that one story. It's in a category of it's own, because it has to be large enough to keep us in place through the most severe storms.

And that is something else that I have come to believe, because I have seen it play out in the lives of many others: God gives us all faith anchors. But, the weight of the anchor is commensurate with the weight of what He is calling you to do. When God is calling you to move to a new city and pastor a church, the anchor is pretty big. When He is calling you to ask someone to marry you, or to accept a marriage proposal, the anchor is pretty big. But not everything in life is as substantial as the big choices.

I would tell you that if you are facing big decisions in your life, look for big answers. But if you're just wrestling with the day to day, don't expect God to make the headlines – He might, He can, but it could be that He just wants you to act on the basis of what you already know and step out in faith.

Because, at the end of the day, that's what we all have to do. Even if we have a miracle to point to and rest on, or even if we have three year's worth of them like Philip did, at some

point, we still need to take a leap of faith and press forward, trusting God and seeking to obey Him.

Don't fall into this dangerous trap of always looking for the next miracle in your life to guide you or sustain you because miracles can be like spiritual candy – they're a great treat, but you can't live off of them alone. Instead, God's works force us to a decision point. He does something in our lives – maybe something physical – like providing you a place to live, or healing you; or maybe He does something financial – He provides the money for you to go on a missions trip to Haiti; or maybe He does something quieter and gentler – He speaks to you about something that needs to change in your life, or something you need to trust Him about – whatever it is, you know that it was Him. And now you have a few options. You can trust Him and follow Him, or you can not take action on it and let it slowly fade from memory - you can downplay it – it wasn't that big of a deal; or you can flat out deny it and explain it away.

Jesus was pointing to three year's worth of evidence to Philip and saying – “make your call. What was all that about? I know you don't understand what is happening right now, but think about what you've seen – do you believe God did that? If so, then can you trust Him right now?” It's a decision point.

Like I said, I'm human, and I'm as susceptible to doubt and discouragement as anyone else at times, but then I remember my house. And I know that even though I can't make sense of what I see or feel at the moment, this is definitely God's plan. I have the same level of conviction about my marriage to Mady, I know that I know that I know that God put us together. Now, loving her is a LOT easier than pastoring a church – it's not the same at all when it comes to weathering doubt or difficulties, but there was a similar conviction, and when the decision point came at the altar, I said, “I Do.” And I've never had a single regret.

So, let me ask you the question – what has God done to get your attention? And what more are you expecting Him to do before you'll take the next step? In the beginning, it's OK to ask to see the Father. When you're looking for God for the first time, trying to figure out Who He is and if He is real, it's good to ask Him to show Himself to you. And when you're facing a new challenge in life, a new decision, it's fine to say, “God please show yourself.”

But at some point, you have to take a step of faith on the basis of what you have seen and experienced – you say, “show us the Father and it is enough” and God says, “believe what I've already said, and remember what I've already done.” You have to take it all in and make a decision – is God trustworthy or not?

And if you want help sorting out that answer, just take a look again at what we see in the Scriptures. God is not working simple magic tricks, He's not performing petty illusions, He's not a one man Superbowl Halftime show. He isn't showing off and saying, “Hey, look at Me!” He's saying, “Hey, look at you, let's see what we can do about that.” And afterward He's saying, “Now trust Me, and follow Me.”

The greatest work of all, of course, the greatest miracle, is that He was willing to suffer for you and me on the cross. Never accept what you see and experience in life without looking at it through the lens of the cross. The cross proves how much God loves us even when we don't understand everything else.

So ask yourself – are you willing to do that today? Are you willing to trust Him on the basis of what you have ALREADY seen in your life?

“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, (insert your name)? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [10](#) Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. [11](#) Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.