

## *Finding God's Will as a Leader*



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“Do you remember the last program I commented on your killer new shirt?”

“I do.”

“This is the same shirt.”

“Well, let me tell you something.”

“I was applauding you because you know how you always like, sometimes, not do the best job on your shirts.”

“Here is the interesting thing. If people look back, I’m either wearing maroon or blue.”

“Do you have five maroon shirts or just one?”

“Actually I have multiple maroon and blue ones. Can we get started now?”

“Yeah, go ahead.”

“Today we are talking about finding God’s will as a leader. You said that this is some of your favorite stuff. Why?”

“Probably because the leadership consulting that I do is actually individual work with leaders. When you work with leaders and you sit there and listen to their lives in a context in which they struggle and chisel this stuff out, a lot of times where they get stuck is in that gap of, Who am I, and am I doing what I’m put on the earth to do, and what does God require for me? A lot of times it seems like this big chasm, and that is where the burnout is. That’s why it’s one of my favorite things to talk about, because I think it’s one of the most heartfelt things that leaders experience.”

“I’m going to turn this over to you and I’ll be back in a little bit.”

“Okay, are you going to wear that?”

“Yes, I will be wearing this.”

Thank you for tuning in and coming out in the studio audience here. As you know, we're in our series on Ultimate Leadership. In case you are joining us for the first time of what that is, for a while now, since 1981, I've spent a lot of time sitting listening to leaders, not being a “leadership expert or guru.” What I spend my time dealing with in life is individual growth and development; but because I started in the context of working with leaders, a lot of what I do is on the individual growth steps that leaders make in their own particular context of having to do leadership. As part of that, I'm going to go back to the original guiding formula for when we set up the series. And how John and I think about leadership is our initial way of thinking about it is character-based leadership. The reason we call it that was we think that character is everything.

There is an old saying that a person's character is their destiny. The reason for that is that you can know the skills, you can have the talents, and you can have the brains, but ultimately it's who you are as a character that's going to have to pull it off. One of the problems—a lot of times you see this in the Christian community—is when we think of the word *character* we tend to limit it and go to just moral functioning. We think somebody with good character doesn't lie, cheat, steal, isn't duplicitous, and things like that. Really, while those are foundational aspects about character, character is much broader than that. Character is really about somebody's entire makeup, and who they are as a person. Then where we went with that in the first night, we were talking about that ultimately when someone is leading that it's about character, so we needed a definition for character.

What I said that first night is something I've come to believe more and more over the years, and that is that character equals the ability to meet the demands of reality. In leadership there are interpersonal realities, market realities, staff realities, number realities (what if you don't have enough funds, nobody is coming, etc.), and there are all sorts of things that come across your desk. The question is, Is who I am up to meeting those demands day to day—the demands of the vision itself? It's one thing to have a lot of skills, abilities, talents, and a lot of brains, but if who I am as a person can't deliver in those ways then I'm going to have a gap or breakdown.

Today we are going to talk about one of the things that brings this together and merges this kind of whole gap here from ultimate reality: what God is up to and what God is trying to do and what God's path is. We are going to talk about what God's will is. Now think about that. That's a heavy title. What is *will*? What does *will* mean in the Bible? Anybody know? We talk about God's will. Does anybody know? Shout it out. I'll tell you. It means desire. What God desires, what He wills is basically what happens. Sometimes He can hold back on His desires. He can allow some things that He wouldn't want to. We call that His permissive will. But when we talk of the big picture, God pretty much gets what He wants. That's why there is such a unifying concept when we start with God—between God's desires and what actually happens in this life.

Now let's use that as an orienting idea for a moment. What if that were true about you? What if that were true about your life, your work, your heart, your passion, and your organization? What you desired is actually what happened. That's what we call the sweet spot. A lot of people operate in life with their wanting or with their desire or what they think they want to do and then this whole other reality that occurs. What we're going to try to do today is to try to integrate those and see if we can have some connecting points of where the reality of what God is up to also is the same reality that is demanded upon me and the same reality that ends up happening. Not only that, and here's the good part, I do have the ability to pull it off. And when we're doing that we're kind of like gyroscoped, I think that's a word, you know getting on the plane where we are supposed to be. Not really having the struggle. It's the sweet spot. How does that happen? There are a lot of formulas out there.

If you look through the books, peruse through the bookstore, and read about how to find God's will, there's a lot of different formulas, pieces, a lot of different important principles where people have pulled those together and there's a lot of great value out there, and I suggest you go to do all the study on all of that. I'm not going to draw from all of those tonight. You know what so many of those are, which include the spiritual disciplines and all that. What I'm going to draw from tonight is one of the only places in Scripture that I know about that tells you how to find God's will. Specifically that you'll be able to figure out what His will is. It's also interesting and fortunate for us, since we're talking about leadership, that in the context where it talks about that it's also talking about the context of what you're supposed to be doing.

So it's not just how to find God's will about your finances or what high school you're supposed to choose for your fourteen-year-old. We are talking about it in the context of what we're talking about in this series and that is your work and your mission.

I'm going to read to you the passage. If you have your Bibles, feel free to turn in them to Romans 12; and I'm going to read you a passage real quickly. (Do you all like my new \$10 glasses? I got them in the airport. Are they as bad as people tell me they are? I'll hide. I lost my other ones on the way up here.) Romans 12, it says this: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—that is your true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Everybody catch that? That's what the message says, that if we do certain things we will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good and perfect will. Then he goes on to say this, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not have all the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if its serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach"; then he goes on to some other gifts there, you can read them. It says to go on and do them with diligence.

So what do we have here? I think what we have in this passage—and this is not to decry all the other components in Scripture—and from practice and discipline and history and tradition that's involved in our walk with God and determining His will as a psychologist, a consultant, a (at least amateur) theologian, my experience in walking with God and walking with leaders who walk with God for a number of years is that in this area there is an, oftentimes, a very big and one of the worst words we can have in our lives in any way, and that is a very big *disconnect*—a very big disconnect. And the disconnect is between the person and God's will almost like, and this is how a lot of people feel. They feel I'm here as a leader and my organization is here, and we're like

this entity, and God's will is somewhere out there. I'm not really connected to that will, but I have to somehow find it; and I'm going to search for it, and if I find it then I can go do it. Like it and me are these separate, not connected, not unified, not cohesive things, if you will.

There's a big disconnect. And here is the big disconnect—and that is one of the things we will see tonight—the disconnect is that we do not realize that Scripture and experience teach us that there is in one sense no such thing as God's will for you or for me that is not deeply connected to you and to me. Now let me say that again. There's no such thing as God's will for you or for me that is not deeply connected and really at one with who we are as people. Here's what I find over and over and over. Now I'm not in any kind of way meaning to say that I can sit in any kind of chair and judge who's in God's will and who isn't. I think we can look at patterns of fruitfulness that testify to people looking like at least that God's accomplishing things through them. You know them through their fruits.

In my experience we look at the fruitfulness of various people's lives. Now that doesn't mean size. Sometimes I think things are huge that are not very fruitful when you really get behind the packaging of it all and you see the lives and what's happening in the lives of people, no matter how good it looks or how big the numbers are. I'm talking about real fruitfulness of small works and large works. When we begin to get there and we're looking at the real fruitfulness, what we see is where that is happening these things are not disconnected at all. Who the person is and finding the sweet spot of God's will are one and the same. I don't mean that in a humanistic way at all that somehow we're the center of the universe and, you know, you become all that you become then somehow you have become godlike or something like that. That's not what I mean. What I mean is Ephesians 2 says, where we are created, you're His workmanship and you're created for good works. Those two are integrally connected together.

Tonight you're going to find a surprise I think. In finding God's will it's not like we can just be who we are and find His will. That's what I found with people, when I work with leaders who are disconnected, that they think when they show up and report for duty with God—"Okay, here I am. Show me what land to conquer"—that it never happens. In fact, as we're going to see through the passage and through experience and how people change and grow, that if I show up for duty thinking I'm ready

for God's will to go conquer something as I am, then I'll never find it. I hear stories like this all the time. If we get in the process I think this passage talks about, which is incredible leadership development stuff, then what we find is that as we grow in this path with God, we will become something that we are able to—as the Bible says—see, attest, and approve and realize and live out. How does it happen? Let's go into it and see what the components are as we outline this passage.

1. The first step in determining God's will for you as a leader is what we will call "clear vision." Lest your eyes glaze over at this point, and you think that I'm going to say you've got to have a vision, you've got to see the hill, you've got to see it before you can do it, and you've got to cast that vision to everybody, get it, and buy into it. What I'm talking about is what you can see. What did the passage say? Where did it start? It said clear vision is being in view of God's mercy. "In view of God's mercy," he said, and then he goes on to say, "offer yourselves," etc. Now here's what we do what I see in the Christian world. I see this with leaders all the time. In the passage where it opens up, where it says, "in view of God's mercy, I urge you to . . ." and then go sacrifice. This is what we do with the mercy part; it's a speed bump. We go over it, and then we go serve. I'm telling you this is huge, because I see it in leaders all the time when we speed bump over God's mercy, where we can't even see it anymore. You've lost your view of it, and then you start to sacrifice and offer yourself as a living sacrifice. You are no longer Christian; you are religious.

Let me explain myself. The entire message of the Bible is 180 degrees different than religion. Religion is to sacrifice and serve. When you sacrifice and serve, then you find God and then you find God's will and you accomplish things for God and this, that, and the other. That's religion. The message of the Bible is that God does the sacrificing and serving way back here for you and me first. If you're going to be Christian about this, the first thing that you have to do is not to be a spiritual sacrifice but to be an object of God's mercy and grace. What I see is people get to the point where they have been trying to do things for God in and of themselves, coming up with what they think that is and what they think is important and what the needs are. And they



see what other people do, and they themselves are not operating on an overflow of what God has put into them. That's what the New Testament talks about. Life begets life. What they're trying to do is out of a death experience beget life to other people. What I find is when they have a lot of talents and abilities, they can pull this off, and then they burn out and they get empty and they go south and they chuck it all and they go join a circus or something. Or they burn out and get depressed or they have a moral failure or something. There is a person in some form or fashion trying harder.

Now let me tell you the other way that it looks. The other way is where not religion, but I called it, truly Christian, where you realize that God's grace and His mercy come to you first. So here's my question. If you're going to find God's will, then where are you? Now it doesn't say, like in past remembrance in history or something, oh yeah, remember when God was merciful to you. No, it says "in view of," and I find that people that do this well are in view of it constantly; not in their memory banks, but they have built-in structures in their lives where they are experiencing God's mercy and His grace and His life is being poured into them in a way that His sacrificial life is poured into us.

Some people think they are just going to have a quiet time, kind of like check in with God, sort of like dollop Internet, log in with God now, then I'm going to go do my work. The Bible talks about a much more organic kind of abiding where your roots are down. You know to grow you don't take a plant and dip it in the dirt every now and then. You do go have this experience or retreat. What you do is you have this root system that is in the soil and that root system is taking in the mercy, taking in the grace, and taking in the nutrients, taking in the things that build the plant. Now here's the point. For me to become this person—the workmanship he can live out and ultimately produce the fruitfulness in that perfect will—I have got to be a person that personhood is being poured into. Where my roots are taking in the nutrients and the minerals.

Let me give you two examples of this. If you've heard me speak before on connectedness and community

and leadership, you may have heard two of these stories. I know a man who built a huge organization, absolutely a monstrous organization, and I asked him one day how he did it. He's known for being a great leader. I asked him how he started his company. He said, "The first thing I did is I went out and found five men who would commit to me, not to be the board to my company but to be my personal board. They would commit to me to where I could go before them, and I could lay out my life; and not just for policing accountability, which is important, but where they could support me, encourage me, heal me when I needed it, and confront me and teach me and use their wisdom. And I could put all my decisions before them, not just in a material sense. It was when I was having struggles with my marriage or my kids, where I knew I could be grounded. I put that together first." He said, "We met on Tuesday mornings twenty-five years ago, and we're still together every Tuesday morning." As a result, he's multiplied and does this all over the world. But when you have that kind of connectedness, what's happening in that process isn't, "Oh, I see God's will; I'm going to go do it. You guys encourage me." No that's not what happens. What happens is you put yourself in this oven of God's mercy where through the gifts, as 1 Peter 4:10 tells us, when we use our gifts with each other, God is administering His grace in its various forms to you through those people. He is pouring into you what you don't possess that is going to be needed to become who you're supposed to be to go accomplish His will. To do His will, you have to grow into the person that you need to be to be able to do that will; and to grow into the person you need to be you have to have the goods delivered to you and internalize those from the giftedness of other people.

I don't find oftentimes, and this is in a zillion situations like this, I rarely find people who are operating it looks like in God's will doing great things, who don't have His mercy operating in an organic way in a small kind of system like that. Nor do I find in this scenario where there are problems do I find that that's in place, and I don't think that's a coincidence. Before you go sacrifice, are you being sacrificed to? That's Christian: We love because He first loved us. Sounds so Christian



to sacrifice first, doesn't it? To deny yourself and all the other things we take out of context. We don't realize you have to be born and nurtured and grow, that's why we are born again and not rehabbed. God doesn't pick you up. It's not a remodel; it's a tear down. We have to be born again and grow up. So before you think about finding His will, His first will is for you to be planted and grounded and being where people are building into you.

Now this happens in the bad times too. Let me give you an example. I had a friend who was in the real estate business and had amassed a fortune, and this would have been in the mid-80s before the dot com boom and before everybody had billions. When you had a few hundred million, you were wealthy, right? So he was one of them. He had amassed this fortune, and there was a scam that came through California. If you read the papers back then you would have known about it, where they took a lot of wealthy people and this guy took them for hundreds of millions of dollars. They were smart people, but it happened to them. What occurred was it all went away, and I actually was talking to him on the phone. I said, "Can you play golf the next day?" and he said, "No, I've got to Switzerland to stop the deposit." He told me what had happened. He said here's what I want you to do. I want you to meet me next Thursday at the golf course for lunch. The next Thursday I walk into the grill at the golf course, and he is sitting there and there are four other guys at the table. My first thought is, *This is an intervention. What did I do?* I go and I sit down and he said, "Alright, you're all here now." He said let me tell you why I've called you here. He said, "I'm busted. I've lost, and it looks like I'm going to lose, everything. Not only that, my wife has decided that she wants to go find herself." He was roughly in his early forties. At the same time he was very involved in church leadership and had been one of the people who had founded one of the megachurches in America and was really involved in that and had done enormous things in his ministry he valued greatly. When you go through a divorce and all of that, you know you're not in leadership at that time at least. So he was going to lose all of that. She was going to take the kids and because of their ages would probably get away with that. The point is what he said to us that day, he said, "Guys, I'm busted and I don't know what I'm going to do. But here's what I need from you and here's why I called you. I need ... one of you each day to meet me for breakfast or lunch or coffee. There's five of you. Monday through Friday, each of you sign up for a day. I don't care about the schedule, but

here's the deal: I don't know what I'm going to do, but I know that if each day I meet with one of you, it will work out. We will figure it out." And what he did was he made himself an object of mercy first, and he got rooted and grounded. Because we can't see God in a vacuum and we can't see reality in a vacuum. What he did was got rooted and grounded in a spiritual community first; and about a year and a half later he had put it all back together. The plan and the specifics came after the mercy. That is the model of the New Testament; and if leaders do not do that and build a vacuum, it caves in. So lesson #1: In view of God's mercy, can you see it daily from where you are?

2. Where it goes from there is to offer yourselves a living and holy sacrifice. To offer yourselves a living and holy sacrifice. What happens to a sacrifice? Slain, right? So what needs to be slain? If you want to find God's will, to offer yourself means to go to Him without any expectations for what He desires from you. We come in with a lot of expectations. We think that He has expectations of us that He doesn't. He might be thinking so outside of the box of what you're thinking that you think you might know His will, desires, talents, gifts, or whatever He has given you; and it may be so much bigger and different than what you think that what you'll do is limited. If we are going to really be a sacrifice, what a sacrifice means is that you take your hands off in the beginning, your hands off the drawing board, and come to Him and you say, "God, I have no expectations, I have no plans, I have no clue." And then you go into what the desert fathers and everybody else has referred to as the emptiness of the self, or the emptying of the self, where you just say, "I am an empty vessel and I don't know what I want to be when I grow up." That's where we come to God.

You're going to have to watch yourself, because that doesn't mean that you don't have interests, passions, talents, or experiences, which He may or may not use. But the thing is those experiences and talents may be connected to a task that is not a one-to-one connecting the dots for you that may be very different than anything that you've ever imagined. You must come to Him, and this is when you are into, as the Bible says, your true spiritual act of worship. You know, what I think as I figure out the New Testament, if I had to

say what one act of worship is, where it says your true spiritual act of worship, my best guess would be, and it fits right here as He tells us to do this, that true worship, Jesus said it: "Not My will but Thine." You cannot get much more worshipful than that! And when we're talking about finding God's will, it is so hard to empty ourselves of what we think it might be. Or what we think He wants us to do. That's going to be important in a minute, but not in the beginning. There's got to be a discipline of emptying one's self, because this is humility. What it says is, I don't know, I don't have a clue, I'm on the altar to be used as You want to use me. You just don't ever know; everybody has their story.

I can give you a little bit of experience in my life. When I first became a Christian, or got serious in college and fell in love with the Scriptures and theology and all of that, I wanted to be a pastor, I wanted to go to seminary. In college when I got out of class, I would go to the seminary—I wasn't in seminary, I was in college. I would go to seminary and spend 8-10 hours in the stacks reading theology. I did that for a couple of years. I wanted so bad to be a pastor. God specifically said no, you're going into the field of psychology. I was an accounting and finance major. Talk about being out of touch with your gifts! We'll get to that in a minute. It was so the opposite of everything that I felt, and He was calling me to go into the clinical world.

Now I didn't know where that was going. I just knew I was being told to go there. It was very specific. I went. Once that started to happen, I started to do all this stuff with theology and psychology and this, that, and the other. Then I was led very specifically to start a Christian hospital. In that hospital what I had to do was I had to develop a lot of content about how the spiritual life is lived out and how you overcome problems in life with spiritual material. We started to do that, and then it turned into this clinical system and finally I felt like, "God, finally, now I realize Your plan, you wanted me to help people in hospitals, in the health care world, and all this." Then all of a sudden, after ten years of that, managed care comes to the world and there is no hospital industry anymore. So what happened to what I thought God was calling me to in my life? What

happened was, little did I know, when you have to do a teaching group in a hospital 365 days a year, which is what we did, either John or I was teaching a lesson in a group. When you do that for ten years, you get a barn load of content and a barn load of material.

What I did at that step in my life was preparing me to actually talk about content, not in hospitals but in churches, satellite broadcasts, in leadership settings, etc. I had no clue. I wanted to be a pastor. Now that's kind of how it's worked in my life. I think if you look back over your life, what you'll notice is that you didn't know what you didn't know, and I want to apply that to today as well as you did in the beginning. I'll give you another great example. I've done a lot of work over the years with Campus Crusade for Christ; and if you talk to Bill Bright anywhere along the path, ask him about the beginning of Campus Crusade for Christ. It was started as a college ministry. What does Campus Crusade do now? A zillion things. One of the things is the Jesus film, which has been shown to literally billions of people who, not only do they *not* go to college, a lot of them wouldn't know what a college is. What if he thought, *What God was doing in the beginning was that?*

See, you don't know what He'll morph you into. You have to have an empty hand before God. Some of you are holding on to your vision for your church, department, or for your ministry; and God may be wanting to blow that whole thing up and do something very different than you ever imagined. And to do that, we have to let go of our expectations. Then it says this. He says, "to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice wholly and pleasing to God." And then he says this, "Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The next step in finding His will is another personal step. It is to begin to just say no. In other words, the point there on your outline is what you are not. You will never find out who you are, and what you're created to be, if you have as part of your character the capacity to be conformed, squeezed by pressures other than God, and molded into something you're not. This happens every single day. It says, instead of—you notice the next point, and I'm going to merge these two together because it's hard to talk about

one without the other. The next point says to have a clean mind. So he says, “Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but by the renewing of you mind.” In other words, you have got a lot of pressures working on your brain to become what other people want you to become; what the world system wants you to become. If you go to 1 John 2, it says that the things of the world—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, boastful pride of life—that there are patterns of this world; and what you’ll see if you peruse through Christian ministry or through, a lot of times, the business world, you’ll see that there are ministries, companies, and businesses that are built on the pattern of this world and they are not strong. Especially when you get into ministry. Because they are built on people’s appetites, lusts, boastful pride of life, people are so into the accomplishment, how big things are getting, what the sizzle is, look what they’re accomplishing, look at this. They get into the significance of certain works and certain ministries and they think because of size, glitter, or because of all this other stuff that really is a worldly way of measuring things, that that somehow is what God is doing.

Don’t ever confuse size with something that God is doing. There are a lot of organizations I don’t think you’d call Christian that are huge in size. I think you have a little different doctrine than scientology, for example, a huge movement, or other movements that really don’t talk about what this book talks about. Yet we use this criterion, and people get squeezed into thinking that they have to be like those; and they start to do things like they do them, whoever they are. They get conformed into these and become somebody they’re not when if they would go back to their core and let God determine who they are, they might find a totally different path that is big or small, but it’s who they are. I don’t know if it’s going to be big or small. It’s different for everybody. Sometimes God calls them to big things and then to small things and sometimes vice versa.

The point is that you can get squeezed. You can get squeezed not only in these ways, but let me give you a couple of others. Sometimes people get conformed into what the world wants from them. Sometimes they’re carrying around what Momma or Daddy wanted. I see this with people in the ministry all the time. Mom or Dad wanted them to be a star or wanted everybody to love them or be perceived as good or wonderful. They’re ministering in ways that get them recognition or they’re protecting the good self or the ideal self or whatever this is and they’re still trying to get a good grade. Still trying to get a star on the refrigerator. Still

trying to do something that Mom, Dad, Aunt Sally, or someone else wanted for them as well. So you're going to have all sorts of people telling you how it ought to be done. They may be in your family, your circle of friends, in the Christian culture.

Do you know that sometimes God morphs the Christian culture? Because that way of ministering is not right anymore. I mean you saw that how many years ago when the seeker movement first started. For example, they found that not everybody likes to hear organ music and choir robes. Maybe if we made it a little more in a different way we could reach people those churches aren't reaching. Then you have some churches that are reaching the ones with traditional means that the seeker churches weren't reaching. You see God has different things that He wants to do. If we are getting conformed and squeezed and it's not what He is bringing forth in you, then that's not His desire for you. If you don't have the power to say no to what people think you ought to be or what the culture says you ought to be or what this broadcast says you ought to be, then you may miss it. Now that doesn't mean, as we're going to see in a moment, that we don't listen to people. I'm talking about being conformed.

And then you have to get a clean mind. So you've got to empty your mind now and have it renewed of, maybe, one of the things that we see in leaders is they have to undo a lot of family of origin patterns in their head. I don't know a lot of people who accomplish much in Christian leadership who have not had the brain surgery of God cleaning out their old ways of thinking that they learned in their family of origin, which was your first religious spiritual system by the way. Do you know that? If you go back to Deuteronomy 6, and it says, what is the meaning of all of these laws and stipulations and things that they were giving that God was delivering. Here's what Moses says, "Tell them this, 'That we were slaves in Egypt and that God delivered us with a mighty hand, and then he gave all of these ways and these statutes so that things might go well with us and we would always prosper.'" And then it says this, "to pass them on in the family." Here's how we know the way God has designed your brain that you have internalized in your first spiritual system. You have internalized invisible ways of doing life, tasks, accomplishments, relationship, failure, forgiveness, finding yourself, risks, growth, and all the spiritual values that the Bible talks about. You learned that in one spiritual family, and that was the family of Adam—the crazy family, the Addams Family. But you've been adopted into a new family and what you have to have is a renewing of your mind in



some critical categories in order to find out who God is.

Let me give you a few.

1. You might have learned in your family that it was all up to you. You've got to have your mind renewed, that now you're depending on and you're going to learn to trust and open up in a community, in a body, to find yourself.
2. You might have grown up in your family where you didn't have freedom and choices. You may have to learn to just say no and grow in your ability to have boundaries. To be able to say no and to be free, like Galatians 5, to not be yoked to a yoke of slavery ever again. Some of you will never find God's will, because you can't resist the people, the pressures, the control, and the manipulations until you do that. But in your family you didn't need to learn that. I've seen leaders have to go through learning boundaries in order to find their ministry and learning to say no.
3. How do you think about failure in your mind? Do you know in the New Testament that the way the world thinks about failure, or you might have learned it in your family, that when you fail, it's over; if you fail, it's over. You know what the New Testament says? When you fail that that's usually a step, because the New Testament doesn't have a pass/fail view. The New Testament has a destiny view. You're called to a destiny, to a desire, and the will of God of who you're supposed to be. It may involve some failures along the way. As Peter learned and others have learned, if you have a fear of failure (as if you've failed and it's over), that's not a destiny view. The destiny view is that you will make it and that you will be transformed and that you will become who He's making you to become. But if you don't have your mind renewed to look at failure differently, then that's a different path. So you've got to get this junk out of your head and it's got to be renewed to get to a place where in God's family you're learning new ways of relating and new ways of accomplishing. It takes a cleaning of your mind. Before you just say yes to God's will there's a strengthening of the personality to just saying no to everything that's not His will.

Let me tell you something about human development. It starts with connectedness. Babies are born into a family with a job description, and that is to basically suck in life. That's what they do. Try to play bridge with one; it doesn't go very far. But they're great at eating and great at taking in love. So when you are beginning in this, then you have to take in mercy and love. Then if you go to 1 John, it says, "Little children, you've been forgiven; you are part of the family. You're taking in love." Then it says, "Young people, young men, you are getting strong and you've overcome the evil one." In other words, you've learned to say no to things that are not right. You're growing in righteousness. So you can't find who you are until you know who you're not. You have to push off and differentiate, that's the "terrible twos" in human development. It's where they start to push off this submerging engulfment, this nurturing thing, saying "I'm going to find out who I am, and I'm going to say no." And then also we learn to submit to no and in that we figure out who we are. Well, you've got to learn to say no to the pressures, and while you're doing that to say yes to new ways to figuring out who you are. So we find out our identity in a combination of saying "no, that's not me" and "I don't know who I am yet, but I've got to find out who God is and find His ways and operate in those ways" and then something happens. Then we're grounded enough to do the next thing.

4. Get small. Here's the words: "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought." Now you may be Billy Graham in the making—something that large in terms of that large in a ministry. But he didn't start out saying, "I'm going to be Billy Graham." He didn't know who Billy Graham was at that time. No, that happened because of multiplication that God did. See what it says is, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." And what I find in leaders that don't ever find God's will for them is they look at some grandiose vision that's out there and they compare themselves. They have other grandiose kinds of things more highly than they ought to think, and let me give you a list of them. They think that they should be able to do it all, when we can't. We can't do what everybody else is doing; we don't have those kinds of gifts. There's

something we're supposed to do, but we're not supposed to do what 8,000 other people do. So they should do it all, and they're under this pressure. And the second one, they think they should do it well. Do you think that whoever is out there doing it well, and you see that conference or read that book or you see that moment, do you think that was the first day? See you don't see the movie that shows all the screwups and all the failures, and the learning curve, and the desert experience, and all of that. So to not think more highly of yourself than you ought means you get small and realize, *I'm not able to do it all, and I'm probably not able to do it well*. Everybody feel better now? Because that's what it means to be humble. I am a living, able, willing sacrifice; and God, I'm going to screw it up. Can you use me? And He says yes. See, that's the opposite of thinking we know what to do. And then, not only to do it all or do it well, but we think we ought to be able to already know what it is and know how instead of a day-by-day learning it. So we've got to get small.

5. Then it says to have a sober estimation of yourself. Now humility is not a negative estimation: I don't want to be humble, I'm really an idiot. I hope God can use a worm like me. No, it says to have a sober estimation or an accurate judgment of yourself, and basically all it takes to be humble is to be honest. Do you know that you can be a rocket scientist and that's a sober estimation of yourself? If you walk into a place and you say, "Well, you know I don't know what I'd do around here. I've got a 200 IQ, but I'm horrible at meeting people." That's a humble person but that's a sober estimation of their self. You've got a 200 IQ. We need you to figure out our tech department. Now you can be used because it's a realistic self-image. It's a sober estimation. So don't think that humility is something that has to have a self-deprecating view. If we're honest, aren't we kind of humbled? Anyone want to stand in front of the camera and confess your thought life for the last three months? You know the quarrels you've had with people or some of the failures, etc. See the truth is known about us, and we need to have people who know all that truth. We're not very arrogant anymore, but I can say, "Yeah, but I am pretty good at this."

In community you begin to find out what your strengths are and what your gifts are. Then it says this when you have this sober estimation of yourself, then it talks about using your gifts according to the faith God has given you. Now let me unpack that for just a second. Once you go through all the steps I've talked about—saying no, getting connected, and going through all these ways and steps—then what's going to happen is in that community you're going to have a sober estimation of your giftedness because in community when you humble yourself and you don't have Mommy's expectation and the culture's expectation and you're in community, your community is going to say to you, "You know what? You really are good at ABC or D," and they're going to notice your gifts. I was an accounting and finance major, but I joined Bible studies in the spiritual community and they kept saying to me, "You know what, you're crazy but you really have an ability to look at a passage of Scripture and kind of think about that and the ways it applies to life." I said, "I do?" They said yeah, and I kept hearing this over and over. I was horrible at 8,000 other things. But they told me, "You should go read theology and you should study the Bible." I didn't know anything about what I was supposed to do next. Each one of you, if you are in a community where people are seeing you, they're going to see a gift in you. It's going to emerge. Let me tell you what that gift is about.

6. That gift is about your uniqueness, which if you look at the next point it says to grasp your uniqueness. When you are finding out what you're good at, you're no longer going to be straining or working. I was talking to a woman who was very, very gifted in a certain area. In these other areas she kept experiencing ought-tos and have-tos and this, that, and the other, and it would be straining and negative. Then she would go operate, and the church would go ask her to do stuff in her area of giftedness and she would do it and it would be incredible; but she would never, for some reason, count that as spiritual even though it was in the church because it wasn't straining, and it wasn't depressing, and it wasn't burdensome, so it didn't feel like she was sacrificing. This other stuff they would ask her to do she would kind of resist and not want to and

feel bad, etc. She would totally discount where all the fruit was and I'm going, "These are your gifts." And she goes, "These can't be gifts, it's too easy." That's a gift. See, a gift is where you've been supernaturally given to in a certain area and that uniqueness begins to flow; and now we're back to will equaling desire, because you've been turned into a person and the real you is coming out in desires and hungers. But those weren't the original expectations. Now that you've gone through the desert and been processed and been built into and been humbled and been squeezed and gone through the blender, now what's emerging is true and it's real and God's will in you has started to become one. Then this part about your faith to the amount of faith that you've been given, I don't know what that is but I've seen it in two directions.

Some people don't have the faith that they think they have. They want to go conquer the world. They should maybe go start with their next-door neighbor. They need feedback about that. Some people need to know that their gift is bigger than they think it is, and they need to be pushed in faith. Be pushed kind of out of the boat. So a good way to think about that is to take the amount of faith that you think you're gifted with—what do you think you can do with your gift?—and have the faith to exercise your giftedness in that way and that amount and then be open (and this is in community), be open to borrowing the faith of the people in your community to do other things with your giftedness that you don't have to necessarily do. In other words, if you know you can teach, somebody might have the faith to think that we can broadcast that all over the world. I don't have the faith for that, but I have the faith to stand up and talk about the Bible, and that's where community begins to happen. Your job is—after you get mercy and get God's stuff built into you and after you get rid of your expectations and lay yourself on the altar; after you say no to everybody else's expectations and after you begin to humble and not have to think you have to do it all yourself; and after you begin to find out what your giftedness is and your actual desire, what's your joy—what comes easy begins to be in tune with "Wow, maybe this could count for God," that you can borrow faith and step out and

use it in a little way. Then God begins to make it and graft your uniqueness without comparing yourself to somebody else. Like Galatians 6 says, and you will find the sweet spot to “be able to approve and to test and determine what is His good and perfect and acceptable will.”

**Thanks, Henry. Before we say goodbye to everybody, there are physical resources that are in people's outlines. One of the things is your book *Nine Things You Simply Must Do*. Can you tell us a little bit about that book?**

Yes, it was a little bit of a different book for me because I'm a psychologist, so I write about the problem side of life, you know, depression, anxiety, and all this stuff. But this book was actually the fruit of getting to be a voyeur. That sounds bad but what I mean is a voyeur is somebody who watches, right? What I do is watch leaders for a long time. About ten or twelve years ago I started to see patterns that highly successful people did alike, and I started to write them down. I literally carried a note thing around with me and I wrote down when I would see a pattern emerge that I'd seen another leader do. These are the nine things you simply must do and it's what successful people do now.

**If you're interested, you can go to Henry's website, which is [cloudtownsend.com](http://cloudtownsend.com). Also on this outline is the Ultimate Leadership Shop in Southern California.**

**I know we talked about that last month, but for those people who are joining us for the first time can you tell us a little bit about this one-week intensive?**

It's something we do many times a year like eight or nine times a year, so you can find one probably that works for you. It's a place in kind of my travels I would hear from leaders all the time that they get a lot of training but they needed a place to go: an isolated experience with other leaders. We take about forty at a time. John and I do the teaching, and we have a group of facilitators that we've worked with, some for over twenty years, and we have mini small-group experiences for the leaders. They are in small groups of about six to eight leaders and a facilitator multiple times a day working through the things that we're talking about. It's not learning the skills of leadership; it's working on you as a person. Some of you may need healing, some of you may have longstanding issues that are holding you back, some of you are



not reaching your ceiling or hitting your ceiling—not reaching your potential—and there are conflicts to work through. It's a place to heal and to grow. You can read the testimonials on our website as well.