



table talk

4/26/26

“Three Harbor Lights”

Throughout 50 years of ministry, perhaps the most requested sermon topic I’ve been asked to address has been about how we can know the will of God. Young people are eager to know how they might chart their life. Middle-agers want to know what to do if they need to correct their life. The golden-agers are hoping to confirm their lives.

I have made a troubling observation in recent years. There doesn’t seem to be as strong of a call for teaching about knowing the will of God for your life. Instead, we have been taught to imagine and declare what we want our life to be. And the Western Church is filled with personal horror stories as a result.

Among many of these immature Saints, they are more focused on seeking “the stuff.” You know, feelings, riches, absence of trouble or conflict, etc. Sometimes they unintentionally fall into the trap embracing a faith that has no real challenge or downside. As Pastor Cory said recently, Jesus PROMISED a life with trouble! I agree 100%, but let’s not end his quote there. Let’s remember Pastor Cory also promised that Jesus is faithful to get us through!

We have only a moment to address the topic, and there are so many questions that need to be answered. So, let me hop to an advanced place in the curriculum. How can I know I’m hearing God correctly when I ask for personal guidance?

When we believe we have been providentially led by the Lord, it makes sense to ask God for confirmation and maybe some clarification if we need it. There is no shame in asking for help in this manner. Even Paul was corrected twice by the Holy Spirit before he properly discerned the will of God for his next

steps (Acts 15). So, how does one grasp confidence in what we perceive to be guidance from God?

Bob Mumford taught a great lesson in his book *Take Another Look at Guidance* when he illustrated guidance by telling the story of a maritime harbor from ancient days that was known for having three lighthouses. Novices thought three lights would cause nothing but confusion and end in disaster. After all, most harbors had only one light that was used for safe navigation, but this harbor was so treacherous that three lights were needed to safely reach the docks.

Instead of creating confusion by offering three sources of guidance, the harbor masters understood that they needed three lighthouses in order to give confirmation to each ship's captain. When the incoming ships were aligned exactly as they should, the three lighthouses would line up and appear as one light instead of three. Whenever they didn't align, your ship was in peril.

Lighthouse #1. The Word of God (What does Scripture have to say about this?)

Lighthouse #2. The inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Do I have peace about this?)

Lighthouse #3. Circumstances (Are circumstances lining up to make this feel right?)

In other words, does the Scripture say anything that would dampen my feeling about this course of action? Is my plan prohibited by Scripture, or does the Bible seem to endorse my plan?

What about the indwelling Holy Spirit? Does He give a witness of peace in my heart? Peace should be the "umpire" of everything we do. Do we feel "the divine yes?"

Are circumstances "lining up" to confirm what you are planning is right? Sometimes we are encouraged to disregard circumstances and "just obey God." Sometimes that may be good advice but only rarely. Many times I have cursed circumstances only to learn that those roadblocks were God's tools to keep me from hurting myself. God can be trusted!

Jesus said "My Sheep know My voice." That's even true when we are in a dangerous port trying to understand three lighthouses!

I love you,
Pastor Stephen