

## I. Review

Last week we were in Psalms 5:7. There is just so much in these verses in chapter five, that it's almost like you are able to break down the verses into three or four sections. Each one of them carries a heavy load of teaching. We examined last week three key teachings out of this verse (Psalms 5:7) that help us for our edification, learning and growth. I talked about what I am trying to do with Psalms, that it is not just teaching it at face value. But showing you how to open up the book to really see inside what is beyond the surface. Ultimately once you try to get inside the book, the book is going to get inside of you. Getting a depth in the book of Psalms and seeing its real value to us as our own relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ❖ 1.) But as for Me....

We saw how David used a little phrase...."as for me". David making a choice to go into the house of God. I laid it out historically and doctrinally. But we looked at it in depth as it is a picture or a pattern of our going into the house of God or the church. I showed you the verses in 1 Timothy 3:15, where in the New Testament the house of God is the church.

*1 Tim 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

I talk about this all the time; that is about the choices we make in life. As I look across this crowd, every one of you chose to make a choice to be here today. If you are healthy and not sick you chose this morning that you wanted to be here today. Yet in any church others chose not to be in church today and the decision reflects on their commitment to the house of God.

I think of Psalms 122:1 where it says, "***I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.***" What a great song that is! Unfortunately, it is not true in many Christians lives today. We meet together to build ourselves and build others in order to build the house of God. We have people that come in all the time that have needs in their lives as they begin to grow. The job of a healthy church is the people in the church, helping the pastor (who can't do it all by himself) to accomplish that work. Every church has folks in it that will help the pastor with his work. They get into the church, and they see it benefits them and they want to take what they've learned and want to give it to others. So many of God's people don't want to do that. They want to sit home and take from the church. They want to glean from everything that is said, but they never want to help build anything. In any church you're going to find that is a common problem the church faces. They won't be any value to the pastor of getting involved in doing what God has called not only him to do, but the church to do also.

I know, I have heard it all, they say well I got this, and I got that. My answer to them is talk to Marty or talk to Jeffery and Cheryl. I have seen people that have what I would call issues in their

life medically and physically and they won't let anything stop them from coming to church. But then you have people who just never miss an opportunity to miss where God wants them to be.

**Saved or unsaved, life will be about the choices we make!** There is no question about that! And how important it is to be in God's house. Hebrews 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]....*". I've seen people that wouldn't give up their King James Bible. Even if someone threatened to blow their brains out and steal it from them, they wouldn't give it up. But they won't go to God's house (church) and be a part of the ministry that God is doing!

## ❖ 2.) The Multitude of Thy Mercy....

The second thing we learned was about "the multitude of thy mercies". **Getting into God's house and growing and never taking all that God has done for us for granted!** As a Christian you know we can never be satisfied where we are at. We can never afford to get complacent. When you get older it's a natural thing in life that when you get to be 65 or 70 you retire from where you work. Whatever you do, you work for the Post Office, or you work for Ford or at GM, whatever. You hit that golden age of your life where you want to retire and take it easy. You've worked hard all your life. But too many of God's people take their retirement into their ministry. **Ecclesiastes 8:8 tells us that there is no discharge from this war we are in.** There is no expiration date on your ministry, no matter how old you may be. God gives us the ability to carry on and it is an incredible thing!

Years ago, I knew a lady that was pretty much bedridden. She couldn't get out and do anything, but she served the Lord in her church all her life. She came to the place where she was a tremendous soul winner and a great prayer warrior. She got to the point where she just couldn't do anything. She was bedridden and I went to visit her one-time. This was back when you still had phone books. The phone book was lying there on her bed, and I asked her, do you need me to help you make a phone call? She says oh I don't talk on the phone anymore. I said, well I saw your phone book open. You know what she said to me? She says yeah, every day I just go through four or five pages, read the name and then I pray for them. Wow!

There is somebody that right up to the day she died, she understood that there is no discharge from this war. Yet some of God's people bail out of it so quickly it's unbelievable. Looking back, we see the hand of God in the mercy that he shown us. That is what keeps us going forward! That is what never lets us quit! **That is why as Christians we should never get to the retirement stage of our Christianity where we are not actively involved in doing everything that we can for the Lord.** When you see that and you understand that, and you will never take all that he's done for you for granted. There will be no choosing not to be in God's house on Sunday because it is his house. Where you have grown and what you have learned will be all through the hand of God in your life and the mercies that you understand he has put in your life.

Many times, we get caught up in life and all that we do. We think that life is not only getting ahead but life is looking ahead. I understand that, but life is not just looking ahead, but it is looking behind to see what God has done. When we do that, he prepares you for what you are

going to have to face which is up ahead. It is all through the multitude of mercies in our lives that he has given us.

### ❖ 3.) I Will Worship Toward Thy Holy Temple

The third aspect we looked at was “I will worship toward thy holy temple”. I showed you the concept of what real Biblical worship consists of. There are **two temples in the Bible**. The true temple that the Lord pitched and not man which is up in heaven, Hebrews 8. And the earthly tabernacle that Moses was given the pattern and the directions to make. He was told to build after that pattern which became the central part of worship for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. I showed you how those **seven pieces of furniture that were found in the tabernacle** will be a picture of what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:17 that really is the bottom line of our worship which is our ministry. **The Bible talks about that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished, from the inside out. Furnished with the seven pieces of furniture.**

*2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

All the new translations, the NIV, the RSV and the rest of them say “thoroughly equipped” or “thoroughly finished”. They take out the word “thoroughly” which destroys the great doctrine and they take out the word “furnished” which destroys the other doctrine. I showed you it’s a pattern of the inner working of the word of God through these seven pieces of furniture.

1. Brasen Altar	2. Laver of Water	3. Golden Censer	4. Table of Shewbread
5. Seven Candlestick	6. Altar of Incense	7. Holy of Holies	and the Ark itself

We defined each part of how it works within you to give you everything that God wants you to have in your worship relationship with him. The key to all of this is the patterns that God has set down for us. For the child of God, God will have a pattern for everything that he does. It will be his way that will show you the correct way. When you follow them you will get the work done as it says in Hebrews 8:5 In this life we live under the shadows of those patterns and they are found in the word of God.

*Hebrews 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

## II. Psalms 5:8 The Leading of God in our Lives

There are five divisions in the book of Psalms. When we get finished with Psalms, I want to have five books of study guides that are these outlines. We will put them into a book and there will be five of them as a study guide for the entire book of Psalms; right at your fingertips.

I think the book of Psalms is such a vitally important book for us to have in the word of God.

*Psalms 5:8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.*

Today, **I want to talk about the leading of God in our lives.** Life is about choices, and we are faced with those choices. When we make the choice, how do you know it is really of the Lord's leading? That is a great question! We are all going to face things in life that we have to decide what we're going to do and which way we are going to go. There is hardly a week that goes by that I don't get a call from somebody that says, hey Bob, I'm faced with this and I just don't know how to make the right choice.

How do you know when it is God leading you verses you just leading yourself?

I am going to be honest with you, there is nothing more complicated, or confusing for us than to try to figure out whether God is leading me or is it the opposition that I am facing? Or is this God telling me to stop or is it the devil just trying to bring something in my life to stop me? Or is God using the opposition to try to teach me something as he is leading me through it?

Wow! There isn't anybody in this room or under the sound of my voice that is not going to be faced with that issue. I am going to tell you, if God doesn't make some things clear and plain, and you understand the process of defining when God is leading in your life and when he is not. We are all going to just stumble all over the map and end up making a lot of bad choices.

Every person that I have known who got messed up and today is back into the world, or really made a bad choice in some things. When they came in to talk to me, every one of them used the same party line when they would say no matter what it was, God is leading me to do this. After 5 years, 10 years, 15 years later it is very obvious God wasn't leading them. It is so easy to make that mistake. It is so easy when we are all faced with decisions that we must make, and we actually think God is leading us. We come up with some of the most ridiculous concepts that we try to use to discern God's leading.

### ❖ Don't be a Gideon – No Need to Put Out a Fleece!

I always go back to the story of Gideon. How many times have I heard a preacher get up and preach a message on putting out the fleece. God told Gideon what he wanted him to do, and he says, "Oh Lord are you sure?" And he puts this fleece out. The fleece is like a lamb skin that he puts out a number of times and asks God to do something with it. Make it wet, make it dry, and by that he says I will know this is what you want me to do. So many of God's people do the same thing. The same pastors that preach that, if they did a little diligent work, they would find out a little farther down the line that Gideon starts worshipping false gods. So, there is something not right there. **The real question is why did Gideon put out a fleece?** He put out a fleece because he wanted to find out the right direction God wanted him to go. Forget the fact that God already told him where he wanted him to go. The problem wasn't God, the problem was that Gideon couldn't trust God enough to believe what he said he wanted him to do. He wanted verification. I find a lot of God's people in that situation. In Gideon's case I don't know what he knew about the Bible. But I do know this, he didn't need to put out the fleece. Neither

do you, if you understand what the real leading of God is in your life. There is no need for a fleece. But wow here we are!

### III. Lead me O Lord – God will give us a Definite Direction in Life

**I want to show you how that you can ask for and get definite guidance from God on everything you face.** Having already said that some of God's people will never do what I am about to tell you. The devil wants to stop you dead in your tracks and most of the time it is simply getting you to follow his lead or somebody else's lead and not God's. But yet we want to say God led me to do this. How do you know the difference? That is the real question!

Verse eight says "Lead me O Lord...". In your Bible there will be **two key examples of how God will give us a definite direction in life.** The leading of God in our lives. With God there will be nothing left to chance in our lives.

#### ➤ Exodus 13:17 A Pillar of a Cloud & A Pillar of Fire

*13 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that **God led** them not [through] the way of the land of the Philistines, although that [was] near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: 14 But **God led** the people about, [through] the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. 15 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. 16 And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. 17 And the **LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud**, to lead them the way; and **by night in a pillar of fire**, to give them light; to go by day and night: 18 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, [from] before the people.*

You know the story here is when they leave Egypt, and they are on their way to the promised land. There are a couple of things I want you to see here. In verse 17 and 18 **I want you to notice that there was a direct path to get them to the promised land that would have gotten them there quicker.** But they had to go through some places where they were going to have to do some fighting and God knew that they were not ready yet. So, we see the leading of God who could have led them one way, but we see the leading of God leading them another way.

I am going to tell you right now in your life if you are a young Christian this is right where you are at. When you first get saved God protects you from some things that would mess you up and quench your desire for God and the word of God. So instead of leading you this way, he will lead you that way. I want to talk to you about how do you understand and know when God is leading you? This is our first great example! He plans a route to lead them another way.

You know the book of **Exodus, it is a picture of the Christian life** almost chapter by chapter. The first seven or eight chapters, they are in bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh. **Pharaoh is a type of the devil and Egypt is a type of the world.** As I have told you they cry out to God and God sends them a deliver. That is a picture of our salvation. Before we were saved we were under the

bondage of the devil in the world (Egypt) and we cried out and yes God sent us a deliver, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, they received Moses and by the time you get to Exodus 12, Moses leads them out of Egypt. Here again is a picture of our salvation. He leads them through the blood of the lamb. **You know how you and I got out of the world? Through the blood of the lamb!** God's deliverer!

From that point on **chapter by chapter he shows us through their journey every aspect of the Christian life.** He shows you about your baptism, about being sanctified from the world. In chapter 16 he shows you your relationship to the word of God. As you go on through it you learn about ministry and about the priesthood. You learn about every aspect of the Christian life. It is one of the most incredible books that you will find! I have told you before every chapter will fit into our growth and development as the child of God and lay out the patterns for us. But within all of this you see how God leads them through the wilderness. Now we have our first example, our pattern on how he will lead our lives through the wilderness.

Remember now, they moved into (just like you and me) the wilderness of sin. Where are they headed? They are headed to the promise land. We always think that going into the promise land is a picture of us dying and going home to heaven. That is not true. The promise land was never a picture of heaven. **The promise land is a picture of your life and my life as a Christian** where we mature and grow to the point that we cross over, and we go into a land of God's promises. Your life as a Christian based on the promises of God. **They had to fight to stay in that land and you have to fight to stay in the promises of God.** It is an incredible story, and an incredible pattern! As we travel through this wilderness of sin; we need to make sure that it is God leading us and we are not just doing whatever we want to do. Then giving the old party line, oh I really believe God is leading me.

### 1a.) Pillar of a Cloud by Day

In Exodus 13:21 we begin to see how God gives a great example for us.

*And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*

By day he led them through a pillar of a cloud and by night a pillar of fire. When we examine these two, it will show us what we need to do to follow the Lord's leading and not our own. The Bible says in Psalms 37:23

*The steps of a [good] man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

His leading! I want you to know this pillar of fire and this cloud went on for forty years. There was never a day when it wasn't there. There was never a nighttime that it wasn't there.

The cloud will be a picture of Christ and his coming to this earth at the first coming of Christ. But also, his coming at the Rapture or the second coming. We are told when he goes back to heaven in Acts 1:6-11, the start of the church age. They are given their commission to go to the world and in Acts 1:6-11 he goes up in a cloud. Then they are told in verse eleven the same way you've seen him go up in a cloud, when he comes back he is going to come in the clouds. In

Revelation 1:7 it talks about him coming back in a cloud and every eye shall see him. You always want to watch the word “cloud” in the Bible. That tells me that you got **a cloud at the first coming and a cloud at the second coming**. That tells me that during the church age I follow Christ and the cloud (by day) by what he represents in the Old Testament. Here is the difference between the two. The cloud during the day will be us following Christ when you can see what is going on, but not exactly clearly or directly. When we study Christ in a cloud it will be all the principles that we have to follow Christ when we are dealing with the decisions that we have to make. It is during the day you have to make decisions, but they are not necessarily game changing decisions. But they are decisions that you want to keep right so what you use is the cloud.

I think it is absolutely amazing that people just can't get away from the Bible. Today all the information on your computers and on your iPhone, even your emails and texts. Do you know where it is at? It's in a cloud! Do you know what the judgment seat of Christ is going to be? When he comes back everything we have said, everything we did, everybody we texted, every conversation we had; he is going to bring it back in that cloud. Incredible! All the information of God leading in this life will be found in the cloud. When we have to make decisions (in the day) it may not be absolutely clear, but **you have the principles that will give you the answers that you need**.

Nobody sees clearly in a cloud. If you are flying someplace and you take off and it is clear, by the time you get up at about 30,000 feet and you can't see anything. Clouds are all around you. If you take off from KCI in a rainstorm, you can't see anything, but by the time you get about 10,000 feet you break through the clouds and then it's a perfect summer day. Clouds are hard to see through.

## ❖ Our Instrument Reading is the Principals of the Word of God

You have two kinds of pilots. You have pilots who get their license, but they can only fly on bright sunny days. They must have a horizon as a point of reference. The other type of pilot who is really advanced will be instrument rated. What that means is he can fly in a cloud that you can't see through, and he is able to stay oriented by his instruments. The problem when you start flying blind, (so to speak) and you are not instrument rated is you could be going straight down, and you think you are flying level. You could be upside down and lose all the relevance of positioning in your life, so you have to rely on the instruments that are on your panel. It will tell you when you are up, down or when you are left or right. You have to trust your instruments because in the cloud it may be daytime, but you don't always see through that cloud clearly. For you and for me, **our instrument reading is the principles of the word of God**. It will tell you if you are up, down, left, or right and just where you need to be.

I think of John F. Kennedy. Jr when he was killed in a tragic plane crash a number of years ago. He was a pilot, but he wasn't instrument rated. He was flying from New Jersey to Martha's Vineyard Airport. He was going to follow the coastline. He thought it would be a safe line of flight, but he wasn't instrument rated and he got up into the clouds and before he knew it he thought he was flying straight. But he flew right into the Atlantic Ocean and was killed.

So many of God's people are not instrument rated. The way God will lead you through a cloud during the day, like he did the nation of Israel is by you being instrument rated. Understanding the principles that will keep you on course. Just as a pilot trusts his instruments, you and I have to trust the principles. As for me as I said my instrument rating will be understanding how to use the principles of God. For a pilot it will be a 100% confidence in those instruments. For me and for you, our 100% confidence in the principles of the word of God.

## ❖ Don't Turn off Your GPS!

I think one of the greatest things that ever came out of Roswell in 1947 was the GPS systems. It used to be you had to buy a GPS and put it on your dashboard. But now everybody's phones have them. When you invite me to someplace that I have never been to, I just put it into the GPS and then follow what it says. But I have to be honest with you and I think this is human nature. Almost in every case the GPS will take me someplace that I actually think I know a better route than the GPS. This is my problem. I think I have an idea where I think it is at and so I put it in the GPS and they are taking me down this way and that way and I am thinking this is taking me downtown and I need to get over here north of Kansas City. So, it took me all around and I followed it but thinking all this time I should just turn this off because I know how to get there. You know what? It got me there! If I had turned it off, I would have been in Topeka Kansas that night. But that is human nature.

When you put it into your GPS, we think we know a better route. That is the problem when it comes to the principles of the word of God in our lives. We think we know a better way and we fool ourselves into thinking that it is of God when it is not. **We need to have 100% confidence in the principles as we navigate through the daytime, through the cloud.** You don't want your cloud turning into a fog that you can't get out of.

### 1b.) Pillar of Fire by Night

The Bible says that he gave them a pillar of fire by night. Where the cloud was the leading of God through the day, when it is not exactly clear, but it is still day. The leading of God through the fire will be when the darkness comes into your life and you can't see which way to go for love nor money. God's leading through the darkness. The fire in the darkness of the decisions that we have to make. When the darkness seems to be so heavy it swallows us up, God will give you the light in the darkness to find your way. Psalms 119:105 "*Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" Believe me. Maybe you haven't experienced it yet, but there will be some dark times in your Christian life. There will be sometimes when in your life it is so dark; and darkness can scare us. In your Christian life, in your nighttime walk it is the things that you can't see that will scare you.

Most of you have little kids, or at least you have been a kid at some point in your life. But when it comes to Christianity you are never supposed to grow up. You are always supposed to be a child with childlike faith. You grow up in Christianity and then you think you are smarter than God, then you become a Pharisee. I am 73 years old but as far as God is concerned, he wants me to stay a child. Little kids get afraid of the dark. You put them to bed at night and the next thing



you know you hear them calling for you to come back. They say I am scared. So, you either let the door stay open a little bit or you get a nightlight. **For you and for me when we get scared in the dark our nightlight is the word of God. God's given us everything we need in the darkness that we have to go through.** Because you and I will have times when a decision you have to make will be clear to you and you just got to work through the cloud. But there will be times when it is so dark that you can't see anything. It is the clear principles that you go by.

❖ **Don't Let Your Emotions Get Ahead of the Principals of the Word of God!**

I was talking with the Alpha Bravo teams yesterday. You know how important these little decisions are because you come to the place where you are a saved person, and you want to start dating an unsaved person. The principles of 2 Corinthians 6:14 are so clear. But I've actually had people tell me, well I am going to get in a relationship with this girl or this guy who is unsaved. They say, I am going to go ahead and get involved with them and I'm going to win them to Christ. Well, that may work out sometimes, but I am going to tell you right now. Most of the time it doesn't go that way. Why? Violation of principles. **When you get into a relationship, no matter who it may be with, this is not the time to turn off your GPS and think you know more about it than the GPS does.**

Years ago, there was a guy that I think was one of the finest young men I ever met. He loved the Bible. Over time he got lonely and wanted to have a relationship, so he found this gal and she went to another church where they didn't have the Bible, didn't believe the Bible. He allowed his emotions to overcome the very Bible and the teachings and principles that he had learned. He knew better and there wasn't any question about it. As far as I am concerned, anybody who makes a bad choice if they are in a church for any length of time, they know better. **It is the idea that you turned off the GPS and let your emotions go ahead of the principals.** I tried to talk to this guy, and you know what he said? He said the same thing they all say. I really believe this is God leading me. Well, it wasn't. I saw him four or five years ago at a wedding rehearsal. I talked to him and met her. Nice gal, but you know what? No Bible, no church, no ministry! This guy had the most potential of guys that I've ever seen in my life. You know what? He turned off the GPS and the darkness, the cloud swallowed him up. Tragic! Yet they all say the same thing, because when you turn off the GPS and you think you know how you are going to get there better than the principles of the word of God does.

You turn the GPS off and you don't follow the cloud by day and the fire by night, then you will wind up in the same place. **We all have a problem, every one of us. It's our flesh!** So many times, if you don't get it under control, your flesh wants to override the GPS system that God put in the word of God. Because we think we want what we want, and we just got to bring God in it so we can justify it.

**You know what keeps you honest in that? Principals!** That is why I beat you over the head every time I can about learning principles. Getting a notebook of principles. Being taught principles. You follow the principals of the word of God in the day when it is a cloud, but also in the nighttime when it is the fire. **Principles will control the number one problem we all have, it is emotions!** The older you get in the Lord, the more you work with people, the more you deal

with situations; the better the principles that you are teaching others. Those principals will also get into your world and it will keep our emotions in control and in check. Because nothing will keep you from spending emotions in the wrong places than the principles of the word of God.

We all are guilty of it. We watch some stupid movie where a guy in love with his girlfriend and she gets cancer and dies. She takes him and touches his face and says, I love you and then he says I love you. And you are sitting on the couch, tears running down your face. You know what they are doing? They are on a beach somewhere in Florida or at some bank counting the money they made from that movie. **We spend our emotions in it and yet there are neighbors around our house, or family members that are dying and going to hell!** Yet we never shed a tear over it. You know why? We turned the GPS off. **Principals will keep your emotions in check.** It won't be a perfect system because we are so imperfect. There will be times when we all fail. It will be a fight every day of your life. There are certain things that I won't watch on television. Not because they are impure. That just goes without saying, but I won't watch things that are going to toy with my emotions. They have a channel for veterinarians where they have dogs and animals that they take care of and some of them, the dogs die! I'm not going to watch that!!!! Why? I am not going to waste the emotion that I have that should be in the right place on things like that. That doesn't make me super spiritual. It's just because I like dogs! We all do that because we are human.

We will do it in relationships, we will do it with decisions, and we will just turn the GPS off and not follow the principles of the word of God. **Principals will control our emotions and keep us in check. Because our emotions in everything that we do is going to be the biggest obstacle we have.** There will be times when there is no clear way to go. Never be pushed around with the fears of your mind, but always operate by God's principles that are in your heart. It will fix it every time!

## ❖ The Church, the Word of God and a Pastor – Our Baseline

**The investment you made in the word of God** through the church that God put you in, his house to grow, you now have a baseline. So every decision you need to make, whether it's a cloud by day or a fire by night. **You have a baseline to come back down to.** That will always be your navigational system through life. Many people manipulate themselves through life. As God's people we need to navigate ourselves through life using the principals of the word of God. When you can't figure it out that is why God gave you the church, the word of God and a pastor. So, we don't stumble in the darkness. **God has a principle or a pattern for every situation that we will ever find ourselves in!**

When I met with Alpha Bravo teams yesterday, I told them that New Year's was an incredible time to really show not only our church but the people that are out there. And I just got bombarded with things from people that watched it that night. That really shows what God has done in your lives and its an incredible thing! I told them that right now they are probably at the greatest point in their life. This is why Paul told Timothy, *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers..... 1 Timothy 4:12.* Right now they are at the top of their game, and they were at the best point in their life to be a witness. Then I told them, this is also the most

dangerous time in your life because if you think for a heartbeat that the devil is not going to put crosshairs on you to take you down, you don't know what you are talking about. You see you never posed a threat before and now that you are plugged into the word of God you pose a threat. You know old people at John Knox Village that are in the 80's and 90's, they don't pose a threat anymore. The devil's got those people; they are in the twilight of their life. They are not going to pose a threat. You are! The devil is attacking churches, and he will attack this church. We have already lost families where the husband just got up and left the family. There is an attack today that is going on. I told them don't get the idea that the attack anymore is in a general sense. You are on the devil's to-do list because of where you are at making good decisions. Don't let the cloud turn into a fog. Don't let somebody in your life that will put the pillar of fire out. Don't let the darkness swallow you up.

## ➤ 2.) Joshua 3:1-5 The Growth of the Believer-Following the Ark

*1. And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. 2. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; 3. And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. 4. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed [this] way heretofore. 5. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.*

There is a couple of things I want you to see here. Forty years ago, they left Egypt. They were not ready to go over into the land yet (the promise land). God has them wander for forty years following a cloud by day and a fire by night to lead and guide them. They were not ready to handle all the big things that God knew was waiting for them when they got into the promised land. They had wandered for forty years and during that time they have grown and matured. If you know anything about your Bible, you know one of the reasons he did that was because that generation that came out of Egypt was fearful and had all kinds of problems. So, he had them wander for forty years until all those people died.

Now we have a fresh generation that is going over. They are going to have to fight for the possession and fight to keep it. Remember I told you the **promise land is a picture of our spiritual maturity**. We live life in the wilderness by the promises of God. Watch this! There is no more a pillar of cloud or pillar of fire. Now they are told that they are going to follow the ark of the covenant itself. They have matured past that point in their life and now they can see Christ clearly. They have grown and matured, and it is not going to be through a cloud anymore or even a fire.

They have learned the principles and the patterns of God. **Now they trust him in the promises of God, and they are going to follow him directly. This will be a picture of the growth of the believer.** I want you to note again verse four, the reference to the church age. A space between them and the ark of 2,000 cubits. The space between the first coming and the second coming of

Christ will be 2,000 years. Again, you have a complete pattern and picture of the church age and now you have a picture of a Christian who started out having to have a cloud by day and a fire at night. He had to follow that right there. Now he has matured to the place where he doesn't need the cloud, he doesn't need the fire, he follows Christ himself, the ark, during the 2,000 years of the church age. **He tells them you want to follow the ark. Why? Because you have not passed this way before.**

The Christian life as you mature will start you out with the visual of a cloud and a fire, but as you grow, and you mature you don't need that anymore. You follow the ark itself, the Lord Jesus Christ. All through your Christian life I can guarantee one thing, God will take you through uncharted territory. He will take you through places that you have never been before. God couldn't do that with them before he had to keep it relatively simple. He had to use object lessons. A pillar cloud by day and fire by night. Object lessons are gone now they are going through uncharted territory following the ark, the Lord Jesus Christ. **The key to knowing the leading of God in your life, will be based on your growing.** The deeper you get into the book, your church that God has put you in, the ministry and as you grow the bigger decisions you are going to have to make in life. **But as you grow you will see Christ in everything you do.** You have five wisdom books down; you have learned the patterns. You see it all and now you do what verse three and four tells you to do. *That you may know the way by which ye must go.... (Joshua 3:4).* You follow Christ and once you get to that point in your life where you are mature, where many of you are right now. Look what he tells them to do in verse three. Go for it! And that is where we now decide we are going for it. You have matured in your life to the place where you have used the principles. God took you through the alternate path, gave you a cloud and a fire so you could see the objects of the lessons and gave you all of that so you could learn to navigate. Now you have come to a place you don't need those anymore. **You see Christ, you know Christ. You know who he is, and you know how he works. You follow him and his principles!**

#### IV. In thy Righteousness – The Ark & the Lord Jesus Christ

Look at the next part of the verse. Psalms 5:8 he says "*Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness.... because of mine enemies.*" In thy righteousness, there is the ark! You didn't get that before now. Lead me O Lord in thy righteousness. **God's righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Here is the key to God's leading in our lives Genesis 24:27. It says "*I [being] in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.*"

We always take that verse, and I've heard it preached basically wrong all my life where it simply says I being in the way the Lord led. A lot of guys I've heard teach that say, well that means that you get in the way of God and then he will push you. No, No! You don't want to ever do that! He says, **I being in the way. God's way not your way!** The way of God, the things of God. **The principals of the word of God will never fail you! But we will fail the principles of the word of God.** The principles of the word of God are our safety net. It keeps us from falling though the cracks because the principles always catch you. Getting away from the leading of God will simply be us forgetting what we know God has told us and not following the ark.

## V. Because of Mine Enemies

Then he says, “...*because of mine enemies.*” **Believe me, the devil doesn’t just use bad people to mess us up. He will also use good people.** The greatest example of that is Simon Peter who was one of the greatest apostles. God gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. But God looked at him and he says directly. Get behind me Satan. The devil was using Peter at that time. So it won’t just be bad people that can get you off track. It will also be good people that will stop you. Not just the nasty things of life, but sometimes things that look pretty innocent. This is where the Bible has to come down for you and me where it says that **we are to prove all things**. He just won’t use the bad areas of life. The devil will use innocent looking areas that seem to be okay.

### ❖ Don’t Take any Shortcuts Through the Vineyard of Life!

I think of Judges 14:5 where Samson is going over to see his girlfriend, who he never should have got hooked up with in the first place. Samson is bebopping over to see his woman. Remember Samson is a Nazarite and as a Nazarite he can’t do a couple of things. He can’t have anything from the vine tree. No grapes, no raisins, and he can’t touch any dead bodies. He has to abstain from all of these things because he is a Nazarite. He is walking to his girlfriend’s house and he is thinking to himself, I know a shortcut. The Bible says that he takes a shortcut through the vineyard, which is where the grapes grow, which he is not to have anything to do with a vineyard or grapes. What happens when he gets into the vineyard? He meets a lion. He kills the lion and now he has touched a dead body. He has violated his Nazarite vow. **The moral of the story is don’t take any shortcut through the vineyards of life. Don’t be found someplace where God told you to stay out of.** And don’t think you are okay there. Because the lion will meet you there, the devil. Who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. That will be you and me.

It is a great example! There is nothing wrong with a vineyard. That lion carcass had honey in it and Samson is going through there and he sees the honey and he says oh I am just going to stick my finger down there and taste a little bit of honey. There was nothing wrong with the vineyard and there was nothing wrong with the honey, but look where the devil put it. You better learn the principle that it is not just what is nasty and dirty that you got to watch. You got to watch everything in your life.

People who want to do what they want to do will always tell you God’s leading me to do this. But I will always ask them what is your principle behind that statement, and they have none. That is why they want to do what they want to do, and they don’t want to talk to anybody about it. When they start going down that road, they will start separating themselves from anybody that will hold them accountable. Folks it only takes one or two bad choices, and you are out of God’s plan, and you are on your own. You know I have seen people headed for really bad choices. I have shown them the violated principles of where they were headed and yet they say I really feel God is leading me. We ignore the clear principles of God’s leading and justify it

with God leading us in spite of the principles. **Rule number one in understanding God's leadership in your life. God will never violate his own principles.** But we do! The principles of God are the only things that keep us honest!

## VI. Make Thy Way Straight Before my Face

The last part of verse eight says “...*make thy way straight before my face*”. There it is, the word way again. I being in the way. **God's way or your way. It is a choice!** The **key word here will be straight.** Most of you know how the world will use this word. I will sit down with you, and they will say come on be straight with me. Okay straighten up dude. Are you gay, oh I am straight. Straighten up and fly right. See how we use it? Now in navigation the straightest route to somewhere will be the shortest route. A straight line between two points. You hear people say as the crow flies. A crow will fly straight. He will go from point A to point B. So when we talk about as the crow flies, we are talking about a straight route.

This is a great principle! God's plan to get you where he wants you to be in order to be able to follow his leading as you grow within the church will always be the most direct path. A straight line before your face. No side trips, no vineyard trips where you will meet the lion. The shortest route in making the decision will be the principles that we use in making our choices and making the right ones. And that will be the leading of the holy spirit of God in our lives through the principles. Following the ark, making thy way straight before your face. Note. when they started out it was a cloud by day and a fire by night. As they matured and were getting ready to go over to the promise land they didn't need the cloud or the fire anymore. Now they had the ark. Christ himself.

### ❖ Don't Just Look at a Ministry, but Observe a Ministry

I look at almost everything differently than most people. When I watch a movie whether it is good or bad, I will always look for the patterns. The real mindset behind movies the patterns have to come out of the Bible. There is only thirty-three original plots that movies are made from and they are all in the Bible. Hidden in these movies will always be a good principle. I will sit there with a little notebook and look for them.

I told the guys yesterday that they need to learn when it comes to ministry and understanding ministry, they need to learn to not just look at a ministry but observe a ministry. I got that out of a movie with Sherlock Homes and Dr Watson. You know that Sherlock was the great detective, and they are at a crime scene. He looks to Dr Watson and says, you don't just see things, you need to learn to observe things, because the two are not the same. I thought that was absolutely true. We see things but we don't observe things. **When you see things, you just see it when you observe something you learn from it. You look at it a little deeper.**

## ❖ Don't Allow People in Your Life that Cause You to Violate the Principals!

I remember the movie "Heat" with Robert De Niro (criminal) and Al Pacino (cop). Robert De Niro is a thief who is out to rob banks. It is a great action-packed movie! Robert De Niro says something that is the most powerful thing I have ever heard anybody say in a movie that is based on the Bible. He never got caught because he followed a rule. I don't let anything or anybody into my life that I am not willing to walk away from in thirty seconds or less when you see it is going the wrong way!

**The greatest advice I could give you this morning! Don't let anything or anybody in your life that you can't walk away from in thirty seconds or less. If you see they are leading you in a place that is not going to work out for you. Translate that into the Christian life, into the Bible, that is biblical principles!**

## VII. Summary

All through this you see the New Testament application of Exodus 13:22 he says "*He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, [from] before the people.*" For 40 years that pillar was there. When they matured to a certain point then they got the ark. That ark was with the nation of Israel right up until they went into captivity. There is Hebrews 13:5 where he says, "*.... I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*" The ark had become everything to Israel as they followed God. As they began to grow and mature, he had the cloud and the fire. Now that they have matured its Christ himself. **In both cases they represent the principles of God in the word of God that are found only in God's house as you get taught and grow through the word of God.**

Bottom line is this. In this church I can't speak for any other church, but I can speak for this one. In this church there is absolutely no reason for you to make a bad choice in life. With the Bible and the pastor, then you get the right people around you. You have everything at your fingertips so you never have to make the wrong choice that will cancel you out of what God has for you unless you want to.

You have the right Bible, but you refuse to come to church. You would never give up the book you have, but you say, I will go when it's convenient or I will go when I got this or that. You see that is where it comes down to and then starting with that bad decision you just keep on making bad decisions.

**The leading of God in your life and my life is simply coming back to the principles.** Starting out young with the cloud by day and the fire by night. Getting to maturity to follow Christ himself. You will never have to make a bad choice or wonder is this God leading me or me leading me. **The principals will always define everything in your life. God will keep his way straight before your face!**