

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Week #3 of a 6-Week "Gratitude" Series

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Alright. We're going to take a trip. Oh, yay! [Congregation laughs] So we're going to take a trip, and you get to go anywhere you want to go. I'm buying! Right? Anywhere in the world! We're going to take a trip, and you get to go.

Anybody seen the new Julia Roberts/George/Clooney movie? It is just cute! It is just cute, and it's in Bali. And it is fabulous. Cute, beautiful. You will giggle. It's fabulous. I thought I was going to lose my wife to Bali at that theatre. [Congregation laughs] She's just going to go check herself onto a plane and be gone.

So if you could pick anywhere in the world, where would you go? Paris? [Congregant: "Italy!"] Italy? New York? London? Bangkok? Venice? Greece? Where would you go? Right?

And what if I could tell you that there was a place that you would find more beautiful than that? Would you be interested? Some people would. That's great, right? Because what I want you to see tonight is ... I want to talk about divine guidance. But before we really talk about divine guidance, we really have to kind of decide the question: Am I going to live by my will or am I going to live by God's will?

Because you have free will, you get to drive this bus anywhere you want to go. You get to take it anywhere you want to go! But the point in our spiritual evolution where it becomes interesting to say: *"Look, I've been driving this bus for a long time. And I know where I keep ending up when I drive the bus."* [Congregation laughs] And it's not always the best part of town! And what would happen if tonight I decide, "Thy will be done"? I'm not actually giving up my will; I'm actually aligning my will in a higher way.

Because you can only know what you know. But God can know that which you cannot know. And when we get interested about the will of God, it really is ... If you imagine your greatest desire; your greatest will; your greatest understanding of life, let's just say it's here [raises arm about shoulder level]. Right? And let's imagine that this is fantastic! Like, there's absolutely nothing wrong with this level; it's fabulous!

But it's not this level of life [raises arm as high as it will go]. And surrendering this [lower level] for this [higher level] shouldn't sound like a difficult choice. Like, if you could have a life that was 100 times greater, why wouldn't you? *"Well, I'd actually have to give up my will. I'd actually have to trust a Power greater than myself to be in charge of my life. And I would rather take two-thirds of the good and be in control than 100% of the good but feel out of control."*

How many of you like to feel out of control? [Congregation laughs] We got four men that I'm worried are all liars, right? And I mean that with just all due respect, right?

But for most of us, we have a high need to be in control. Right? And it didn't always work out so well when we weren't in control. And we trust ourselves to be driving the car; to make the decisions; to be in charge of our life.

But what if you decide tonight that you're asking for divine guidance, and you're not even sure where you're going? See, I think there's something that happens when we evolve as a spiritual being. Because I believe that there are times when our ego needs to be satisfied before we can let them go.

Like, if you've always wanted to go to Paris. Like, if Paris is your thing, and you've always wanted to go to Paris, there's something that happens when you finally get to Paris. It's like, "Ahhhhhhh." Right? Sometimes we have these "ego itches" that just need to be scratched. And then we can move on.

How many of you have ever wanted, like, a cookie? Anybody ever want just like a good cookie? And you can pick whatever your thing is, right? But a good cookie. And you tell yourself, "*I'm going to have a carrot, instead.*" [Congregation laughs] Now, come on! Haven't you all done that? "*Well, like, I'm going to have a piece of celery, and I'm sure that's going to satisfy my craving. Celery; it will be beautiful and it'll be ...*" And you take a bite of the celery and it's like, "Uckkkk." [Congregation laughs]

So then, because you don't want to go all the way to your cookie, then you try a cracker. And then you try popcorn. Maybe a slice of pizza. [Congregation laughs] Slice of cake. A doughnut. You've now cleaned out half the kitchen because you didn't want to have one cookie. Right? There's times when we need to satisfy our ego needs. We do! Right? And God knows that!

But over and over again, there's also a point in our spiritual evolution where we realize that if we choose the will of God, our needs are going to get met in the process.

So by the time I was in high school, I knew I had this calling. And for me it was that: it was a calling to be a minister. And it looked like a terrible job. I mean, working every weekend, every holiday. And the ministers I knew were barely scraping by. And it just looked like a terrible job. It looked ... Did I mention it looked like a terrible job? [Congregation laughs]

To my teenage brain, it was like, "*There's football games on!*" Right? And you're at church! Right? It looked like ... Did I mention it looked like a terrible job? [Congregation laughs] To my teenage brain, it looked like a terrible job.

And my plan was to make a lot of money and then kind of retire into it when I was too old to have any fun. [Congregation laughs] That was my plan. Like, somewhere around my age now, the plan was: I was going to kind of retire into it when I was old and boring and didn't mind giving up on all the fun stuff.

Well, the more that I came to know God and, really, the abundance of God, the generosity of God. And I was working in a corporate environment, and every week I was putting on the suit and going to work. And I literally was making a ton of money. But then on the weekends, I was putting my jeans on and going to work in the youth ministry at our church. And I was loving that, like, a thousand times more!

But I really began to feel like maybe there was a place where I could trust God; that I would be okay if I went into ministry. And when I finally made that commitment, I was in grad school. And I was in grad school in psychology. And I was going to be a psychologist because I thought that was close enough, right? [Congregation laughs] You still get to help people but, again, weekends off! Right? [Congregation laughs]

And so, seriously ... [Laughs] This is really my life!

And then at one point I said, "*Richard, this isn't it. Go do what you know you have to do.*" And it led to a life that was infinitely greater than I could have ever imagined. And what looked awful from the outside has been a perfect fit for me; for my life; for my soul; for who I am. It's a perfect fit!

And I think about all the times after I made that commitment to step into this life where I had to make an even deeper commitment. I remember in my first ministry ... My first ministry was in a little town in Merced, California. Anybody know where Merced is? It's about two hours from everything! [Congregation laughs] It's two hours from the beach; it's about two hours from Yosemite; it's about two hours from everything.

And I remember the Sunday when I decided that I had to quit doing my talks. And my talks were okay; they were just okay. But I had to really surrender them to God. And I said to myself, *"I'm willing to get up there and say whatever Jesus wants to say through me."* And it was noticeable! That week my talk was better. It was better!

And it always amazes me that the weeks and the Sundays and the Wednesdays where I forget to deeply surrender my talk to God. Because from my ego, I can do a decent talk. But God does a much better talk. Right? It's just better! It goes into people's hearts and souls, and it's just better! And I think over and over again how many times I have to surrender my will to a greater good.

You know, some of you know that we used to be on 15th Avenue and Northern. And we were trying to put a deal together to come to this church. And it was going to be about \$4 million. And at that time, that little church had never raised a million dollars. Right? We'd never come close to a million dollars. And we were trying to put a deal together for \$4 million to buy the land, to build this church. And we decided it was a good idea to sell our church that we were in for \$600,000. And the church that was buying us would give us a year to get out.

But that meant once we took the money, the clock started. So not only did we have to make sure we had the money, but we had to make sure that we could get all the way through the process, right? And I remember the week where I -- in the middle of a panic attack -- where I said, *"Richard, you haven't surrendered this at all! You're holding on to this one, and you feel personally responsible for this!"* And I had to just let it go.

And over and over again in ministry, there's been these moments where I had to decide to live my will or God's will.

One of those times was on a beach in Mexico. I was on vacation, and I had worked hard all year. And we had taken a family trip after Christmas, before New Year's. And I got about four or five days of down time on the beach at Acapulco. And we got a screaming deal and the kids were there. We were all there. And I played with the kids all day, and they were going up to shower and take a nap and change for dinner. And I had an hour by myself on the beach. And I might have had an adult beverage.

[Congregation laughs] And there might have been a Cuban in this hand. There just might have been. I don't know; guys talk, and you hear things. Right?

And it was my happy place. And I'm thinking, *"Thank you, God, for all the blessings! We made it through another year. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God!"* And this is my time. This is my time.

And I see a person walking down the beach and they're having a hard time. They're crying. And I'm thinking, *"No, God!"* [Congregation laughs] *"I'm in Mexico!"* [Congregation laughs] *"My commitment stops at the border!"* Right? Like, once I get into Mexico, it's like Las Vegas! You know, whatever happens in Mexico stays in Mexico. *"I don't have to do ministry here! I don't have to get up and check on this person! I don't have to do it!"*

And Spirit said, *"Can we review your commitment?"* [Congregation laughs]

"Grrrrrrrrrr." [Congregation laughs] Right?

So I get up and I don't even know if I'm going to be able to communicate with them effectively. And guess what? They spoke English. Guess what? I spent an hour of my free time ministering to that person. And it was the best thing I could have done!

Because over and over again, every time I put God first, my needs are met. And it doesn't always make sense to me. Right? Like, how in serving them, could I feel spiritually refreshed? More than with an adult

beverage and a thing from Cuba, right? [Congregation laughs] How could I feel that refreshed? And it was! It did! And I went up to our room and I told them what happened, and I just felt like a new man.

Over and over and over again, we have to make this decision. Because our ego always says, "Don't." Our ego always says, "Look out for yourself. Make sure your needs are met. Make sure you get your share. Make sure there's enough for you."

And over and over again, when we surrender to a greater Presence -- to a greater Power -- there's something that happens that's just more.

Because God can tell you how to meet your needs. God wants to meet your needs. But there's higher levels. There's greater good. And when we surrender and go all in, everything in our life goes to a higher level.

I've been reading this book, and I really would recommend it. It's Michael Singer's book, *The Surrender Experiment*. Anybody read this book? It's a fabulous book! One of the lines in this book -- one of the affirmations he gives us in this book -- is, "*I let go of myself and allow what is meant to be to be!*"

Would you like to say that with me? I love this statement!

[With congregation:] "*I let go of myself and allow what is meant to be to be!*"

I mean, that's a tough thing to do! It's a tough thing to even entertain the idea of letting go of yourself. Like, I don't let go of myself! I'm about myself! I'm about my needs; I'm about my ego; I'm about my story; I'm about my drama; I'm about all that I think I am, all that I should be, all that I want to be.

And in this book -- and I highly recommend this book ... In this book, he talks about his own journey of deep, profound surrender, and how much better his life got.

"I let go of myself and allow what is meant to be to be!"

Together: [with congregation] "*I let go of myself and allow what is meant to be to be!*"

To allow what is meant to be to be.

Because the moment you let go, God can do amazing things in your life. The moment you let go, everything is possible!

So how does God speak to you? How do you know divine guidance?

And I want you to see tonight that we all have spiritual senses. Just like we have physical senses, we have spiritual senses. And when we learn what our spiritual senses are, we actually trust divine guidance more. Like, not only do we have physical hearing, but we also have a level of spiritual hearing. And some of us, this is our dominant spiritual sense: that we actually hear the activity of God. We hear the angels whispering in our ear. And we can actually hear when we're being guided and directed. And it almost sounds like a real voice.

For some of us, it's that sense of a deep knowing. That we just know that we know that we know what the direction is.

Some of us get feelings. Some of us: we actually feel the pull of Spirit, and it feels like a real pull.

So how many of you just get a gut feeling? How many of you are gut feeling types?

And it's a little bit different, but how many of you just know? You don't know how you know, but you just know. Right?

And how many of you actually sometimes see visions or see things spiritually? That you just see how it's going to go?

How many of you God just whispers in your ear? Anybody? Where God just whispers in your ear?

And I want you to see that, as we practice this, it actually moves us forward. We actually deepen ourselves. Because for the last thousand years or so, we've been perfecting our physical senses with telescopes and microscopes and hearing and all the ways that we've tried to magnify our senses.

But I think the real step is when we really perfect our inner senses: our spiritual senses, so that we really, truly feel the activity of God guiding us and directing us in greater and greater ways.

So how do we do that? How do we perfect our inner guidance?

The first thing I think we need to do is **INVITE IT**. The more that we just start every day with the idea: *"Spirit, guide me."* The more that we just start every morning with, *"Spirit, guide me"* and end every night by, *"Thank you, God, for all the ways that you led me; all the ways that you showed me the way. Thank you, God, for all serendipity; for all the experiences."* And we just begin every day for asking for it and giving thanks for it every night.

Two: I think that learning to **LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT** is a requirement to live by spiritual guidance. Because in my life, God doesn't always tell me what's going to happen three weeks from now. Sometimes I'd prefer it. It's like, *"Okay, could I just pencil that in in my Daytimer so I know I might have to be available then?"* Right? But for most of us, that's not the way it works. In the moment, Spirit guides us and moves, and we just feel in the moment. So if we're going to live by our guidance -- if we're going to live this inner guidance -- we have to be available in the moment. And sometimes that means that, in the moment, we have to surrender our agenda and the way we thought our day was going to go -- or a moment or experience was going to go. And we have to be willing for it to go differently.

And three is: when we **TRUST OUR INTUITION**, we realize the more we use it, the more we trust it. And it just creates more and more feedback.

One of the suggestions that I was given was actually to **KEEP A JOURNAL** on your intuition. Actually write it down. So *"I was guided to do this today,"* and you write down what it was. And then you actually write down what the outcome was. So that you actually get to see, *"Oh! This was guidance and this was the outcome. And this was guidance, and this was the outcome."* Because it actually deepens our faith if you see over and over and over again that your intuition worked. You actually use it more! And actually by writing it down and keeping a log or a journal on your intuition, it actually deepens your faith. It broadens your faith.

And the fifth point is: the more you **GIVE THANKS FOR YOUR GUIDANCE**, the more you trust it; the more you pay attention to it; the more you use it. And I believe the more you acknowledge it, the more the angels whisper in your ear. I do! I believe that. I believe the more we give thanks for it, the more we align with it.

So here's where we're going. You ready for your homework?

I want you to pick one area in your life that may not be going exactly the way you'd hoped. Does everybody have at least one? One area that maybe not is just screaming at the level that you'd like it to be going? And I'd like you to entertain the idea of completely surrendering that area of your life to God. *"Thy will be done."*

And you just imagine, if you will, taking that area in your life -- whatever it is. It could be your relationship; it could be your finances; work; health; anything. And every day -- this is an imagining and a visualization -- imagine just placing it in God's hands.

Now, does God really have hands? No. Right? God doesn't have real hands; God is Spirit. Right? But imagining that: it's our way of imagining moving from our will to *"Thy will be done."*

So place it in God's hands every day and then just ask the question: *"What would you like me to do about that? Is there anything that you would like me to do about that today?"* And just do what you're guided to do.

See, the other hard part of living by guidance is: don't do what you're not asked to do. Are any of us "helpful"? [Congregation laughs] I mean like spiritually helpful? Like if God says, *"Don't do it,"* we think, *"Well, I'm just going to do it anyway, because it'll just be kind of helpful."* Right?

And the key is: if you're really going to live by God's guidance, you have to trust that when Spirit says, *"Don't do anything,"* don't do anything! Because our ego wants to ... you know, God's getting old; we want to help the process along! [Congregation laughs] Right?

And so if we live by guidance, then every day we wake up and say, *"Okay, God. I give you this thing. I give you this event; I give you this situation; I give you my life; I give you my relationship; I give you my finances; I give you my work; I give you my health. I give it to you. Thy will be done. Show me what I need to do. Reveal that which needs to be revealed."* And see if your life doesn't get better.

We were never intended to be alone. You might feel like you're alone. It might even look to you that you're alone. But the infinite presence and power of God is 100% with you. And when you open up to it, it will show you a very different world: a world that is a win for everybody!

And I truly believe that the longer that our ego drives, the scarier our world is going to get. Because not only do we have to practice this individually, but the world right now is asking us to practice this globally. That the world is in a time of transformation. So every day, *"Thy will be done."* Every day we place it in God's hand. Every day we say, *"What is mine to do today?"* And every day we have the faith to do it.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That there is but one presence and one power: God the good. And today we give God everything. Everything! Our finances; our work; our health; our relationships; our children; our grandchildren. We give God the economy. We give God the political picture. We give God our nation. We give God everything. Everything! We hold nothing back! We give God our hopes and our dreams and our fears and our insecurities. We give it all up. Simply say, *"Thy will be done."* And so it is. Amen.

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