

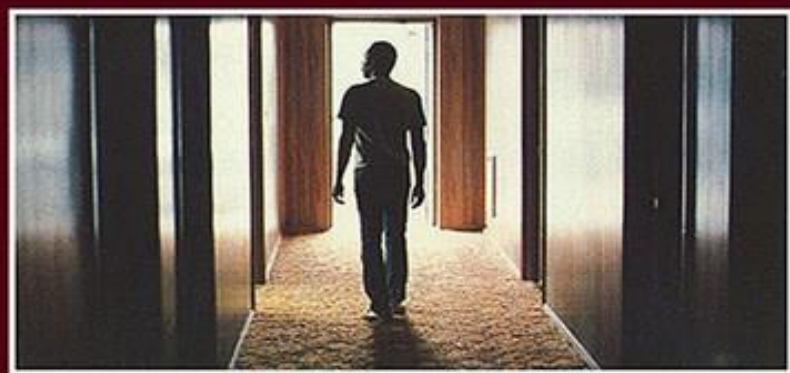
How To Know

The

WILL

of

GOD



Lester Sumrall

How To Know The Will Of God

by
Lester Sumrall

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1

WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD?

The greatest questions asked among believers today are, “What is the will of God?”; “How can I perform God’s will in my life?”; “How can I be sure that I am in the will of God?” When you become born again your newborn spirit desires to do what God wants you to do, which is His will.

We read in I Thessalonians 4:3, “*For this is the will of God...*” It is beautiful that a man like Paul could say to the Christian Church, “Now this is the will of God.” It gives assurance inside of us when we say, “This is the will of God.”

What is the will of God concerning you? In I Thessalonians 5:18, it says, “*In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*” The will of God flows through Christ Jesus into you.

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GOD IS OUR FATHER

What is the first factor in knowing the will of God? It is to know who God is. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 6:9. He said when you pray, say, “*Our Father, which art in heaven.*” Jesus did not say, “Our boss, which art in heaven.” He said, “*Our Father, which art in heaven.*” You will never understand the will of God until you first understand your relationship with God. As long as you feel like a poor, weak little sinner who will be severely chastised by God every time you do one thing wrong, you will never grasp the will of God. Until you understand the fatherhood of God and your own sonship, you will never understand His will. It begins with your relationship with Him as your heavenly Father. That is why Jesus told us to say, “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:9-10). God’s will on earth is done through His Fatherhood.

THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

I am a father, and I understand will. I have three sons. My will is first that they be my sons. I want them as my sons. They were born into my family; therefore, they have a special relationship with me.

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This is what people do not understand. I do not even have to know what my sons are doing to know that they are in my will. Why? Because they are my sons.

What is your relationship with the Father in heaven? Your relationship is this: Whatever you are doing as a son, you are doing it to please the Father. God does not have to tell you everything that is to be done for the simple reason that you are a son. God does not have to knock you on the head every morning and tell you it is time to get up. Many people want God to beat them around and tell them, “You do this,” and “You do that.” But He is not that kind of a God; He is a Father.

When my sons were growing up, sometimes my wife and I would have a cup of coffee and a piece of toast down in the kitchen just before I went to the office. What if, suddenly like thunder, they all came running down from upstairs and they hit the bottom step together screaming, “Father, Father, Father, what is your will today? What is your will today? Oh, Father.” I would say, “Go back to bed!” That is what God thinks of some people; He wishes they would go back to bed, instead of screaming at Him for His will. His will is as pure and holy and easy as breathing. The reason is sonship. You were brought

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into the will of God through sonship. By coming into His will through sonship you do what your Father wants you to do.

NO SECONDHAND MESSAGE

Since we are all sons of God, He will talk to each of us individually. He does not need to send messages about His will to us through other people.

One evangelist told the best man in my church, “Stop your medicine. If you have faith in God, you are healed.” He was one of these very sweet, nice, and calm brothers. He replied, “Yes.” Neither the evangelist nor the man told me what had happened in the back of the church so I did not hear of it. In a few weeks my friend was dead. The evangelist had lied. This same evangelist told another one of our fine laymen, “God wants you to save thousands.” He had never saved one yet. He had been in my church for years and I had never known of him getting anyone saved. He almost backslid for the following six months. He thought he was going to save thousands. He did not know how and the evangelist did not tell him how. Finally he came back to church, but his attendance was sporadic. Before that, he never missed. She almost wrecked his spiritual life. God is a gentleman. He is not going to tell one person what

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another one ought to do. What I tell these “prophets” is this: “You have a message from God for me? Since you are so close to God, go do it yourself. While you are doing it, tell God my address and if He wants me to do something, He can come see me about it.”

God certainly can speak through one of His pastors or one of His leaders. If he is a good man and a conscientious man, it very well may come true because he is your spiritual advisor. But when someone comes and says, “God just told me something about you,” you should write it down, put a date on it, and wait to see if it comes to pass.

WE ARE ONE OF A KIND

One of the major obstacles to knowing the will of God is that people try to make God do for them what He has done for someone else. On that one inch of the tip of your finger are some marks called fingerprints. There are more than 6 billion people living on earth today, and not one of them has a fingerprint like yours. God loves individuality. We can see this in the natural world. And it is extraordinarily that way in the spiritual world. Your experiences in God are going to be absolutely refreshing, new, and beautiful. NO ONE can say he has had the same experiences as you.

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Occasionally an evangelist comes from South America saying, “I am the Billy Graham of South America.” There is no Billy Graham of South America. There is only one Billy Graham and God does not want anymore. When Kathryn Kuhlman died, some lady preachers around the country started proclaiming, “I’ll be the next Kathryn Kuhlman,” but God had one and He never wants another one.

There are people who go sit under a tree and say, “Oh, mighty God of Moses, put your fire in the tree. I’ll sit here until you put the fire in the tree.” That is where they will die, under the tree. God put fire in the tree only one time, and He is not going to duplicate that experience with another person. He wants each of us to walk in the way that He has for us as individuals.

They tell me that of all the billions of snowflakes that fall on the earth there has never been two of them alike. How much more important are you than a snowflake?

The will of God is unique to you. God will do in your life what He has never done in anyone else’s life.

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BE PREPARED TO BE TESTED

Sometimes God may ask you to do things that he does not really want you to do; He simply is asking for consecration. Often a spiritual lay person gets a real hold of God and feels called to preach. God does not want everyone to preach, but if you tell Him you will not preach, then you are in rebellion. If you feel in your heart that you should preach, say, “Yes, Lord, I am willing, I certainly am willing. I’ll do anything that you want me to do.” He says, “My child, you have already done it. You have already finished it; you have already completed it.”

When you tell God you are willing to do something, in God’s eyes you have already done it. Jesus said if you look on a woman to lust after her you have already committed adultery in your heart. That is the negative side. On the positive side, when you say, “Lord, I am willing to do what you want me to do,” you have already done it, because you are willing to do it. God many times simply wants to know if we are willing to serve Him. The only way He can know is to ask us to do something and wait for our willing response or negative refusal.

A preacher who deeply seeks God often feels that he should be a missionary. He says to himself, “I have a

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burden for India; I must go to India.” Or he feels that he has a burden for Africa. “I have to go to Africa,” he says. Or “I have a burden for China; I must go to China.” God may not want him to be a missionary. But God wants His ministers to be willing.

If God wants you somewhere, He will get you there. You still being where you are tells me that you have not finished your work there yet. All of us would like to work on the moon, but we sure hate to work on Main Street. We do not bring anyone to church, but we think we must go to China and change China. We better change our neighborhood before we seek to change China.

I have heard people in almost desperation say, “God has called me to India. Oh, help me, please give me an offering. I must go to India.” I do not give people like that money. If God wanted them in India, they would be there. There would not be the problem of who is going to open the door unless God has locked it to keep them out. A little woman came to me and said, “Brother Sumrall, I’m called to India. I have to go to India; God wants me in India. Everybody’s against my going to India, but I have to go to India. God is going to do great things in India for me.” I just stood and looked at her. I finally said,

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“Honey, is your husband saved?” “Oh, no, but I am working on it.” “Do you have any children?” “Yes, I have six.” “Now, if you can get your husband saved and those six little Indians into the kingdom of God, that will be all of India you will ever need.”

The first thing God requires of you is to keep your first commitments. If you make a covenant with a man that you are going to live with him, then you better live with him. You have made a covenant to stay close to that man, and you have no business running around the country telling how great you are while your husband is alone at home.

There was a man named Abraham who all of us wish to emulate. While Abraham was praying one day, God said, “Abraham, you know that little 12-year-old son named Isaac? He was born to you when you were 100, and now you are 112. I would like for you to take him and offer him up as a burnt offering to me. You are hugging him so much that you have not hugged Me lately. I would just like to know which one of us you love the most. Take him to Mt. Moriah and offer him up as a sacrifice to Me.”

Was it the will of God for Abraham to kill Isaac? No. But it was the will of God for him to be willing

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to do it. God will ask each and every one of us to do something that He really does not require us to do, but we must be willing to do it. The will of God is to listen to the voice of God. Be sure that God is doing the talking, then pursue everything that God tells you.

A minister once told me that God had called him to the great city of Bombay and that he would have a great evangelistic outreach that would stir the whole city like the revival in Manila, Philippines. I rejoiced with him. He said, "Have lunch with my wife and myself and tell us something about India." I said, "Fine." We met in a beautiful restaurant and he began first by saying, "God has called me to Bombay. God is going to do great and beautiful things. God is going to save many people." Tears were running down his face. His wife jumped to her feet and said, "I will not go to India. I will not give up my beautiful home, nor anything. I will not go to India. I am not going," and right there she went off and cried. The husband's whole vision and mission for God came to a grinding halt because of his wife's refusal to obey God. Soon afterward she died of cancer and he had a heart attack and retired. God's will is that you walk in His Word as He has identified it to you. When He says to do something, just do it.

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WHAT IS GOD'S WILL?

I have been in the will of God since I was 17 years old. I do not remember not being in the will of God. I believe 95% of all Christians are in the will of God. The only way to be out of His will is to be in rebellion to His will. You might say, "God has not told me anything." Well, you are the most fortunate.

Ask my three boys. As long as I say nothing, they are safe. It is when I say, "Come here" that they work for me. They are in my will until I speak because they are my sons. When I speak, if they do not obey they are out of my will because they refuse to obey.

God does not talk directly to people every day; He ministers in your spirit and He ministers through the Word. Moses was in the desert 40 years before God said anything to him. If you expect God to talk to you every morning, you are going to miss God by a million miles. You would not follow if He did. He would be wasting His time with you. He puts His Spirit within you and your spirit tells you what to do.

Elijah was fed by ravens and watered by the brook. It was not easy to get the will of God through to him. God had to stop the ravens and dry up the brook

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before He could get his attention. Do not be like that. Do not make God take away everything you have before you say, “I have a need.” When God stopped the ravens from feeding Elijah and dried up the brook, the prophet said, “I had better get the will of God.” God said, “Up at the other end of the nation there is a little woman in Zarephath. Go bless her.”

2

GOD REVEALS HIS WILL TO MAN

Most Christians are in the will of God and have not rebelled against His will, and in times of crisis man has been uniquely and divinely guided by the voice of God.

ADAM, THE FIRST HUMAN TO FACE A CRISIS

Adam made a grave mistake when he sinned against God. God walked into the garden and with a strong, clear voice called unto Adam and said unto him, “*Where art thou?*” (Genesis 3:9).

In that first crisis Adam hid in the bushes, afraid, but God brought him out, stood him upright, and told him what he must do. God’s voice came through loud and clear as He spoke with compassion and direction. God provided Adam with a covering for his

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transgression: “*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them*” (Genesis 3:21).

THE ANTEDILUVIAN CRISIS

There was a man named Noah, the great, great, great, great grandson of Adam, and he observed the conditions of man and knew they could not continue. He saw that man had lost his tomorrows, that man was confused and given to every sensual emotion of his being. Noah saw that the social functions of mankind had far exceeded his spiritual relationship with God, and in discouragement he looked at himself and at those around him with distaste.

Jesus told the story of Noah’s time: “*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark*” (Matthew 24:38).

In this dark crisis Noah looked up and heard the voice of God. God told him to build an ark for his salvation and for the salvation of his household. Genesis 6:13, 17-20, “*And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. And, behold, I, even I,*

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do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive."

As far as Noah was concerned, the scintillating beauty of the rainbow had already blossomed on the bosom of the darkened sky. Noah began to labor hard and long to build the mammoth seagoing vessel because he had heard the voice of God. He knew what to do and how to do it because God revealed it.

It was the voice of God that changed Noah's situation during the gravest crisis mankind had known since his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. God was there and His voice was loud and clear!

ABRAHAM HEARD A VOICE

After the debacle of the Flood and the scientific

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erection of the gigantic tower of Babel, man was scattered over the face of the earth.

There was a man who lived in Ur of the Chaldees. He surveyed the world in which he lived. He knew of man's loss in the Garden and of all that God said at the Flood. Now he saw mankind worship idols and serve devils. The world was at a low ebb spiritually, but Abraham heard the voice of God: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing*" (Genesis 12:1-2).

The Abrahamic faith as we know it began with God speaking directly to Abraham. Abraham knew that he must follow God's voice, and he became the spiritual father of all believers because of his zeal to obey Him.

GOD SPOKE TO LOT AND SAVED HIM FROM DESTRUCTION

Abraham's nephew, Lot, was a prominent citizen of the most wicked city on earth. The wickedness of that city moved God to destroy it and wipe it from

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the map. But God would not act until He first spoke to Lot, His one representative in Sodom. God sent angels with a message of hope for Lot and his family. Genesis 19:15, *“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.”*

MOSES TALKED WITH GOD

If we draw aside the curtains of history, we will see that in every deep crisis the voice of God was there to lead, guide, direct, and strengthen man.

It was the startling voice of God which brought the man Moses out of the wilderness like a flaming fire to stand in Pharaoh’s court. It was the voice of God that transformed that lisping man into a veritable prophet, a prophet of tremendous depth and knowledge of God. Moses had wandered in the desert for 40 years. His life entered a crisis; he felt life was running out. Then at that moment God spoke to him. Exodus 3:6-8, *“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which*

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are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey....”

God’s voice came through loud and clear to Moses. As with Noah, because of God’s direction Moses knew exactly what to do and how to do it.

GOD SPOKE TO JOSHUA TO TAKE THE COUNTRY

After Moses was removed from the scene of earthly activity, God appointed Joshua as the leader of Israel. How could anyone fill the position of God’s hero, Moses? It was an awesome responsibility that Joshua faced. But in his time of crisis, God spoke to Joshua and transformed his life. Joshua 1:1-3, “*Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”*

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JESUS HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD

You ask, “How does God speak today?” Many times God speaks through His Word. It is most amazing to me that even the Lord Jesus Christ met His crisis by quoting the Bible. He knew that the strength of God’s Word could defeat every lie that the devil would bring against a human being.

At the time of the temptation of Christ, the devil misquoted scriptures to Him. The Lord always answered back, but not with His own words. Instead, He used the words of the Bible. Matthew 4:4, “*But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*”

Matthew 4:7, “*Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*”

Christ clearly is teaching that God’s Word is a buttress and a fortress and a power that protects us in the hour of temptation.

GOD’S COMMISSION TO THE DISCIPLES

The disciples of Jesus were commissioned to a worldwide ministry. They lived in a pagan world, a

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world that needed to hear the truth. However, the religious leaders hated Jesus and those who proclaimed His gospel. What a crisis they faced! Yet in the time of such a crisis, God spoke to the disciples and sent them out with great victory.

Men like Peter received the stamina to stand for the gospel regardless of the cost. John 21:18-19, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*”

Men like Paul received a worldwide vision of evangelism. Acts 16:9, “*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*”

GOD STILL SPEAKS TODAY

God is still speaking. Are you listening? In whatever crisis you face, God has a message for you. Open your heart, your eyes, and your life to His voice.

3

GOD'S WILL UNIQUELY REVEALED TO ME

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish” (Isaiah 41:10-11).

It is amazing to me that the Word of God has directed me in every great crisis of my life. I have never tried to use the Bible in a magical way, such as somehow trying to get God to talk to me through the Bible, but God Himself has taken the initiative and spoken to me through and by his Word.

The first instance in which God used the Bible to speak to me occurred when I was seventeen years of age. I had been sick unto death with tuberculosis and

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our doctor said I would live only two more hours. During that time God spoke to my heart, healed my body, and saved my soul. Three weeks after that fateful night I wanted to go preach.

Early one morning I walked into the dining room where my father was eating breakfast. I told him that I had definitely decided to preach and that another young man and I were leaving that day for a rural district to conduct a revival meeting in a school building. My father spoke roughly to me and warned me of the privations of ministers in general. He also reminded me of the money that he had already spent in preparing me to follow another vocation. He brusquely told me that without a doubt I would starve if I went out to preach and that I should expect no help from him.

As he walked out the door to go to work, he pointed a warning finger at me and said he expected to find me at home that evening.

To say I was brokenhearted would be putting the matter mildly; I was crushed! My father's unbending attitude brought not only sorrow, but also struck terror in my heart. "You will starve!" kept booming in my mind and heart. A seventeen-year-old youth

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thinks his dad is a fair authority on most subjects, especially on how to get along in life. My father's words caused the darkness of hell to cover my life.

I staggered back to my bedroom after I made my early morning announcement. I fell beside my bed weeping bitterly, trembling with the fear of disobeying either my heavenly Father or my earthly father.

While on my knees praying to Christ in desperation, the inner voice of divine guidance said to read Isaiah 41:10. Not being familiar with the passage I reached for my Bible, turned to the inspired writing, and began to read aloud, "*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*"

That moment is possibly too sacred to put into words. It very well may be impossible to describe the blending of the human and divine in that spiritually illuminating and holy invigorating conclave. I was humbled before Omnipotence as I realized how definitively, positively, and lovingly that God was speaking to an inexperienced youth.

Each phrase in Isaiah 41 spoke dynamically to

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my personal situation as if it had been written just for me!

“*Fear thou not....*” This direct command from my God had the greatest affect upon my mind and spirit. Like a cloud lifting, I felt fear dispelled from my heart instantly. Fear of the future was gone; fear of failure was gone; fear of hunger was gone! Suddenly within my breast, the music of triumph was sounding a victory march! God had performed a miracle in my life. A boy’s heart had been made into the heart of a man.

The second clause of scripture gave the reason for the first: “... *for I am with thee....*” As I gazed at those words through the prism of my tears they became a fortress of strength. Mother’s God was going with me to battle! Jehovah, who had performed the miracles of the Bible, would be going with me as a companion!—the God of Moses, of Joshua, of David, of Daniel! I laughed and I wept. I stood up and looked out over the lovely blue waters of St. Andrew’s Bay, then I knelt again by the bed. I had been transported into a new world. I felt ready to “run through a troop and jump over a wall.”

Again looking at the Scripture I read the third

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phrase: “*Be not dismayed....*” The Webster’s dictionary defines “dismay” as follows: “to deprive of courage, resolution, and initiative through the pressure of sudden fear or anxiety or great perplexity.”¹

This was my true condition. Fear had made me lose my courage for God. It had left me in a state of horrified amazement, but God marvelously dispelled the despair and had revealed to me that as His servant I would not know permanent defeat or despair.

The fourth phrase contained the positive source of deliverance: “*For I am thy God....*” My God was the living God, not an idol of stone or gold, not a god with ears that cannot hear and eyes that cannot see, but “*...a very present help in trouble*” (Psalm 46:1). How thrilling to a young man for God to speak with such assurance.

I then read the fifth phrase. It stated, “*I will strengthen thee....*” You cannot imagine what those words meant to a youth so recently up from a bed of tuberculosis. I needed divine strength, for the battle would be long and hard. I could feel it flowing into every fiber of my being as I knelt in God’s presence.

In the sixth clause God continued: “*Yea, I will*

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help thee....” This was double assurance to me, a double promise. God was saying that in every emergency He would be there to assist me and give me strength.

The seventh phrase affirmed: “*Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*” God’s hand speaks of His power, of His authority. Knowing that God was holding me up with His right hand was the greatest security I could receive.

Any minister who could not go forth to preach having that group of promises in his briefcase would never be able to preach the gospel! Verse 10 explained the ministry, and verse 11 took care of the personal problems: “*Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.*”

This was to be my armor. I need not fight my own battles—God would fight them.

As I packed my small fiberboard suitcase to leave my father’s house, my heart was filled with love, joy, and faith. Fear and dismay were defeated. Weakness was past. God had undergirded my spiritual life.

God's Will Uniquely Revealed to Me

From that hour God has helped me to bring deliverance to hundreds of people who are bound by fear. If there is any special gift of God in my life, it is to assist and lift from depression those who are afflicted by fear.

May I suggest that God is no respecter of persons? Acts 10:34, *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.”*

II Peter 1:20, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”*

Take Isaiah 41:10-11 for yourself. Use it to meet your own needs, just like He made it meet mine.

GOD'S WILL IS ENCOURAGEMENT

Luke 4:18, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*

The second time that God spoke to me through His Word was after I had started preaching. I left my

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home in Florida to preach at the age of seventeen. I worked my way north and eighteen months later I stopped to visit some close relatives in Tennessee. One of them came to the meeting to hear me preach. After the meeting I heard her talking in an adjoining room saying, “Lester would not make a preacher in a thousand years.”

No one could ever know how this hurt me. She may have forgotten it within a few minutes after saying it, but it went deep into my heart. I was struggling hard in that little country schoolhouse to be a successful minister of the gospel. Then one of my loved ones said I could not make it in a thousand years.

I lay on the floor weeping before God, and as I did the Lord told me to read Luke 4:18.

No human could ever know the sensation which moved through my being as I read this direct word from God to me.

“The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me....” If God’s Spirit is upon a person, he cannot fail. If God’s Spirit is upon a person, he must achieve greatness and blessing. It is better to be clothed with God’s Spirit than with any earthly garment.

God's Will Uniquely Revealed to Me

“He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor....” This was a divine directive as to what I was to do with my life. God has anointed me to preach the gospel. I am not to go into business. I am not to be occupied with secular things. I am an anointed man for a certain job and that job is to preach the gospel! I could feel my heart being transformed as God was doing a deep work of grace within me.

I was to preach the gospel to the poor. Immediately I thought of the underprivileged, the outcasts, and the low-salaried people of our nation. But God rebuked me and said to my soul, “All humans are poor; they are poor in spirit; they are poor because they do not have heaven’s riches. The heathen are poor in that they have never heard. The denominational members are poor in that they do not have heaven’s riches.”

A new meaning came to my heart regarding preaching the gospel to the poor. I minister to those in out-of-the-way places and to those for whom it seems nothing has been prepared. This has been my lot from the day I began to minister.

I looked at the verse again. It read, *“...he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted....”* This touched

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me very deeply that my ministry was a healing ministry, that I was to be used to heal hearts, spirits, and minds. God was sending me to help the crushed, to bring joyful life again to those who felt they were castaways and disappointed in life.

God had given me a ministry of healing the brokenhearted. As I look back on my ministry, I can see that counseling with others has been a very important part of my life. It has been easy for me to help heal those who have had deep disappointments.

TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES

I Looked to see what else God had to say to me, I read, “...*to preach deliverance to the captives...*”

I immediately began to minister in jails, hospitals, and places of this nature with great blessing. But God slowly spoke to me and told me that the emphasis was spiritual. Millions are captive of the devil through demon possession and through tormenting habits such as alcoholism, nicotine, gambling, adultery, lying, etc.

There are literally millions today who desperately need divine deliverance. How can they hear without

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a preacher? These millions of captives will never be delivered unless we preach the good news that Christ sets us free, and they will not be set free unless we preach and emphasize the delivering power of Jesus.

RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND

God's Word overwhelmed me as I continued to read, "...*recovering of sight to the blind...*"

We live in a world where people once could see the truth, but now truth has become dim to them. God was sending me to help the spiritually blind so they may see the truth, see God's anointing, and see what God would have them be.

TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED

As I read, every word from the Bible was living, vibrant, and instructive. It continued, "...*to set at liberty them that are bruised...*"

There are people who are hurt. At one time they taught Sunday School, were deacons, or sang in the choir. But someone bruised them and they feel they cannot work for God anymore. They must have

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their chains loosened, their bonds broken, and be set free in the name of Jesus!

As I lay on the floor for about an hour that night, God taught me by His Word. It was life when Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:17, “...*flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*”

Certainly there are great truths which cannot be taught to us by any man, organization, or book. Only through the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit can we learn some of the richer truths of God. God has seen fit to do this for me through His Word.

May He speak to you in the grave crises of your life by His Word—the Bible.

GOD’S WILL FOR WORLD MISSIONS

John 15:16, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*”

One of the great and desperate crises of my life was the day I left home and parents to go around the

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world as a missionary.

I had preached through several states for three years, but now I was setting out to minister in many countries of the world. I was not especially stirred emotionally about going around the world until at the railway station. I bade goodbye to my parents, brothers, and sister and the train began to slowly pull out of the station.

MOBILE, ALABAMA

Being rather close-mouthed I had not said anything about finances to anyone. As my hometown faded back of me and I could hear the roar of the iron wheels beneath me, I realized I was completely on my own. I had asked no church to sponsor me nor had I communicated with any organization or denomination. God had called me supernaturally to go and I must go.

As I sat there on the train realizing I had no earthly means with which to go around the world, and no human assistance to depend on, tears burst from my eyes and I began to weep.

There were several women watching me from across the train coach. I heard one say to the other,

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“Poor little dear, he never left home before.”

What they said upset me because they were wrong. I had been away from home for three years. It was not my going away that affected me. It was the fact that I had cut loose every cord from my family, my homeland, and from the churches that I knew, and I was venturing forth into remote lands without any pledged support. I knew I must depend completely upon God to supply my needs.

THE CHOICE OF THE ALMIGHTY

Sitting on the train weeping, God in His love and kindness spoke to me within the innermost resources of my heart, saying, “Read John 15:16.” It said, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you....*”

Something thundered through my being louder than the most resounding thunder I had ever heard. Within myself I exclaimed: “I haven’t chosen God, He has called me. I am God’s. He is responsible. He is the one who chose me.”

I then reasoned that if God made the choice, it would have to be successful. Therefore, there was absolutely nothing to fear or any need for apprehension.

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It is impossible to explain to another human being the ecstasy that went through my being at that moment. I realized that I had not chosen to make a name for myself, to become a missionary, or to be a preacher. I had only answered the call of God.

This truth brought great satisfaction to my soul. My life and ministry were functioning, operating, and going by the choice of God and by the decision of God.

My weeping was over! I looked back to see what else God would have for me in such a choice scripture. The next words were, “...*and ordained you...*”

I remembered the year before, when I was nineteen, and had been ordained by Reverend Ernest Williams and others at the conference in North Little Rock, Arkansas. I had been licensed to preach by the district superintendent in Memphis, Tennessee about a year before that. I appreciated these godly men laying their hands upon me and doing what they could, but here God spoke and said, “...*I have ordained you...*” This sent something through my being far different from anything I had ever felt. It was as if some earthly king had commissioned me to do a special duty that no one else could do for him.

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Something within me came awake. I mused, “I am ordained of God to do God’s work.” The meaning of ordination came vividly before me. It meant an anointing, that I was anointed of God to do His work and nothing could prevent success.

As I thought of the nations where I would minister, I knew souls would have to be saved, lives would have to be changed, and glory would have to be apparent simply because I was ordained of God. Ordination means to be set aside for a specific use, and I knew that God had forever set me aside to love all the nations of the world, to do missionary work throughout the entire earth, to show forth His love to the masses of humanity.

After this had settled on my soul for some time the thought came to me that this scripture may have something more, and I looked further into the verse.

The joy of discovering this scripture by the Holy Spirit was so overwhelming that I could only take a word at a time as it came to me. I had forgotten the roar of the train wheels as they sped toward the West Coast, and I had forgotten about the two old ladies across the aisle who were more interested in me than in their own business. I looked again into the verse

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that God had given to me. The next words were, “...*that ye should go and bring forth fruit...*”

I almost left the seat and walked up and down the aisle with my hands raised. I just did not realize the Bible could speak so definitively and specifically to a human being. When I read, “...*that ye should go...*” I talked back to God and said, “Lord, that is exactly what I am doing. I am going!”

At that moment the word “gospel” was so very important to me. The first two letters of the word “gospel” spell “go.” I promised the Lord that I would never stop going and that I would go anywhere and everywhere to preach His Word.

Afterward the Lord directed me to read the full verse, so I looked at it again to see if there would be more blessing. After being chosen of God, ordained of God, going for God, bringing forth fruit for God, the next clause to catch my eye was, “...*and that your fruit should remain...*”

It's hard to describe what happened to me. It was as if electricity was turned on in my body and the voltage was going higher and higher! The ecstasy that went through my being was tremendous. It was

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as if God was thundering to me, “The fruit would remain!” Wherever in the world that I ministered for Him, the fruit would be there for others to enjoy. The fruit would be there for others to see. This has been the story of my life throughout the world. God has helped me to raise up churches, and those churches exist today—the fruit remains. There are literally thousands of people throughout the world who are evidence of this ministry.

I deeply rejoice because of this fruit that has remained. It fulfills the promise God gave me the day I started off around the world.

I had not yet read the complete verse so I went back for the final clause. It said, “...*that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*”

This was like a personal check all signed. My job simply was to fill out the amount and ask the Father for whatever I needed in Jesus’ name. He would then give it to me!

I must confess to you that through the years God has fulfilled this total promise to me. He has supplied all my needs and most of my desires. When I

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have wanted something, God in His great love and mercy has seen that my wants were satisfied. When I have wanted something of a spiritual nature, such as a new church building or a missionary project, God has been gracious and kind to me.

Until God used the Bible this way in my life, I did not realize that God could speak so forcibly and directly to us through His Word. This almost makes one feel that the Bible was written especially for him. This reveals the miraculous power of the Bible and that it is divine revelation. No other book can fit into every situation that a person may find himself.

May God use His Word to direct your life.

GOD'S WILL SAVED US FROM ROBBERS

Revelation 19:6, "*And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*"

When I traveled near the borders of Burma and Tibet with Reverend Howard Carter of London, many very interesting, exciting and unforgettable things took place.

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We saw unsurpassed scenery in the towering mountains. We encountered wildlife that we had never seen before or have seen since. We saw butterflies so large and multicolored that it was almost impossible to believe that they were real. We saw mud villages where humans lived in hovels and worked in the open fields.

During this three month journey on mule back in the hinterland of Asia, we visited and preached in mission stations of several denominations. We had seventeen rented mules in our caravan, our own cook, and a private guide. We slept in what is called “hay hotels,” the equivalent to horse inns, except mules stayed downstairs and crunched hay while humans slept in the loft where the hay is stored. We slept on folding army cots that we carried with us on the back of our mules. Our cook prepared our meals after buying food in the local market each day.

We knew this was wild and dangerous country. We were told by the British and American consuls in Kunming before we started that there were killings in the area.

We saw blood on the ground where the Communists had killed many people. There were robbers,

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possibly army fragments from the major Communist Army, which were fleeing from Chiang Kai-shek's forces at the time.

One day as our caravan was moving slowly along a lonely mountain path, three men stepped from the undergrowth with old-fashioned muskets in their hands and pointed them at us and said, "Who are you?" Our interpreter told who we were, and without saying very much these ragged and dirty men said they were part of the Communist Army.

The bandits led us down the path, not on our mules but walking with their guns aimed at our backs. It was a most uncomfortable feeling to have a man with a straggly beard and fierce eyes point an old-fashioned gun at our backs, not knowing at what moment they may decide to kill us.

Brother Carter was a relatively young man, just above 40 years old. I was now 21 years old and I had preached for four years. I had enjoyed preaching all through America for three years and had completed one year of overseas work in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China. Would the end be near the mountaintops of Tibet? Neither of us wanted to die on a Tibetan hillside by a brigand's bullet.

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In the various mission stations, we had heard of those who had been killed by such people. We had seen villages burned and places where executions had taken place, places where blood was still evident. We felt that God had sent us to minister in this reckless, divided, confused, and bloodthirsty land, but had God sent us here to die? As I walked along that path thinking of all these things, suddenly God spoke to me. He said, “Read Revelation 19:6.” I considered this unusual, but I reached into my shirt pocket and pulled out my little testament, which I kept there while traveling, and opened it. As I read, this became one of the most fascinating moments of my entire life.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

My first thought was that this surely is a happy verse, and it sounds as if I am already dead, hearing, *“...the voice of a great multitude and the voice of many waters....”*

Then God spoke back and said, “No, this is the loudness of my voice sounding like a mighty

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multitude, or like a tremendous cataract going over the escarpment. Or like a volume of thunderings peeling through the heavens in cosmic fury.”

They all were saying the same thing. It was the only thing they were saying in this verse: “*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*”

At that moment the truth hit my heart. I mused, “If God reigns, He is in control. If God reigns, no one else reigns. That means if this man tries to pull the trigger and it is not my time to go to be with God, it will not work. It will fail.” I became so overwhelmed that I turned around and looked at the men holding the guns and laughed. The one directly behind me dropped his eyes to the ground.

I said, “What do you want?”

In less than half an hour those three men said, “How much money do you have?” Our interpreter, who carried our local money, opened the bag and said, “This is what we have.” They said, “Give it to us.” He gave them our local currency and they said, “Now go on down the road.” They stepped back in the bush just as they had come out of the bush.

We were saved! As our caravan went on into the

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mud village, the people were amazed that we were still alive.

That night as we lay down to sleep I said, “Lord, the One who took us out brought us back.” Something inside me replied, “My voice is now with the multitude; my voice is now with the many waters; and my voice is now with the mighty thunderings saying, ‘Alleluia, my God omnipotent reigneth!’” He reigns right now in your situation, in the crises of your life. It is when you look on the wrong side, by observing the devil and your problems, that you do not see the strength of God. It is when you look first and continually to God that you see His power and strength. It is then that you can say with those who have gone on before, “...*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*” If He reigns, He governs. If He governs, He protects, keeps, and supplies.

So why don't you sing the song? It was my song of mighty deliverance. He reigns!

This was one of the great crises of my life and God came through loud and clear saying, “He reigns today.” My testimony is that He does reign!

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GOD'S WILL FOR TOMORROW

Jeremiah 33:9, “*And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.*”

In 1959, I departed South Bend, Indiana, with my family to do missionary work in Hong Kong, China. We raised up a new church that we named New Life Temple.

I gave up my lovely church and wonderful group of people in South Bend to do this missionary work. Since that time, I have come to realize that though God wanted me to raise up the church in Hong Kong, I should have put an associate minister in South Bend and returned to my headquarters after opening the church in Hong Kong. I soon discovered that without a strong home base the work on the field is limited in many ways.

After completing our ministry in Hong Kong, where we now have three churches, and ministering over a year in Manila at Bethel Temple, I returned to the United States to bless world missions. I traveled

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throughout America in the interest of men on the mission field. I soon realized that I needed a group to pray with and for me, that I needed a home base in order to be effective.

A turning point came one day when from South Bend I received a paper with 69 signatures on it saying, “We do not have a place of divine deliverance. Will you pray regarding this need?”

I did not know what to do. It had been a number of years since I pastored in South Bend. The world had gone through many changes.

I delayed for some months in answering this call, seeking God for His will for the people as well as seeking the will of God for myself. Eventually one of the ladies came to me and said, “Brother Sumrall, God spoke to me last night and said if you did not obey Him and open a church in this city, He would send someone else to do it, and you would be jealous of the great work he would do.”

As I had known this Christian woman for years, I took this very seriously and thanked her for counseling with me; however, I could not come to a point of decision.

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Later I was conducting missionary rallies in the state of Illinois. I was praying in a hotel room one night and said to the Lord, "Lord, I have had a kind offer from Denver, Colorado. One man promises he will give me a building if I will move my magazine and missionary headquarters there. I have offers from other cities asking to please come and build a work there. In the natural I would like to do this, but I know that I must obey You."

The next morning before leaving my room for breakfast, I was having a time of communion with the Lord. Mr. C.C. Ford and Reverend James Murphy were in the next room. God began to speak to me. He said, "The answer to your prayer is Jeremiah 33:9. You must accept the petition of these 69 people and build a work for Me in South Bend." However, I could not have told you what Jeremiah 33:9 said.

I opened my Bible quickly to read Jeremiah 33:9. It said "*And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.*"

I was simply startled. I looked at it time and time

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again. “*And it shall be to me a name of joy....*” I said, “Lord, will it be a name of joy to You?”

The Lord said, “Yes, it will.”

With tears I cried, “Lord, I will start it and it shall be unto You a name of joy!” Man had not spoken to me, but God did. He said, “It shall be to Him a name of joy!”

I looked back to the Word a few moments later to see what more God had to say. It read, “*...a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth....*” This seemed too much. This surely meant that God would do a great work in the church and that it would be a praise and an honor. The only reason people around the world would praise and honor a church is because blessings go out from it. Men and nations will have to know that it carries a tremendous missionary burden. There is a period of laying the foundation, but the church must grow and tower and be grand. People will look upon it and say, “There is a place where God’s Spirit and anointing rests.”

I do not believe I have ever done anything for God that has been fought against more fiercely by the devil, and by people, than that levied against our church in South Bend.

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It is possibly because of the very fact that God wants it to be a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth that the devil wants to stop it.

God spoke further in this verse and said, “...*which shall hear all the good that I do unto them...*” Because God said it, people around the world must hear of all the good that He does in South Bend, Indiana.

OUR WORLDWIDE OUTREACH

My films of divine deliverance and my audio and video lecture series’ go all over the world, and I have authored more than 100 books and study guides that help to equip the Body of Christ.

As God has opened doors, we have moved into other avenues of the media. Our first venture into electronic communications was radio. In 1968 we went on the air with WHME-FM 103. WHME stands for “World Harvest Missionary Evangelism.”

Our next thrust was television. It was in 1972 that our first Christian television station, WHMB-TV 40 (World Harvest Missionary and Broadcasting) was purchased.

In 1976, WHME-TV 46, the sister station to WHMB, went on the air in South Bend.

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One of the newer doors to open? Satellite! We are saturating the world with the gospel. The potential is mind boggling. I believe the key is mass evangelism, and God has placed the tools in our hands to lead millions to Christ.

The last clause is a little more difficult. It read, “...and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”

I do not quite understand, but this will be the attitude of others as they see all that God does for the church in South Bend. They will understand the goodness of God and they will understand that God is the One who gave it.

This certainly was one of the great crises of my life. Again God came through and used his Word, the Bible, to direct me. I would never have built our church in South Bend, Indiana if God had not spoken so clearly to me through His Word.

God indeed has proven to me that in every crisis of my life He would direct me through the Bible. God certainly has used His Word to guide my unworthy life.

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GOD'S WILL TO THE FINISH!

Psalm 71:18, "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

There is another time when God used His Word to direct me. It happened when preaching in the modern and exciting city of Brasilia, the new capital of Brazil, in South America. We were having a glorious time under a large tent. We were having a good revival meeting and I was enjoying it very much.

I had fasted for more than two weeks without eating a meal and preached twice a day. I found at the end of the fast that I had lost very little weight. I even felt stronger physically.

During this time of seeking God's face, I spoke to Him and said, "Lord, you have told others their position in life; you have shown others their life ministry. Would you be so kind as to reveal to me my future? I want to know my end ministry."

I remembered how the Lord had spoken to Peter concerning John, telling Peter that when he was old

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he would be led where he didn't want to go, speaking of the death that he would die. John 21:18-19, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”* This prophecy meant that Peter would not die young. Herod put him in jail in Jerusalem but could not kill him because Christ had prophesied that he would live to be an old man, though he was not an old man at the time Jesus said this to him.

I asked God to show me my end and the ministry I must fulfill. As I prayed it seemed like a storm entered my hotel room. The power of God came upon me. The anointing of the Lord came and God spoke to my heart that I would find the answer in Psalm 71:18.

Be assured that I did not at the moment know what was in that verse. I did not know what God was going to say to me. Kneeling beside the bed I opened my Bible and read Psalm 71:18. *“Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not;*

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until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." I looked at it and laughed, saying out loud, "One thing is for sure, I am to get old and greyheaded."

Through this verse, God promised me that for the rest of my life, even when old and greyheaded, my ministry would remain the same, that my force would remain strong, my ability to bless would remain, and my years would not reduce my ministry. I would minister with the vigor of youth all the days of my life.

Then the significance of the verse came into focus. God said, "*...until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation...*"

I was told to declare, "God is not dead. God is a God of miracles, of tremendous power, and a God that does amazing things!" Not only was I to be a witness to God's strength, but also to show His strength. It meant that I was to pray for the sick and see them healed. It meant that I was to pray with the unsaved so they will be converted. I was called of God to reveal His strength to this generation.

God continued, "*...and thy power to every one that is to come.*"

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The command clearly showed that I was to teach young ministers of God's power. God said I must help those who were to come after me to know His power. I must reveal to them how God will bless them as He blessed Elijah, David, Peter, Moses and anyone of those who have gone on before. God said it was my duty to reveal His power to those who come after me. I had been commissioned to teach young men, ministers, pastors, evangelists, and missionaries about one thing—and that is God's power. Once I knew my end-time ministry, I understood that it must be fulfilled. At that moment, I knew that I had to keep the faith and impart it to others.

I would not say that this last scripture was given to me during a major crisis. It certainly was not the same as when three bandits held their guns behind us in the mountains of Tibet, but this may have been more of a crisis than I was aware of. It may have been that I was moving from the dimension of middle life toward the afterglow of maturity. In His mercy, God was showing me what I was to do and be in the years ahead. Possibly no verse in the Bible could have spoken this more clearly. "*When I am old and greyheaded...*" revealed that I must show forth His strength to this generation and His power to all of them that come after me.

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GOD'S WILL FOR YOU

I want you to let God's Word guide you in the crises of your life. God is no respecter of persons. He does not make distinctions between His people. He will reveal to you how to live, and in your crises of life He will speak to you.

The Bible is His living Word. God can take one portion of it and make it live as if no one else was ever blessed by it except you!

In this glib world, by all means do not be guilty of saying "God has spoken," when He has not spoken. If your own spirit talks to you, do not call it God speaking. God has never spoken to any two people in history identically the same.

God is unique and diverse. Don't pressure God to do something your way; let Him speak to you as He wills. You will always be glad!

¹. Mish, Frank C., ed. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1988), "dismay," p. 364.

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Dr. Lester Sumrall

1913-1996



The voice of Dr. Lester Sumrall remains prominent in the Christian world today. More than 65 years of ministry in over 100 nations made Dr. Sumrall a respected source of wisdom and understanding. He was an author, teacher, missionary, evangelist, and the pastor and founder of Christian Center Church in South Bend, Indiana. Throughout his lifetime, Dr. Sumrall worked tirelessly to fulfill the Great Commission by carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. In 1957 he founded LeSEA, a multifaceted global outreach. Today LeSEA's outreaches blanket the world through television, satellite, FM and shortwave radio, and LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry®.

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A Prayer of Salvation

If Jesus should come today, would you be ready? When you say the following prayer from the depths of your heart and surrender to Him as the Lord of your life, He will come in instantly and forgive you of all your sins. As you trust Him, you will be filled with hope and peace that only Jesus can offer.

If you are ready to make this commitment, please pray the following prayer out loud:

Dear Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I do believe that you died and rose from the dead to save me from my sins. I want to be with you in heaven forever. Please forgive me of all my sins that I have committed. I here and now open my heart to You and ask You to come into my heart as Lord of my life and to be my personal Savior. Baptize me in your Spirit. Amen.

Now that you have given your life to Christ, it is important to pray and read the Bible on a daily basis. It also is important to attend a Bible-believing church regularly. Doing these things will help you to walk in continual fellowship with the Lord.

We would be happy to rejoice with you, please feel free to write us at:

Christian Center Church

530 E. Ireland Rd.

South Bend, IN 46614

You may also call us at:

574-291-3292 (ask for the pastoral staff)

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