

Pop Verses! Jeremiah 29:11

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Today “Pop Verse,” is another verse from the prophet Jeremiah. You will remember last week we heard from Jeremiah in Lamentations expressing his hope in God amid devastation. Jerusalem has been destroyed. Jeremiah was in great pain and despair. Yet he dared to hope. He knew if he waited confidently in the Lord, help would be on the way.

Today we hear Jeremiah continuing his message of hope. He is speaking on behalf of God as a prophet to the people of God who have been taken captive by Babylon. They miss their homeland. They were in a foreign land and wonder if God would ever deliver them. Then the prophet Jeremiah speaks these very familiar words to them. Our pop verse for today:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” –Jeremiah 29:11 It was a comforting word to the people of God. God would eventually bring healing and restore the people.

But we find ourselves thinking, that’s great, but what about me? What about God’s plan for me? Three times in this verse is the word, “plan.” What is God’s plan for me? I want hope. I want a future. I believe this is why we love this verse so much. Individually and collectively, we crave that hope that God does have a plan for us, a future for us. But perhaps you struggle with, “Does God really have a plan for me?”

I remember doing a Bible study on this verse many years ago and a lady in the study said, “Well if God has great plans for me, I wish God would let me know!”

Inevitably, when this verse is brought up many people want to know how to discover God’s hopeful plan for them. “If God has these wonderful plans of hope, then what are they?”

People continually come to me, desperately wanting to know God’s will. They often say, “I have a big decision, and I need to know what God wants me to do!” “I am at a crossroad, and I wonder what God’s will is for my life?”

God’s will is not a secret. Discovering God’s will is not some kind of existential game of hide and seek where God hides it and is amused by watching us try to find it. God deeply desires for us to know and do God’s will.

Unfortunately, many have the notion that discovering God’s will is reserved only for the spiritually elite. They hear friends speak about God as if God was at their breakfast table every morning, and then they wonder why they can’t hear God too. But being in tune with God’s will for us is not complicated. We complicate it.

So today we are going to look at how to find God’s will for ourselves and apply it. If finding God’s plan and will for us is not complicated, then why do we struggle with it? The answer is simple: We have a will, too! Quite often people know what God’s will is for them; they just don’t want to do it. They hide behind the statement, “Woe is me; I can’t find God’s will.” It is more like, “Woe is me; I don’t want to do what God wants me to do.”

I have discovered as a pastor that often when people struggle with God’s will in their lives it is a struggle of change or a struggle of pride. This is not always the case, but in most cases, somewhere in our struggles to find God’s will is either the obstacle of change or the obstacle of pride.

There are those who fear change so much that they have a spiritual block to hearing and doing God’s will. We are creatures of habit, and we get comfortable very easily. Therefore, we don’t like change. Sometimes this can be the real cause of our inability to find God’s will.

The unavoidable truth is that there is no growth, Christian or otherwise, there is no wholeness, there is no fulfillment, there is nothing worthwhile that happens in this gift of God called life without change. To refuse to change is to refuse the best God has to offer you and your life.

Pride can also be an obstacle for many who are struggling to find God's will. Too much pride can get us into a lot of trouble. We become filled with pride and we are totally oblivious to where it is leading us. This is why it is impossible to live out God's will when we are filled with pride. Pride makes us stubborn to God's will or it selfishly attaches conditions to God's will. Our pride often causes us to bargain with God: "Yes, Lord I will forgive this person as long as they apologize." Or "Yes, Lord, I will serve in the church as long as I get recognized for my efforts." Is it any wonder that we have a tough time finding God's will and living it out when we live our faith in this way?

Ask yourself: "Do I have an issue with change or pride?"

However, that may not help you. Perhaps you have prayerfully searched yourself and you know that your struggle with God's will is not a struggle of change or pride, and you are at a loss.

Sometimes when we struggle in our faith journey and have a difficult time discerning God's will for us, we need to get back to the fundamentals of our faith.

That can be found in Jeremiah 29:12-13 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. –

For us to truly know God's plan and hope for us we must seek God with all our heart. "All of your heart" means you are seeking a relationship with God. In that relationship you will discover the hope and future you need and desire. Here is today's message:

If you want to know the will of God, you must first seek the heart of God.

That's the problem. Many people are after God's will without seeking God's heart. And you will never find God's desire for you that way. Jesus would repeat the same message:

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." –Matthew 22

Jesus' answer was revolutionary. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He said if someone follows these two commands, he or she will keep the essence of the Law. Jesus was saying, "You don't have to memorize all these little rules and laws and worry yourself sick. All you have to do are two things and you have it. Here it is, Love God with all your being and love other people like you would love yourself. You do that and you have the Law down!"

You can see the Pharisees' jaws drop. They had dedicated their lives to over 613 laws. They interpreted and debated them. And along comes this carpenter from Nazareth and he wraps them all up in one sentence!

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

That is the heart of it all. This is God's will. God's will for us is to seek God's heart and be in a relationship with God. Out of that you will discover God's hope and future. Amen.