

# 10

## HOW TO BELIEVE GOD FOR YOUR FUTURE

I WAS VERY ANXIOUS FOR GOD to place me in my first full-time church while I was in seminary. After I had preached at a particular church in the Dallas-Fort Worth region under consideration to be their next pastor, Jeana and I would drive by there and think about what I would do if they would just call me to serve them. On the nights we did not drive by there, we would sit on the front porch awaiting their phone call. Hours stretched into days and days into weeks. Obviously, we did not end up going to this specific pastorate. I am still waiting for their call!

Even though I had served one church on the weekends as their pastor, I was so naive. It is embarrassing to think how we would jump any time the phone would ring, hoping it was the church we had preached in weeks before.

This journey was the first time I remember having to come through the process and just believe God. It has been repeated

numerous times since those seminary days. The mystery of the future still entices me to this day.

The future is something we want to know, yet is impossible to know. Nothing can cause more stress and distress than thinking about the future and its relationship to you. As a minister, you can become plagued by worry to the point that you become pitiful by your discontentment. This is not God's will for you or your ministry.

I have had to go back in my mind so many times to that dormitory room in the spring of my freshman year at college where the Lord gave me a powerful word for my future. In Psalm 75:6–7 it says:

Exaltation does not come from the east, the west,  
or the desert, for God is the judge: He brings down one  
and exalts another.

On that spring afternoon, I became convinced that God had an enormous plan for my life. What I needed to do was just believe God for my future.

As I have matured in life and in my walk with Christ, I have had to review those verses hundreds of times. Those life verses have held my hands in guidance and supported my knees in prayer. Is it easier now when decisions about the future arise? Not really. Yes, I do have a little history to think about what God has done and how He has worked in my life. However, it still comes back to the excruciating process of prayer over the process of time.

The great news that I have learned through experience is that when God chooses not to do something I thought He would do, it is for protection on my life. I was not very good at understanding this in the first phase of my ministry. When things did not go my way, I would feel rejected and discouraged. Today, I feel protected and loved! I feel that because I have learned to believe God for my future. How can you believe God for your future? You need to know these five things.

## KNOW WHAT GOD IS SAYING TO YOU

As I write this chapter, I am completing a painful prayer process pertaining to a huge opportunity in my life. It is an opportunity that has future written all over it. I have had to pray like never before, receive counsel from men I know and do not know, and live with what God has spoken to me for several weeks before it is confirmed or rejected. What I do know with confidence, even though the final outcome is God's decision, is that I am doing what I believe God wants me to do at this time.

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How do I know that? The Bible is the constant source from which I draw wells of insight. Each time I sense that God speaks, I mark the item in my Bible and date the experience. Additionally, I write down in my prayer journal what God has said and is saying to me about this futuristic possibility. I

share it with few to none and then put it on my points to pray about daily.

Once God speaks through the Word, I pray. In that prayer process, I exercise the practice of believing God for my future. I stand on His authority, the Word of God, and declare what God is saying to me. This builds my faith like nothing else. As you pray, ask God for His protection on your desire to please Him. He has protected me many times and He will protect you.

Therefore, it is essential to know what God is saying to you through His Word. He is speaking. Are you listening? You can only believe God when you know what He is saying to you.

## **KNOW YOURSELF WELL**

Each of you has been endowed with gifts from the Holy Spirit. Each of you has been called to express those gifts through a specific calling in ministry. God does not ignore the giftedness He has placed in you when He places His leadership upon your future. He will never lead you to do what He has not equipped you to do.

He may use a new calling or a renewed calling to refine you, develop you, or mature you. He knows your gifts, but He also knows all of His intentions for you when He created you. He realizes what your potential is in Him.

How well do you know yourself? Do you know your spiritual gifts? Have you re-evaluated that recently? How have you developed other skills in your life that may be what you might categorize as a spiritual gift? What are you passionate about right now? Has God been putting some new desires in your heart over the course

of the last few weeks, months, or years? Have you revisited your initial calling and even the initial years after it, to consider what He put in your heart in those early years? When is the last time something deeply spiritual occurred in you, altering you and perhaps even your future or desires? What do you want to do with the rest of your life?

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I believe there comes a time when we get very secure in who we are and what God has gifted us to be in life. We cease or at least restrain our aspirations, realizing the unique gift mixture within us and the unique calling to us. Are you there? Try to get to this place.

The water becomes very cloudy concerning our future until we know who we really are in life and ministry. Until this happens, we imagine ourselves to be in places we have no business being or doing things we are not really gifted or called to do. At this point, discontentment sets in about what we are doing and where we are doing it, further muddying the already cloudy water as we look toward our future. This is not God's will for any of us.

Re-evaluate who you are right now. Re-introduce yourself to you. There is a new you that sets in through maturity and development. Know yourself well. When you do, you are setting yourself up to believe God in a more productive way concerning your future.

## KNOW YOUR MISSION AND PURPOSE

I went through this process extensively this past year. God rattled my life with possibilities last year concerning my future. There was a time when so many things were possibilities, it appeared strongly that transition was about to take place. I was not looking for any of it to occur and I had initiated none of it, which made it even more frightening, but exciting. However, one by one, God took care of each one. I am still here in Northwest Arkansas. It was a tremendous experience for me to walk through because I felt so loved and protected by God. I have no regrets pertaining to my conduct or response to what God brought my way for discussion and consideration. It was a very healthy experience. As a minister, it is also a great blessing to know that God knows your cell phone number and e-mail address.

These experiences which began in February and ended by the late summer, as well as my dad's death just before Thanksgiving, moved me into a process of re-evaluating a lot of things about me, my church, my giftedness, my passions, my desires for my future, and, most of all, what needed to be my new or revised mission and purpose for the rest of my life.

Therefore, from Thanksgiving until just after the first of the year, I walked through this process. I got to know me again. I stopped long enough to evaluate my development in various areas. I did this with prayer from my lips, a pen in one hand, and a Bible in the other hand. I talked to God. I listened to God speak to me from His Word. I wrote in my prayer journal.

On January 4, 2006, it all came together. I began to write, based on what God had placed on my heart through the reading of Scripture. The following has become my new mission and purpose in life:

*My mission and purpose in life is to use my gifts, leadership, influence, and resources to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the entire world.*

From this statement, I began to write down four major areas I believed the Lord had placed on my heart about how He wanted me to accomplish my mission and purpose. In fact, under each of the four major areas, there is some detail about each one.

Daily, I pray through this one page document. It helps keep fresh on my mind what I am about in life. It also creates a level of accountability for me. This is my vision path.

All of this is future driven and I believe God for it daily. So much would have never occurred without the supernatural element intervening through it. I am amazed and astounded, even extremely humbled, by God's activity since that time toward the initial fulfillment of some God-sized matters. What God does is His determination. My role is to believe God for my future.

You can do this too. You need to know what God is saying to you. You need to know yourself well. You need to know your mission and purpose in life. Remember, God wants to use you in a maximum way to expand His kingdom throughout the ends

of the world. In order for Him to do that, all of this is part of the process spiritually. Enjoy the journey.

## KNOW THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK

When you follow the process I have written about in this chapter, the Lord may begin to bring some opportunities your way. They may or may not mean a geographical transition, but perhaps a transition in you or the ministry you serve. These opportunities may exist right now. I would counsel you to stop long enough to go through what I have stated in this chapter thus far. Then I believe it is important to consider asking yourself some hard questions. In fact, whatever kind of transition you face personally or in ministry, geographically or internally, these are good questions and right questions to ask yourself. These are some decision-making questions.

### *Q 1: Did this opportunity begin with God?*

Is God originating this, or did you begin it due to your interest in it? Is this you or God? First Thessalonians 5:24 says, *“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”*

If there is something clicking here, if God is calling you, He will do it. No one can stop the hand of God from working in your life.

### *Q 2: Am I willing to do it?*

Am I willing to walk away from this as much as I am willing to do it? God wants you to be willing to do anything, anywhere, at anytime. You need to be as willing to stay as you are to leave. I believe God searches for a willing heart before He makes His

will clear. Again, never forget: God wants you to be willing to do anything, anywhere, at anytime.

*Q 3: Is it God's timing?*

Just because something may come your way and you are willing to do it, it may not be God's exact timing. He may want you to do it, but just not now, perhaps later.

At the same time, there are times when God brings something that makes you wonder, "Does God not realize this is poor timing?" God's timing is not by your timetable or even your church's timetable. God does not live by your watch or calendar, but by seasons and moments. This may be His moment to express himself through you and your ministry. Whatever will bring Him the most glory is what it is all about anyway.

*Q 4: Is God saying anything to me through James 3:13–18?*

I will let you read this biblical account, but it is a very pivotal revelation concerning wisdom. James shows us the difference in wisdom that comes from the world and wisdom that comes from God. Wisdom is critical in all decision-making.

Human wisdom has the components of bitter envy, self-justification, evil possibilities, earthly or fleshly activity, confusion, is self-seeking, unspiritual, and can even be ignited by the demonic. I realize this is strong, but so much stuff we do in the name of being "spiritual" is very carnal and fleshly.

Conversely, God's wisdom has the components of purity, a willingness to yield, no hypocrisy, is full of good fruits, is gentle,

merciful, peaceful, and unwavering. This is strong and can be quite confirming for you.

Go through the text yourself. Ensure that human wisdom is not more existent than God's wisdom pertaining to your situation. This text may rule out this new opportunity for your future or it may become your cheerleader as a confirmation. Learn to make decisions based off of God's Word.

*Q 5: Does this decision demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit?*

Read Galatians 5:22–23 which gives the account of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. After you read it initially, ask yourself about each one of the fruits, “How is the \_\_\_\_\_ factor?” Place each of the fruits in the blank one at a time.

*Q 6: Does this decision bring glory to God?*

I believe each decision you make is to bring glory to God. This is not about you, so please remember this as you consider your future.

*Q 7: What is God saying to me?*

After working through these questions and others, be honest and answer this seventh question, “What is God saying to me?” I believe there are times when the Lord lets you have the privilege of choosing between two great options for your life. He looks at you and says, “You have worked through this. Your heart is pure. Do what you want to do.” He is your Father and you are His child. Just as you do with your children at times, God may choose to do this with you. Just ensure your decision

is God's best for you. He is into using you up to the maximum for the greatest glory unto himself alone.

By the way, always follow this as well: *When in doubt, don't!* Do not force something that is not right. Wait until you know, even though there will usually be an element of faith involved.

These are the right questions to ask yourself when you are facing some kind of transition.

As we move to closure, remember, I have talked to you about the importance of knowing what God is saying to you. I have encouraged you to know yourself well. I have highlighted the importance of knowing your mission and purpose in life and ministry. I have just given you the right questions to ask yourself when facing some kind of transition. All of these and more are very important to help you know how to believe God for your future. However, there is a final statement I want you to bank your life, family, and ministry upon.

## **KNOW THAT YOU CAN BELIEVE GOD**

When Paul was in the uncertain waters recorded in Acts 27, he declared to those on the storm-tossed boat, "Take courage . . . I believe God!" Life and ministry are full of uncertainty. Doing God's work may result in pain, loss, suffering, discouragement, and even, sometimes, death. This is why you need courage and faith in all matters in life. In order to be a minister who operates by faith, you are going to have to exercise courage and belief in God daily. People do not follow unclear and uncertain leaders. They yearn for clarity and confidence from you.

You can do this because you know who you have faith in as you live life and ministry. You are not trusting in yourself, but in God. Paul declared to his young preacher protégé, Timothy, some words every minister needs to have in his heart. He stated these words:

*. . . I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day (2 Tim. 1:12).*

Discontentedness and discouragement in ministry can be avoided and overcome when you live life and ministry believing God.

If we were sitting in a Starbucks conversing over a cup of coffee, discussing all the matters I have shared with you in this chapter, I would look at you at this time and say, “Sooner or later, you are just going to have to believe God.” It really comes down to believing God for your future. How do I know this?

## **MY FINAL WORDS TO YOU**

I want to close this chapter and book with a couple of thoughts for your consideration. Since ministry is so much about the future and preparing to engage it, it is essential that each minister know they can believe God for their future.

I know you can believe God for your future because you can trust God and His Word. His character is impeccable and He always stands by His Word. My friend, dear minister, believe God. Do not trust yourself, another minister, a new method, or

a creative tool. Trust God himself and His Word for your future life and ministry. You can trust Him.

I know you can believe God for your future because I have experienced His guidance and protection through 30 years of pastoral ministry. Thank God I am where I am and doing what I am doing. If I had gone to so many places I have imagined myself to be or done whatever it is I have imagined myself to do, I would not be in the center of the will of God and my success would have been limited or none. Thank God, He protects me when I do not know how to protect myself.

God knows what is best for you 24/7, every day of your life and ministry. Remember, He designed you.

Do not forget that. He has a purpose for you. He has a will and intention for you. From the womb of your mother, He formulated a role for you in life and ministry.

Pray for His guidance to be as clear as the sun. Pray for His protection to guard you on every side. I am so thankful God has done this with me for these 30 years of pastoral moments, of which 20 of those years have been in one church located in Northwest Arkansas.

One of the greatest privileges you have in life is be one of God's ministers. There are many things you need to know, but above all, you must know you can trust Him.

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MINISTRY.

When you trust Him, you will learn this one thing about ministry: There is nothing like it in the world.

**Remember:** *“I rise before dawn and cry out for help; I put my hope in Your word”* (Ps. 119:147).

*Also by Ronnie Floyd*

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