

What To Do When You Don't Know What To Do

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[0:00] Say thank you for the meal, but I have not eaten it yet. There's nothing like getting up to preach on a full stomach,! And then you don't know what's coming out. And so I just kind of got a plate back there.

I'm not going to say that's going to speed me up, but you don't have to worry. I am not a long-winded preacher. I don't believe I am. You might have something else to say when I'm done, but you might even question me being a preacher when I'm done.

Who knows? But I'm glad. It's glad to be here. Glad to bring my wife. That was my wife, Rose. That is Toby's younger sister. And I was talking to somebody that's known me.

It's good to see a number of men and ladies that I've known from years past and get to meet some other preachers or not get to meet them yet, but want to meet them. And some guys that I know that are in the ministry here that I saw years and years ago.

I was talking to the church yesterday. The second time that I ever preached, I was 16 years old, 1996. And I preached here at this church at a youth meeting at Pastor Gilbert's house.

[1:00] And so it's been a long time since I've been here. And just a real blessing to be back. Real good to see the faithful that have stayed faithful through the years. My wife and I have six kids.

We've got three girls and three boys. And they are back home right now doing really God only knows what. Amen. We're hoping that they're doing right. Now, we're blessed with good children. They all love the Lord from 22 all the way down to 8. And God's just really blessed us with a good family. So pray for us if you would. This is a man from my church, Brother Charles Ennebrad over here.

He is a Rock of Ages prison ministry and a minister. And he is down here in the California area ministering to a number of jails. And a real blessing just to kind of see. We've had two guys go out of our church just a couple of weeks ago.

My assistant pastor took a church in Texas. And he took a church in Michigan. It's hard for me to say that word being from Ohio. Michigan. Nope, nope.

[2:00] We don't say go blue in my presence anyhow. But anyhow, we've had a couple of different guys go out of the church there. I've been there for 13 and a half years, 10 years in New York as an associate pastor.

I like to call that position the sheepdog. It kept me in line of what my perspective was to the pastor. But I was there for 10 years, out here for 13 and a half. And being able to see him go to Michigan and then my assistant pastor go to Texas.

There's a bitter sweetness to that. But it's a blessing to be able to see men go out into the ministry. And so he is out of our church today. Tomorrow's another subject. We'll talk about that later.

But he's a good brother and it's always good to see him. Many of you know my dad. And that is a blessing. And I want to just ask you, employ you to pray for him.

He won't let you know, his body will, that he is having shooting pain. I was talking to him the other day and he said, I said, Dad, on a scale of 1 to 10, I tell people that your pain is probably a 12.

[2:58] He says, honestly, my pain level is probably between, somewhere between a 5 to 15. And I don't know that that's a level, but for him it is. And it's pretty severe.

He said he went to the doctor the other day and the doctor said, we're going to do a procedure here to see where you're at with the situation with your neck. I mean, he's got deterioration.

It's collapsing on top of nerves and just a whole lot of stuff. And he said, the doctor said, it's going to be really painful. And so the doctor did it and dad said, I didn't feel anything at all. We went back for

a checkup later and the doctor said, it's going to even be worse.

And he goes, again, I didn't feel anything at all. And so it's either cauterize the nerves or do opium. And so I think my dad's probably up for all of it. Who knows? But he needs to do something to get rid of that pain.

But if you know him, pray for him. It is the only thing that gets him from point A to point B. It is the only thing that keeps him sane. I think the ministry is a solace to the pain that he has.

[3:58] And so other than that, I think I've seen that man who was once a car thief, street fighter, just a, for the Lord, a soldier of the cross with his head in his hands, bawling because of the pain.

And so if you think of my father, you know, you don't have to text him or call him or anything like that. Just pray for him. He definitely needs it. And so I ask you to do that.

Again, it is a blessing to be here. Good to be around some other preachers and good to be around the brethren. This is a message that I have preached a couple of times before. I'm not polished.

I'm not an evangelist. I said the other day here at the church that I'm doing the work of the evangelist, but I'm a local church pastor. And so, but I have preached this message at a pastor's fellowship and I pray that it'll be a blessing to you, but it is not necessarily geared towards pastors, although it may affect those in the ministry.

I think it's geared towards any Christian this evening. So if you would turn to Judges chapter 20, Judges chapter 20. And if you know anything about the end of the book of Judges, it's not really the bedtime reading that you want to do with your kids, you know, especially chapter 19.

[5:09] I mean, it's probably one of the most gross, severe stories in the Bible. A story that is perpetrated by the men of Belial. Men who the Bible calls men of Belial.

Belial meaning worthless, meaning wicked. And they did a absolutely horrendous act here in Judges chapter 19. And you know that they did a, they violated a woman and she eventually died from that.

And it was just, it's just absolutely terrible. We come to Judges chapter 20. And now the rest of Israel is really taken back by this atrocity. It is something that is actually, the Bible says it.

Look, if you would, there in verse 30, and it says, And it was so that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day.

What had happened and, and the, the, from the, from the vileness that they had done to the repercussions of it, to the cutting up of this concubine, this woman, and sending her through all the 12 tribes, has never been done at this point, that all since Israel came around, since they crossed over the Red Sea.

[6:19] Roughly about a hundred years. Israel had never seen this before. You know, you say, what are we seeing today? Today, in our day and age, we're beginning to see a whole bunch of things that you probably never thought you'd ever see.

Men who dress up like girls and go and do vile, wicked things. Women who try to be like men. And, and it's being accepted in our society, quote unquote, right?

We're seeing things that we thought never would it be a day in America that you'd see that happen. This is what Israel was thinking. They got that, that bloody male come to them, each one of those tribes.

And they take that piece of that woman. And they're just like, I've never seen this done before ever in Israel. Listen, we've seen some pretty wicked things. The Bible records some pretty wicked things.

But since Israel became a nation, I mean, this was something that just took their, their breath away. I'll bet they had some sleepless nights. Some of those men, especially the one that opened the mail, you know, I mean that, that person where the post arrived and they gave them that package and said, look, there's a meeting and they want all of Israel to come together.

[7:18] I mean this, that man that had that job, I'll bet he had a couple of sleepless nights from opening up that package. Never had there been a thing done like this in Israel. It was done by a particular group of men from Geba in, that was a town that was in the tribe of Benjamin.

We find that in previous chapter 19, chapter 19, verse 14. So it was done by a few people. And we're not going to, we're not going to condemn Benjamin because of something they did. Be very careful of condemning.

And oftentimes we feel condemnation because of somebody who's close to us or we love or within our own family who does something wrong. I've been on the phone with people that have cried and they're upset about a family member or a child who's gone wayward.

And it really is pretty sad for them. And I don't know what that's like. I'm praying that I never will. I don't know. But, you know, we're not looking down on Benjamin just yet. We'll get to that point here in a minute.

It was a very peculiar people that did it. Sons of Belial from the town of Gibeah. But they were from the tribe of Benjamin. This thing was just absolutely wicked and never done before.

[8:22] I want to preach this evening as we look through chapter 20. And we'll look through most of this chapter. I want to preach on what to do when you don't know what to do. Now, as a pastor, it is not very flattering to get up behind the pulpit at any point in your ministry.

And I've been in it for 23 years. And look at your people and say, I don't know what's going on. I don't know if you watch movies or not. I don't really care if you do.

I am just carnal enough to have fun with. All right. And I watched a movie years ago about a submarine and the captain died. And there's the first mate. He comes up. He's the next guy in line. I don't know what you call him. Co-summerine captain. Sheepdog of the submarine. I don't know. The executive officer. There it is. And there's a first mate out there somewhere.

He's not that guy, right? He's just the kind of old salty sea dog. And in this movie, there was a great thing that I kind of took into my mind in my ministry. And that captain had died.

[9:22] And now that man's there. Everybody's looking at him. He had never been put in this position before. And he looked at the guy and said, I don't know what to do. And that old salty sea dog took him aside. And he said, don't you ever tell him you don't know what to do.

They're looking for leadership. But listen, sometimes that philosophy right there can be the detriment of us leaders. We need to let people know every once in a while. Listen, I don't know. We're not saying this. We're not saying that he doesn't know what to do. What we're saying is that I don't know what to do. And there's been multiple times in my life and in my ministry where I've looked out across to some things in my life.

And I've only voiced it a few times. But I'm like, I don't know what to do. This is a very practical message on what to do when you don't know what to do. Now we're going to look at what they did. And I'm going to say this. We're going to lay this out here first. The things that we're going to see them do are going to elicit amends from you. Because everything they do because of this is things that we would want you to do.

[10:21] We're going to look at the end of it and see how they kept falling on their face. And then we'll come to the reason of why. Let's have a word of prayer. And let's jump into this message here tonight. Father, I thank you for this time. I thank you for this opportunity, God, to open up the Bible.

Lord, this is a message that literally has come back to me at times, even as of recent. Where I've been like, Lord, I just need to practice what I'm preaching. Lord, I am not above this message just because I'm the one delivering it.

This is a message that will come back. Lord, it is the message that has gone into the thing and it will not return void. So, Father, I pray, Lord, that it will go into our hearts. Maybe there's somebody in this room.

I highly doubt, Lord, that we have everybody in this room knows exactly which way is up right now. Lord, I highly doubt that everybody in this room is standing solid, even though we're on the rock of ages.

Lord, that we're standing solid into what life is throwing at us. Lord, there could be confusion. And we know that God is not the author of confusion, but yet the psalmist says, Lord, put me not to confusion.

[11:22] Lord, we can be there at times in our own godly Christian walk. So, Father, I pray that this message today would be an encouragement, a

help. Lord, maybe something they could put back into the recesses of their mind and you could pull it out in time when they need it.

Lord, I know it's been a help to me and I pray, God, that you'd speak through me tonight. Lord, that you'd help us to get something from your word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Look, if you would, there at the end of chapter 19, he says this.

The first things that Israel did here are found in verses 1 through 20 of chapter 20. But at the end of chapter 19, it says a couple of things there. It says, consider of it, take advice, and speak your mind. I appreciate those words right there. Now, I don't know, you know, when a preacher gets up and he preaches a passage of scripture, I might preach it a different way than you preach it, right? And you go, well, that's not what it means. But you just let the Lord flow through it as I preach this.

Consider of it, take advice, and speak your mind. I see here the first things that we're seeing them do is that they're acting. They're not reacting.

[12:24] They're not reacting. As a Christian, I think you have everything built inside you to act and not to react. There are prisons full of people who reacted. And they reacted wrong.

It was just my second nature to do whatever it was. Or I was justified to let those feelings get it whelmed up in me. Man, I mean, you saw the atrocity. And I, at your own time, read this passage beforehand and see what Israel had to go through.

And you can understand, there should have been like this. The reaction would be opening up the package and go, oh my goodness. That would be the reaction. But then they stopped. And they considered, they took advice, and they spoke their mind.

They wanted to come at this situation, at this problem with the men of Gibeah, with wisdom. With a pace that would determine victory.

Instead of just coming, flying off the handle and reacting to something. Charging headlong into the battle without any support or any knowledge of what to do next.

[13:27] Many bad decisions have been made because people have reacted to something instead of acting. So I appreciate that end of that. And now we begin to see them doing that here in these next verses.

These next 20 verses show us a number of things that they did that we want every Christian in this church to do. Verse 1 and verse 11 says, Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as, what's the next two words?

What's the next two words? One man. Man, isn't it nice when the brethren dwell together in unity? We want everybody to act as one man. Unless it's them picking up stones as to stone us, right?

But other than that, we want them to act as one man. Look at verse 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered together against the city, knit together as one man. That means their mindset, their movements, their actions were formed and formulated in a picture of one person coming at them. I've never gone to Africa yet. I'm a continent there. And I believe it was in South Africa. A missionary years ago said that those tribes were still warring in his backyard. And he said he heard some of those tribes coming.

[14:40] And he says, You will never experience fear or also some form of excitement when those tribes are going around the back plain, going to go after another tribe. And he goes, They're all stepping at the same time.

400 guys going, Dun, dun, hoo. Dun, dun, hoo. Dun, dun, hoo. 400 guys as one man. I wouldn't want to stand in the way of that. One man, they come together to deal with this situation.

Boy, we love it when the brethren come together as one man. Unfortunately, tragedy has a way of uniting people. Well, you saw it. Remember years ago? I know exactly where I was standing.

I know exactly where I was. I was in Bible school in 2001, September 11th. And our foreman came out. And he was kind of like some idiot just flew his plane into the skyscraper up there in New York. And was like, we didn't know what it was. Just some dope. You know, like, we're like, okay, well, bad for him. Half hour later, he comes walking out a little pale, a little ashen. And he goes, another plane hit the South Tower.

[15:45] You know what happened? America, as much as you might not agree with everybody, you say, what happened? And they kind of came together. And there was some prayer. And there was some things going on as one man.

Tragedy is a way of bringing people together as one man. And they did. And listen, we want you to come together as one man. We want you to do, in verse 2, we want you to assemble as the people of God.

Look in verse 2. And the chief of all the people, even all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God. We want you to be assembled as the people of God.

Amen for that. Forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

Boy, what a wonderful thing it is to see the brethren dwell together in unity. Look at verses 3 through 7. This is something that is really, really important. They sought to know the truth of the matter before they acted on it.

[16:43] Man, how many missteps have been done before we've actually talked to both parties? You know there is another side to the coin that you're looking at. There is a tails to the heads. They have a side as well.

I've gotten calls multiple times where I'm dealing with somebody and I'll say, listen, I think you sound right, but he that cometh first in his own cause seemeth just. And there's another side to this. So I will listen and I will give what advice I can if God tells me to, but I need to talk to so-and-so to find out what is the truth. I don't know. And so what do they do?

They look at verses 3 through 7. It says, Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. That's just a little parenthesis. We'll bring it back to that parenthesis here in just a second. Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness? And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came to Geba. That belongeth to Benjamin. I and my concubine to lodge. And the men of Geba rose up against me and beset the house round about me by night and thought to have slain me.

[17:44] And my concubine have they forced and she is dead. And I took my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel. For they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

Behold, you are children of Israel. Give her your advice and counsel. They sought to know it.

Verses 8 and 9, they formulated a plan with counsel and wisdom to go up.

Verse 8, And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not, any of us, go to his tent. Neither will any of us turn into his house. But now this shall be the thing which we will do in Geba.

We will go up by lot against it. But like I said, you know what they did? They went to verse 12. They went to Benjamin. They went to the people where the family member was part of them.

And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? Hey, we've heard what the Levite had to say. Now we want to hear from you.

[18:42] We want to know his story. Is it correct? Is everything he's saying correct about the men of Geba and what they did? I appreciate this. Boy, would I love it if my church members would seek to know both sides of the story.

If they would flip the coin over and say there's another side. Boy, what a thing that would be. Now, men of Benjamin had heard it. The men of Benjamin heard it. You say, why? Because at the end of the last chapter, they cut that concubine up and they sent her in 12 pieces to all the tribe.

That means some elder sitting in the gate of one of the cities of Benjamin received a bloody piece of mail with a little note that said, The men of Geba, one of your family members, did this.

Along with every other tribe, Issachar and Zebulun and Dan and Gad and Asher and all the rest of them all received a different piece. But the men of Benjamin, that little parenthesis, knew what had happened.

But they didn't want to talk about it. They wanted to stand for their people. They wanted to stand for their family. That's very hard. Very hard. Listen, look at verse 10.

[19:48] Boy, this is a great one right here. Especially Baptist preachers love to talk about giving to the battle. And we will take 10 men of 100. What's 10 of 100? What is it?

It's your tithe. Yeah, yeah. Throughout all the tribes of Israel, And a hundred of a thousand and a thousand of ten thousand to the fed said to fed vigils for all the people that they may do when they come to Geba of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

You say, what did the people do? They gave to the battle. Man, I preached the message last year on giving right in the middle of the year. I don't preach that often on giving. I told this church last night, I said in about 10 people left.

One lady told me she stopped tithing. And then our offerings went up. Praise the Lord. I don't understand it. I can't understand it. I'm just saying, okay, God, whatever, man. I did what you wanted me to do.

I tried to speak the truth in love. And I painted it out. Listen, the Bible says, Jesus even says, you know, that God loveth a cheerful giver. And you're supposed to give as you meet it out.

[20:51] And I mean, if you read that, that's in red. So I'm pretty sure it's Jesus who said that. Right? And here's what they're doing. They're giving to forward the battle. Listen, if you're a tither in this room today, praise the Lord for that.

If you say, I don't believe in tithe, it's whatever. I'm fine with that too. Just listen. Here's what I'm going to say. Give as you have got his purpose in your heart. What he's done for me is I've purposed in my heart to keep tithing.

And he's blessed me for it. But I'm going to say this, that it is a blessing when the tithers give. It is a blessing. You say, what's it do? Yeah, the bills get paid.

But the preacher gets paid as well. That's what I live on. I was reading a Bible verse the other day. I didn't really quite like it as much because it was where Elijah went and got Elisha. And Elisha went and he killed the oxen.

And then he also boiled the oxen with the yoke of the oxen. And I had pulled a hammer out the other day. I was doing some work and I flipped it up in my hand and I caught it because I used to do all that stuff. I used to work with a hammer and nails and build some things.

[21:50] I was never really good, but I did it. I wouldn't hire me today. Okay, just to be honest with you. But I read that verse and I just quit a job of 12 years driving around cars, driving around for some different work that I had.

I have a little side job that I do on the side that's really not producing anything. The only thing I get is the church pays me. And I'm looking at that verse and it was like the Lord said, this is the way you're supposed to be paid.

And then I go to church and I look out at people and I just sit in my mind and I say, thank you. They don't know how appreciative I am that they're forwarding the battle. There's a family of eight that is living on their giving.

Man, let me tell you, just say thank you. Every pastor in this room that does tithe of the tithes, like Levites used to do, that tithe of the tithes would look, would sit here and say, thank you for forwarding the battle.

Thank you for taking 10 out of 100, 100 out of 1,000, 1,000 out of 10,000 and giving it to the need. That's what these men did. Man, there was some wisdom put out here.

[22:53] Everything they did was done right. I mean, I love that. They gave to the battle. Now, verses 12 through 14, something else that they did was they, I don't know, it's kind of not a Baptist preacher thing to say, but this is what we're supposed to be.

We're supposed to show peace with all men. You say, what did they do? They tried to seek a more peaceable resolution before doing conflict. Verses 12 through 14, You know what we're supposed to do?

We're supposed to live peaceably with all men. How about this one? Diplomacy before death. Wouldn't you like to see somebody converted before you have to kill them? So you don't have to kill them?

Come on. You look at those wicked people out there in this world today, and you know what I know, and you know the truth, that the only thing that'll change some of them stinking perverts that are out there is Jesus Christ. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

You know, we get all worked up in our Americanisms. Remember this, you were saved and given liberty to be a Christian, not an American. You better believe that. You better remind yourself of

that. You've been set at liberty to serve him, not to be an American.

[24:22] And I am red, white, and blue through and through. But I'm supposed to be a Christian first. And so when my Americanism flares up, and I look at what they're doing in our schools, and I look all over the place, and I'm just disgusted by it.

I need to remember this, that I'm supposed to be a Christian, and I'm supposed to give them the gospel. Because if they get saved, they can hide a multitude of sins. That's what we're supposed to do.

Diplomacy before death. How about diplomacy before death within the church walls? Matthew chapter 5, if you bring your gift before the altar. This is Old Testament, bring your gift before the altar thing. But listen, you bring your gift before the altar.

You come to church, and you say, I got a problem with so-and-so. We know what you're supposed to do. The Bible says you leave your gift at the altar. You go, and you find your brother, and you make it right. You know what I know as a father?

I don't like it when any of my kids bicker and don't get along. And then when they want to come to me and say, Dad, bless me, I say, you're mad at your brother and sister. Go get it right before I bless you. Don't you think I learned that from him?

[25:21] You know what he wants? He wants us to get along. And you go along to Matthew chapter 18. And if a brother has trespassed. Trespassed means they've gone across that little fence line with the tire hanging on it that says no trespassing.

Where you've come to them multiple times and said, Hey, look, they know that they're not supposed to go there. You know what we do? We don't give each other the benefit of the doubt. Man, they went against me. How do they know if you haven't told them yet? Now, if you've told them and they trespass, you're supposed to go to them.

Before you do that, just remember this. This needs to be something that if they do not listen, it still is brought up before the church. So maybe you just need to swallow your pride and suffer as a Christian.

How about that? But diplomacy before death. And that's what they did. Listen, they went out there and they looked at the men of Benjamin and said, this was just the Geibites.

This was just the men. We just want to put those guys to death. Look what the atrocity they did. You have that bloody piece of that arm back there that shows what they did. You know what they did. We don't want to hurt anybody else, but we have to separate this from us so that God can have His blessing upon our country.

[26:33] They went out and they did diplomacy before death. And you know it, the diplomacy failed. Diplomacy did not work. The men of Benjamin said no. They went out in verses 15 through 17 and they prepared.

They'd done everything right, man. They went out. Verse 15. The children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities, 26,000 men that drew sword beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered 700 chosen men.

That's 26,700 men that are on the Michigan side. Amen. Verse 16. Among all these people, there were 700 chosen men left-handed, every one that could sling stones and at Herod's breath did not miss.

And the men of Israel beside Benjamin were numbered 400,000 men that drew sword and all these were men of war. You know what he's saying? Everybody that came to battle for Israel had drawn blood before.

He's not saying that about all the men of Benjamin. Some of them had. Some of them were snipers with a slingshot. But 26,700 men versus 400,000 men.

[27:34] I like those odds. I think that's about 11 to 1. Man, I'm telling you, we're going to do right. This is going to be great. Look at verse 18. Look at verse 18. This is a good one. And the children of Israel rose and went up to the house of God.

And they asked counsel of God and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle? Which of us is going to go up, God? Against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up first.

They did it. They asked counsel of God. They went out in verse 19. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning and camped against Geba. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin.

And the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Geba. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Geba and were destroyed down to the ground by Israel. That's not what it says, does it? It says, That means the people that did everything right seemingly lost 22,000 people.

They went from 400,000 to 378,000 to still 26,700 men. Odds are still very much in their favor. Boy, don't you think that'd be a little discouraging?

[28:57] Don't you think when you do everything right, and let me tell you something, as a pastor, I've done everything right. No, I know I'm a sinner. You can see what I'm saying, gentlemen. I don't go out, and I don't purposely do things that are wrong.

I purposely do things that are right. And you know what sometimes I feel? No victories. How many times have I laid down, and I've been like, God, but Lord, we've canvassed in 13 years.

60,000 people, brother. 60,000 people. Every house in Lewiston, Idaho, and Clarkston, Washington, and Asotan, Washington, and we saw one person saved.

13 years. Yeah, amen. But one. 13 years of money, and time, and investment. Praise the Lord for that one.

She came out. She got saved. She got disciplined. She got baptized, and then she made it home to glory right away. She's not even tithing anymore. I remember she's sitting over here one day.

[30:01] I come into church, and she's a little old lady, and she goes, Pastor, she took my hand, and she goes, Pastor, I only had two dollars to put in the plate today. Do you think God's upset with me? I went, Sister, let me tell you about a story in the Bible.

About a little old lady who threw two mites in, and God saw everything about it. Now I'm telling you, it was awesome. I got two less dollars in my plate now. But she's home. She's in glory.

But 13 years. 13 years of, you say, oh, was the church going to grow? The church didn't grow at all from it. In fact, there's times where I've watched the church go like this, and this, and this, and this, and it went like this here recently, and back down.

Now it's back up just a little bit. You talk about, what is it, man? It's discouraging at times. It's discouraging at times. You do everything right, and you still lose some men.

Boy, that's difficult. You say, what'd they do? Verse 22. And the people of men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array, and the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

[31:01] You know what they did? They encouraged themselves. Don't we know a man of God, a man that's a man after God's own heart, who, when he was discouraged, encouraged himself in the Lord? That's exactly what they do. Everything they're doing is correct.

Quote, unquote. Everything they're doing seems what we would preach from our pulpits. Of what to do when you don't know what to do. My first major exodus, and I say my first major exodus in our church, I remember just feeling so demoralized.

We got in the church. I took the church at six people. I got voted in 100%. I don't know that those six people will take the same vote anymore, but you say, what happened?

We got the church up. I mean, it went from six. We had \$80,000 in debt, and we paid the church off. I mean, we painted everything, you know, just like charity, paint covers them all through their sins as well. Same with makeup and all that kind of, anyways, I'm sorry.

But, you know, we went out, we paid off some different things. We started putting a security system, windows and doors. I mean, we did a lot of work to it, and it was pretty stinking awesome watching what God did, and then I watched the church go from 80 down to 30.

[32:18] Over six months. Boom. No split. Just watching people leave, because God can do what he wants. You know what I am in the sheep fold? I'm the porter. You only mentioned once, I think. You say, what do I do?

I just open the door and let the shepherd take the sheep where he wants them to go. And I stand there and I go, bye. I'm never going to see you again.

And then I close the door to the thing, and I watch the shepherd lead his sheep out across that valley, and he leads them across the still waters into the green grass, and I just go, okay, I'll tend to the ones that are left. But I'm the porter, and I'm hurting, because I love them, because I pray for them every day.

I have them, as Paul said, in my heart. And I do. And they were, you say, well, what were they doing? And they were encouraging themselves, because there was 22,000 mothers and siblings that would go to bed that night without having fathers and brothers to protect their homes. 22,000 people having done everything right. You say, what do you do? Get back on the horse and ride. So what'd you do?

[33:30] When those people left, I just preached the next message God gave me, chambered another round, and went back to war. Scourged. But we did it.

God built the church back up. For a time. We'll get to that. Verse 23. And the children of Israel went up.

And remember, they had done this. They set the battle in the rain, like they did the first day, and they encouraged themselves in the Lord. And verse 23, and the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord unto even. I'll bet there was some, but there wasn't a dry eye.

And asked counsel of the Lord. See, they had expected that they would be going up to God with the spoils of victory instead of handfuls of dog tags.

And they asked counsel of the Lord, saying, shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother? The Lord said, go up against him. Hmm. Okay.

[34:28] You know, you know what you do when you don't know what you do? You just keep going to God. This is not the answer to my message. But this is what Moses did. I don't care how many gray hair there is in this room, and I mean no disrespect, but we still, not me, you guys, still come across some things where you don't know what to do.

Moses was 120 years old when five ladies come to him and said, our brother, our dad died with no male inheritance. What are male to get the inheritance? What are we to do? Here's a 120-year-old man who led a million people out through a desert who said, why are you asking me?

You know what he said? Let me go talk to God. What a wonderful thing. It doesn't matter how old you are, how wise you are, how experienced you are. You just keep going back to God, and that's what they did.

They're doing everything right. See, I keep doing this. They're doing everything right. God says, hey, say, Lord, we want to go back up.

Is this what you want? We're going to go again. You want us to go? He goes, go up against them. Okay, we're going. Verse 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

[35:41] And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again 18,000 men. All these men drew the sword.

26,700 men killed another 18,000. The numbers are down to 360,000 men from 400,000. Now, they are completely demoralized.

Verse 26. Then all the children of Israel and all the people went up and came into the house of God and wept and sat there before the Lord and fasted that day and even and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

Let me tell you about my second church split. It's actually second church exodus. This one was a split. This one, I still look down at my heart and I see scars.

So much so that one day I was out and I said, God, I don't like to have things against people. How am I towards the brother who caused the biggest issue?

[36:49] And I was coming out of one of the many coffee joints that I frequent, driving my truck and he was coming out of the barber shop right there and I got behind him and I pit maneuvered him into the curb.

I didn't do that. You say, I got behind him and I felt pity in my heart and I prayed for him and I said, God, I love him and I prayed for him and his wife and his kids.

But boy, it took me years to get to that point. You say, why? Because this exodus was not just him splitting the church. There was only 17 to 20 people that left because of that but along with that was another exodus of one time I'm driving to a pastor's fellowship.

I'm going to preach on how to encourage yourself in the Lord. Right? And I get to this, as we're driving there, I started naming off with my wife all the people that had left and 42 people that had left over the course of five months.

And we went from, again, 85 people down to lower than 40 and I'm sitting there going, what am I doing wrong? And I got up at a pastor's meeting and I said, open your Bible.

[37:55] I'm going to preach on how to encourage yourself in the Lord. I'm like crying like a baby. You say, what's going on? I don't know.

I literally don't know. I'm doing everything God's way. I'm doing everything like I just preached it. And I'm losing people. I don't know what to do.

You say, what? What's the problem here? Well, what did they do wrong? They did something very wrong. Versus, the thing they should have done first, verses 21 and 25, Israel lost 40,000 men two times they went to battle.

Because they had still not done things correctly, even though it looked like they had. I am not a chef, but I make some mean Kraft macaroni and cheese.

I mean, my sister-in-law, Joy, one time says to me, she goes, you don't need to put a whole quarter of a stick of butter in there. And I was like, get out of my way. You put a whole quarter, you do exactly what that thing says, and even more butter.

[39:03] I think it was Julia Childs who said, butter makes everything better. That woman is in heaven just because of that statement. I made Kraft macaroni and cheese.

I mean, it was perfect. It wasn't this al dente junk that people call you still chewy. No, I mean, it was great. Except that I didn't have the milk. So I opened up the refrigerator and the only thing we had in there at that moment was coffee creamer that was French vanilla.

So I put a quarter of French vanilla in there and I stirred it up and it looked just like Kraft macaroni and cheese. It had the same texture. I mean, you put your spoon into it and your spoon just rests on that and the noodle just separates that spoon and just dives straight into it.

You take a spoonful of that and I spit it out immediately. You say, why? Because I did everything seemingly right, but one major ingredient was wrong. And I just took that whole box, two boxes actually, and I dumped it right in the trash.

You say, why? Because I did something wrong. I followed everything the way it was supposed to be except for one thing. In verses 1 through 22, we find that these people were unified as the people of God seeking the truth, giving of themselves to the solution through diplomacy and God's counsel, encouraging themselves in tragedy and seeking God's true will to fight or not.

[40:29] Verses 27 and 28, the next time they asked God if they should go out again to battle and they waited to hear God say, I will in their endeavor. Look at verse 27 and 28.

This is the third time. The children of Israel inquired of the Lord. The ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days saying, shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother?

Or shall I cease? The Lord said, go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them. Into your hand, thine hand. I said, what'd they do? This time before they did anything they waited to hear God say, I will. I said, but everything seemed right. This time they go out in verses 29 through 35, God gives them the victory.

Look at verse 35, they only lose I think 36 guys. Now they're down 359,970. 30 guys, they lost. But look what happens to Benjamin and Geba.

[41:36] Verse 35, Lord smote Benjamin before Israel and the children of Israel were destroyed of the Benjamites that day, 20 and 5,000 and 100 men and all these drew sore. That means only 1,600 were left. That's victory.

What's the difference between victory and defeat? Here's the message. The first time in verse 18, they asked God's counsel as to who should go up without asking Him if, if they should go up.

God, who should go? Oh, Judah. Eeny, meeny, miny Judah. They didn't ask if. You know what? We have all the right fundamentals of Christianity in our living, but it doesn't matter if God ain't in it. You can give. You can come together as one man. You can seek counsel. You can seek diplomacy. You can flip the coin and look at both sides. You can even come to God and ask Him. You know how many times as a pastor I've heard people come into me in my office and say, I've prayed about this. Sure you have. Sure you have. The second time in verse 23, they asked God if they should go up to battle, but here's the key.

[43:01] They asked Him if they should go up to battle after they had already set themselves in a ray to go up to battle. So what'd they do? They went out there and they did everything the same way and then they went, God, we're ready to go.

But, do you want us to go? God said, go up. Very generic answer. You say, why? They had already set themselves in a ray to do it anyhow. Let me read you some verses here.

I'll read you the verses just listen. Ezekiel 14, verses 1 through 4 says, Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me and sat before me and the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, these men have set their idols in their heart.

He can't see it, but God could. These men have set their idols in their heart and have put the stumbling block of iniquity before their face. Should I be inquired at all by them?

Therefore speak unto them and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, every mountain of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart and put the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and cometh to the prophet, I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols.

[44:12] So what'd they do? They set the battle in a ray. They said, This is what we want to do. This is what we purpose to do. This is what we're planning on doing. God, do you want us to do it? And God just says, You've already figured out your whole life, buddy.

Yeah, just go do it. Ooh. How many times am I guilty of that as a pastor? This is what we're going to go do. Of course, if you want us to.

And he goes, Yeah, you just go do it. Say, what are you doing this year? We're not canvassing this year. It's not because I don't believe in it. Please don't come to me later and tell me I'm wrong.

I got 13 years and 60,000 people that have gotten the gospel in our valley. You say, What are you doing this year? I'm just going to stop and let him tell me what he wants when the time comes. And you know what it's doing?

It's killing me inside. You say, What'd they do? What'd they do to get, What should you do when you don't know what to do? The third time, in verses 27 and 28, they asked God if they should go again to battle while they were sitting and waiting for God to answer, I will.

[45:20] No more setting the battle in array. Now they're doing this. Weeping. 40,000 men lost their lives. And you know what they're sitting there doing?

Lord, I'm not moving until you tell me. Just going to. It's your battle. Amen. I want to go to war. We've done everything right. But I'm just going to sit here and I'm going to wait patiently until you let it be known.

And this time God says, I will and I'll fight for you. And he did. Too many times, we as Christians set our life up the way we want it to and then say, God put your stamp of approval.

And he goes, let's go do what you want. We wonder why it's a failure. We wonder why we're discouraged and why we're depleted. Because we're not letting him direct us in everything.

Sometimes it's our modus operandi of doing things. If you've already purposed about something to do it and then you've prayed and said, this is what I'm going to do.

[46:25] I would just say, and you haven't heard really from God and you haven't really sought him and he hasn't opened the door. I would just sit on your haunches and wait a little while. It's not fun.

Thirteen years ago when I came to Lewiston I wrote on a board and it's now impressed. It will never come off on the whiteboard of my office. Something that Balaam said. He said, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more.

