

**GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO INDECISION**  
**Stressbusters - Part 4**  
**Rick Warren**

"He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:3b

GETTING GUIDANCE FROM GOD

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I NEED A GUIDE

"Everyone of us have strayed away like sheep! We have left God's paths to follow our own." Isa. 53:6

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Pr. 14:12 (NIV)

"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way." Ps. 25:9 (NIV)

2. \_\_\_\_\_ IN FAITH FOR DIRECTION

"If you want to know what God really wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; but ... be sure that you really expect him to tell you... If you don't ask in faith, don't expect the Lord to give you any solid answer." James 1:5-6 (LB)

3. \_\_\_\_\_ FOR GOD'S RESPONSE

"God does speak -- sometimes one way and sometimes another -- even though people may not understand it." Job 33:14 (NCV)

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH

The Bible ... Teachers ... Impressions ... Circumstances ... Pain

4. \_\_\_\_\_ GOD WHEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND

"Your road led by a pathway through the sea -- a pathway no one knew was there!" Ps. 77:19 (LB)

"The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter till the full light of day." Pr. 4:18 (NIV)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Pr. 3:5-6 (NIV)

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord ... When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong because the Lord is the one who holds his hand." Ps. 37:23-24 (NAS)

"In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality." Pr. 12:28 (NIV)

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Today we're continuing in our series we're calling Stressbusters. We're going verse by verse through Psalm 23 and looking at the antidotes to seven common causes of stress. We've already looked at the antidote to worry, to business, to damaged emotions. Today we're going to look at the antidote to the stress that is caused by indecision.

Life is a series of choices, of decisions. Success is basically a matter of making wise decisions. You make dumb decisions you fail in life. We make our decisions and then our decisions make us. Because every decision has a consequence, because we're human beings (which means we're prone to make mistakes) decision making can be very stressful because you don't know what's going to happen. Have you ever been afraid of making the wrong decision? Some of you right now are facing the stress of indecision. Just this week you've been facing a major issue. Should I hold on or should I let go? Should I get in or should I get out? Should I get married? Should I get a new job? Move? The stress of indecision begins to get to you.

The Bible says in James 1 that a double minded man is unstable in all of his ways. The Greek word for unstable literally means "stagger like a drunk." When you can't make up your mind in life you're going to stagger through life, bouncing off walls like a pinball in a pinball machine. Sometimes even after we make a decision we start second guessing ourselves -- "Did I do the right thing?" We waver back and forth and that causes stress.

Is there an antidote to that kind of stress that comes from decision making? Yes. In the fourth phrase of Psalm 23:3b "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The antidote to the stress of decision making is to let God guide you. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The good Shepherd not only feeds us, He leads us. He not only provides, He also guides. The good Shepherd not only protects, He also directs. God has said "I will guide you through this life if you trust Me."

He says I will guide you on the paths of righteousness. This just means the right path. Literally. Today, David would say, He keeps me on track. It's easy to get off track in life. It's easy to become preoccupied with trivia, majoring on the minors. God is the one who can keep you on track in life.

Some of you say you've tried this. You've asked God to guide you, to lead and direct you. But it's more confusing than before. You can't figure it out. Why is knowing God's will so difficult? Is God playing games with us? Is He playing hide and go seek? No. Does He get some kind of perverse pleasure watching me struggle through the maze of life wondering what I'm supposed to do? Of course not. God wants to guide you. He wants to guide you more than you want to be guided. God wants you to know His will more than you want to know it.

**One problem is we often look for the wrong thing when we're trying to find God's will.**

Some people go for the mystical approach. They are looking for a feeling. They want to be swept off their feet by some emotion -- a quiver in their liver. They are looking for some emotional release so they can say "That's how I know what God's will is!"

Others of you are more logical. You want a methodical approach to God's will, a mechanical approach. You want somebody to give you a recipe, a formula -- nine ways to always know God's will for your life. Apply the recipe. God's will is not a recipe.

Some people take a magical approach to God's will. They're looking for God to do some fantastic sign, He'll write it in the sky, call them on the phone, send them a telegram.

All of these ways lead to frustration and cause us to miss God's will. God's will is not a feeling, or a formula, or something He wants you to be frustrated or fearful about.

**So how do I know it? How do I let God guide me in the right path?**

The Bible says you do four things:

1. Admit I need a guide
2. Ask in faith for direction
3. Listen for God's response
4. Trust God when I don't understand

## 1. I NEED TO ADMIT I NEED A GUIDE

This is tough, especially for men. When we're lost do we want to stop and ask for directions? No. It is not in the nature of a man to stop and ask for directions. We just don't do it. So we stumble and get confused. Sheep, by nature, tend to wander, to get off the path. They need a good Shepherd and so do we. We tend to wander.

Isa. 53:6 "Everyone of us have strayed away like sheep! We have left God's paths to follow our own."

This is the real problem why you don't know God's will. The fact is that most of the time we don't want to follow God or anybody else whether we're a Christian or not. We want to go our own way. We don't want to admit we need direction, a guide.

Sheep have poor vision. They can't see very far. Instead of saying "He's as blind as a bat" you could say "He's as blind as a sheep". A sheep cannot see very far ahead. That's why, on a path, they don't know if that path is going to go off a cliff, lead them into a fire. They need a shepherd, someone to guide them. Likewise, you're like a sheep. Human beings can't see the future. They don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, much less next year or ten years from now. You don't even know what's going to happen this afternoon. God made you so that you don't see into the future no matter how much you try. Even with all the gimmicks to predict the future, you don't really know what's going to happen. Why did God do this? So that you would depend on Him. So He could be your guide.

The problem is because sheep don't see very well into the future and we don't either, we tend to stumble. Proverbs 14 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." We've all made a decision that at the time seemed right but later on turned out to be wrong. Some paths lead to dead ends. They lead nowhere. That's why it's easy to get off track. Just like sheep tend to wander and can't see into the future neither can we and so we stumble. But the first step is to just admit, "God, I need help."

Some people say God never speaks to them. They probably don't really want Him to. You probably don't think you even need a guide.

Psalms 25 "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way." Humble means I admit I need a guide.

## 2. ASK IN FAITH FOR DIRECTIONS

The Bible says, "Jesus said, 'Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and the door will be opened.'" Ask, seek, knock -- ASK. God wants you to learn to ask.

James 1 tells us how to get wisdom, "If you want to know what God really wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; *but* ... if you don't ask in faith, don't expect the Lord to give you any solid answer."

God is willing to give wisdom, He's anxious to give wisdom, He's waiting to give you wisdom, He wants to direct you in life, but you've got to have two things lined up: You've got to ask the right person -- God. You ask with the right attitude -- in faith, expecting an answer.

Have you ever asked God for something and didn't expect to get it? Sure you have. That's why you didn't get it. God works in our life according to faith. So many times we say, "God, please guide me!" and we walk away not even waiting for guidance. We just immediately start to work. We say, "God, I want you to give me wisdom, help me make the right decision." But we don't really expect Him to do that. We think it all depends on us.

God has promised wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view. Wisdom is the ability to make decisions the way God makes decisions. God always bats 1000. He never makes a bad decision. He never makes a mistake. He says if we trust Him and listen to Him, He will guide us. But we must ask in faith.

### 3. LISTEN FOR GOD'S RESPONSE

Right now, in this room, it's filled with radio waves and television waves. There are messages going across this room right now. You can't see them but if you had the proper reception you could tune in and hear it. A radio can pick up the reception. Why? Because it was created by its creator to pick up radio waves. God designed you to hear His voice. There is a receiver in you to get guidance from God. He wouldn't have made you without it. That's what makes you a human being. Out of all the creatures God created and put on the earth, only human beings have the ability to tune in to God to hear what He says.

If you don't hear God then,

- a) You have the receptor turned off -- you've never established a relationship with God.
- b) You're away from it all the time, you're not listening to it.
- c) You're on the wrong channel -- if God's on channel 13 and you're on channel 4 you're not going to pick it up.

God speaks all the time, we're just not tuned in. Job 33:14 "God does speak -- sometimes one way and sometimes another -- even though people may not understand it." Why wouldn't we understand it? Because we're not tuned in.

What channels does God use? There are many that He uses to speak to us. The Bible, teachers, impressions, circumstances, pain. He doesn't always speak the same way. The primary way that God speaks is through the Bible. A lot of the direction you need for life is already right here. God says life is a journey and He's given us a road map. He's given us a compass -- our conscious inside of us. And He's given us a guide -- His Spirit within us. If you're lost, it helps to have a road map and a compass but even more, it helps to have someone who's been there and who can actually guide you through that desert. The Bible is God's guide book, a road map, and if you don't read it you're going to get lost. It will help you negotiate the mazes and the directions you need in life. You need to read this book everyday. If you don't, it's like having the phone off the hook. God can't get through to you.

You say God never speaks to you. Are you reading the Bible everyday? No. If you've never memorized any verses in the book, God can't bring them to your mind. If you've never put anything into your mind, how can He bring it out at the right time? You need to read this book and fill your mind with it so you can know God's will. God's will is found in God's word. Read it systematically.

God speaks through teachers, Godly Bible teachers. Have you ever been in a crowd like at church and you feel the teacher is speaking directly to you? In that moment God is speaking directly to you. He's speaking through teachers. Am I saying that God speaks through me? Yes, I have no doubt that sometimes God uses words I say to speak to other people. But God does that through every Christian. God speaks through you. If you'll stay in tune with Him and learn His word, sometimes God will use you to say things to people that He wants to say to them. It's not something real fancy only reserved for pastors. God speaks through every believer at different times.

There is no way that I could figure out what everybody in a crowd needs and fit it all in one message so that everybody gets their need met. But as I'm preparing each week I say, "God, you know who's going to be there next

Sunday and You know the tough week they've been through. I don't, but You do. You know what they need to hear. Help me to say something You want to say to them." He uses it. That's one of the reasons why I never want to miss church. So many of the turning points in my life, major turning points, happened when I was listening to a Bible study or message. When the doors are open at the church, I want to be there, because I think "What if God has prepared a message for me and I don't show up?" Even when I'm on vacation, I don't like to miss church. I'll try to find a church somewhere around and go there. God uses teachers to speak to me. God may have had the pastor prepare the sermon just for me.

God speaks through impressions, inspirations, ideas, hunches. There are two extremes here. There is the rationalist who says, "God never speaks through impressions." And then there is the mystic who says, "Every impression is from God." That's obviously not true. You may have just had a bad burrito. Acid indigestion. God can give all kinds of impressions but so can gas. And the devil can give impressions. That's why you need to test it.

God uses circumstances to speak. He uses pain. God whispers to us in our pleasure, but He shouts to us in our pain. God gets your attention when you're in pain. There are no atheists in fox holes. When your life is on the line, everybody believes in God. Proverbs 20:30 (GN) "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."

God is speaking all the time. Do you have your ears on? Are you listening? If you listen, tune in, He will lead you on the right path. If you don't get in tune with God on a regular daily, moment by moment basis, you're going to miss God's path for your life -- the right path, the path He made you for. God often moves us in directions we don't understand.

In all of the Apollo Space launches to the moon they constantly had to do mid-course corrections. They didn't just aim the rocket and it went there automatically. Every second they were re-correcting. That's why you need to stay in daily contact with God. It's real easy to get off track. If you're out of fellowship with God for a day, two days, three days or longer you can really get your trajectory off. You're going to end up in a whole different place than God intended for you to end up in life. You need to stay in touch so He can make those mid-course corrections.

If you listen, if you tune in, you'll get on God's path. If you don't, you'll tend to live your own path. Following your own path leads to broken dreams, broken hearts, broken lives, broken homes. We have a society that is broken and falling down because people are not following the right path God intended for each of us to follow.

The good news is that the path of righteousness is also the road to recovery. When you come to God saying, "I'm way off base. I missed the path somewhere along the line. Maybe early in life or maybe just a few days ago. I need to get back on the path." That's the road to recovery. God can turn you back around.

Bob Wood:

Alcohol and drug addiction. I'd like to share with you how God has guided my life and led me in ways I never dreamed of and the positive changes that have happened in my life as a result. I came from a loving home where there was no alcoholism or abuse of any kind. I did all the normal things that kids did while I was growing up. I was very involved with sports but mainly soccer. During these years everything seemed fine until I got into Junior High School at which time I began experimenting with drugs and alcohol. I really liked the way they made me feel and thought it was cool at that time. I liked what it did so much that I began doing it on a regular basis. This ultimately led to harder drugs and heavier drinking the consequence of which was a lot more problems in my life such as being expelled from school, arguments at home, and continuous shortage of money. I lived in a constant state of confusion because of the direction my chemical abuse was leading me. In spite of numerous treatments at many rehab programs which I agreed to in order to satisfy my family, I continued to live in the denial of my addiction. Drugs and alcohol appeared to be my solution for a problem based on low self esteem. After three more years of this behavior my family couldn't take it anymore. Do the fact that I became a danger to my family and home and those I worked with. My family finally put their foot down and decided to fire me from the family business and to throw me out of the house unless I sobered up. The fear of being left with nothing caused me to try sobriety on my own, to redirect my path. But without the help of Jesus Christ, I failed miserably bringing more pain and frustration

into my life. It was obvious to everyone that the path I was following was one of misery and destruction created by my own self will. I'd have to say that the first way God led me was to recognize my need for Him. Next, God led me to realize I was powerless to change the hurts, habits and hang-ups that were destroying my life. This was the first step on my road to recovery. Soon after I went to an AA meeting and met a Christian man who invited me to this church and a program Celebrate Recovery which helped me realize that meetings were not enough and that my recovery depended upon my relationship to Jesus Christ. It was then I asked Him to be my Lord and Savior and Director of my life. He began to guide me away from my old path toward His Holy Word. I learned in the book of Proverbs that if I trust in Him with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, acknowledge Him in all my ways, He promises to make my path straight. As I started to walk down this path on my road to recovery He had planned for me, He gave me a deep desire to mend the destruction of my past through the ministry of Celebrate Recovery led by pastor John Baker, with the sincere hope of helping others who suffered as I did with addiction. His path also led me to the completion of a New Believers Bible Study which was necessary in order to build a solid foundation in this exciting new relationship with Christ. In addition to laying this new foundation, He also put on my heart to attend class 101, 201, 301 at which time I was baptized and became a member of this church and attended a Life Perspective Bible Study led by Pastor Tom Holladay, Kay Warren, and Dr. Ron Road, where they taught me more about His love for me and the plans He had for my future. The results of following this path that He planned for me has caused my relationship with Him to grow through prayer and regular reading of His word. God began leading me to see how I could make a real difference with my life through becoming a small group leader in Celebrate Recovery where I can be of service to those who attend our meetings. Also I became a lay pastor at our church which provides me with even more opportunities to serve the Lord Supper, baptize and help those in need. This earnest desire to serve my fellow man is only a gift that Jesus Christ could have blessed me with. He continues to bless my life by allowing me to share His love with the children in Adventure Land. Not only has He been faithful in guiding me in ministries, He's also been guiding me in other areas of my life such as bringing into my life a beautiful and kind and sincere woman who loves the Lord Jesus Christ as much or more than I do myself, as well as many men who love me, support me and encourage me in everything I do. As for my family and job... instead of firing me and telling me to move out of the house, they are now training me to take over the entire family business. But most of all He has seen fit to use me to bring members of my family to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and they are now active members of this church. My mother, who never gave up on me and faithfully prayed for me for ten years, is battling her fourth recurrence of cancer. Her faith continues to grow as God uses her to encourage others through the Caring Hearts ministry and the Cancer Support group. My sister has also been involved in the ministry for young adults. All things do work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose. It has only been a year and a half since my Lord has taken me off the path of misery and destruction and put me on the road to recovery. As for low self esteem, it completely disappeared when I was brought into the service of a loving God who would never leave me or forsake me. He continues to make it very clear that the only life worth living is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Let Jesus Christ do the driving in your life. You won't get lost. He'll direct you through the curves in life. Don't be afraid to trust God with your life. He promises to lead us down a path of righteousness for His name's sake now and into eternity.

I know some of you have been thinking you're too far off the path for God to get me back on, or I've wasted too much of my life. I want to say to you, you're dead wrong. No matter how far off the path you've gotten God can bring you back on. Sometimes God's going to lead you in paths that don't make sense. They may involve a tragedy, a crisis, a lot of pain. Sometimes the path that God has designed for your life will be hard to understand.

#### **4. TRUST GOD WHEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND**

You are not God. An example of this is from the Old Testament when the children of Israel were finally set free from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. Moses had gone to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go" and Pharaoh said he'd had enough, get out. They leave. The whole nation starts marching out to freedom and the first thing they come to is the Red Sea. On one side of them is a mountain range that is uncrossable. On the other side is another

mountain range that is uncrossable. In front of them is an ocean. Behind them, in hot pursuit, is the Egyptian army that has changed its mind and decided to come and slaughter them all. What is God going to do now? The path looks like a dead end. But God knew exactly what He wanted to do. He was preparing them for a miracle. He was preparing them for deliverance. He had not made a mistake because He could see what they could not see. He opened the Red Sea and they walked through.

Years later the Israelites looked back and in Psalm 77 they said, "Your road led by a pathway through the sea -- a pathway no one knew was there!"

Some of you are facing some dead ends right now -- financial, emotional, relational -- but it's not really a wall; it's a door. God can see a path that you don't know about. The path you're on right now may be one that is dark, despairing, discouraging, and you feel depressed about it and you think there is no way it will work out. Impossible. If you will keep on moving in faith, trust God even when you don't see a way, He can make a way. When you think it's not going to happen, if you'll keep on walking on that path God has put you on, it will become clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, and more understandable the longer you go, the longer you grow, the more you mature and the more you learn to be like Christ.

Life's a journey. Prov. 4:18 "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter till the full light of day." When dawn comes up, is it fully light? No. But as you go on in your life it will become clearer and clearer. One day you will stand in the full light of eternity and see why God chose that path particularly for you. That mystery, crisis, chaos now that you can see no value to, one day in the full light of eternity, you will understand. You'll view the big picture. You'll see God's purpose behind the path He specifically chose for you.

What do I do in the meantime? You do what Proverbs 3 says "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." What does He mean "don't lean on your own understanding"? Don't try to figure it out. You're not going to understand most of the things that happen in your life until you get to heaven.

Never judge the path God leads me on until I get to the end. Don't criticize an unfinished plan. Have patience. One day you'll realize why it was all happening. You'll see that God knows what He's doing. God does not make mistakes. God does not goof up. God knows what's best for you. You cannot see what He sees. He sees the future. He can see the end result. You can't. All those problems, heartaches, difficulties and delays, thorns in the flesh, physical ailments, all the things you ask "why" about, one day it's going to be clear. In the light of God's love. But in the meantime, lean not on your own understanding. Trust God.

Psalm 37 "The steps of a man are established by the Lord." Even before you were born, God knew the steps you would take. God created you with a custom plan. He has a path that when He created you, He designed you to walk down that path. He's not going to force you to walk down the path. You have a choice, an option. You can either go God's way or your way. One day you'll stand before God and He'll say "Did you take the path I led you on?" If you say, "No, I did it my way" He'll say, "Then have it your way." Your way doesn't lead to heaven. The path God has for you leads to heaven. The Bible says that the path you get on leads to destruction. It seems right but it leads to death.

God has a custom plan and path for your life. It's a big, big mistake for you to try to copy somebody else's life. You can't live their plan, you can't walk their path, you can't be what God made them to be. You were meant to be what God meant you to be and nobody else. God wants you to be you. He wants to be your guide. He'll hold your hand through life.

If you don't follow the plan, the path, that God created for you -- the path of righteousness -- then you will experience life's greatest tragedy which is a wasted life. This is not a minor issue. We're talking about whether you're going to waste your life or not, whether your life is going to count or not, whether you're going to be what God made you to be in this universe or you're going to go out and be something you think you ought to be. The greatest tragedy in life is to exist without ever having known or fulfilled the very reason you were made for. What a waste!

Sometimes God has paths cross. God has another person's path cross your path. He brings people, circumstances, instances into your life at the right time to get your attention to talk to you to help you grow. Obviously, part of God's path for your life was to be at Saddleback today. You are not here by coincidence. It's providence. You're here not by accident. You're here so Jesus Christ can say to you, "You matter to Me. I made you. I love you. I know everything about you. I died for you. I have a plan and a path for your life. I know where I want you to end up in life. I know how to get you there. I know how to get you there safely. I will walk you through life. You'll never go it alone if you'll just let me hold your hand and be your guide."

So much of our stress is unnecessary. It's irrelevant, unneeded. When you have a guide that says "I'll walk with you" and you stumble it's OK. "...When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong because the Lord is the one who holds his hand."

The ultimate question: Who's path are you going to follow in life? Your career track or God's plan for your life. I want to warn you and be honest with you. If you say, "God, I want to get back on the path that You plan for me and I want to live the way You want me to live" the path of righteousness is not necessarily the convenient path. It is not necessarily the easy path. It is not necessarily the most popular path. It won't be. God will want you to go differently from the crowd. It is not necessarily the path in life that is going to make you the most money. It is not the path that is going to be the least risky.

So why should you follow God's path?

"In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality." Pr. 12:28 God says, you go My way, you get the good life on earth and eternal life in heaven. You go your way, the way that seems right unto man, but it ends in death. It's your choice.