

#5 – So What Should I Do Now?

By: Kathleen E. High



Figure 1: Lilies of the field (Matt 6:28)

Living Beyond Work Loss

(Unemployed Support Group)

Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship

*Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.” Matt 6:33*

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Biblical Reflections #5:

“So What Should I Do Now?”

(Isaiah 30:21)

1) Introduction:

Part of my journey included a season in 2002/2003, which lasted few months, where I was engaging in a season of “Information Gathering.” During that season, God was showing me all the work that would need to be done. Among the things I understood would need to be done to accomplish this ‘big picture’, was that I would eventually be teaching principles I have learned in a church setting; and that to do so would involve creating some bible studies.

At the time, the State of California was in the midst of an economic crisis, so jobs in education were scarce and doors were not opening. As I was exploring my options, I found the doors to private practice, starting my own business, and working within the church started to open. As my season of information gathering came to an end, I realized if I am to work within the church setting, I would need more training in theological matters, so I enrolled at Fuller Seminary. The “big picture” God was showing me was so big, it was causing me to question my sanity. While I knew all the things he wanted me to do, imagining doing them all at one time, while still being challenged over making my house payment, overwhelmed me and contributed to my stress-induced psychotic break. Unfortunately, though, I did not yet understand that this ‘big picture’ he was showing me would take a lifetime to accomplish. I later came to understand that my time at Fuller was to help me understand: “Yes, I am hearing him correctly, so stay focused.” Since that “Information Gathering” season of

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2002/2003, I am finding opportunities to accomplish those things on my “God-Ordained To-Do List” slowly but surely.

So, when we started this support group for people who are unemployed, I was asked to do some speaking or teaching based on “all the wisdom I’ve collected” over the years as a result of this long journey I have been on. I knew right away that this was something of God because this is something he showed me would need to be done back in 2002/2003.

Today, as I work with people who are unemployed and feel as if they are “between a rock and a hard place,” I often hear them express frustration over the fact that they do not know what to do. My first response is to reflect back on my own journey and what I have learned from it:

Just get up and start walking. As you do, doors will open and close. That will be your instruction. As I think about this, I am reminded of a particular verse in Isaiah: 30:21.

2) **Primary Passage:**

(Note: All passages were taken from NASB¹ translation unless otherwise noted.)

Isaiah 30:21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

a) **Context of the Passage: God’s people have gotten away from him**

To fully understand what God was saying to his people through this prophetic word, it is important to understand the context in which this verse falls. Chapter 30 has two primary themes: 1) Judgment on God’s people for creating an alliance with Egypt; and 2) Promise of deliverance from the enemy.

Isiah 30:1-2

¹ “Woe to the rebellious children,” declares the LORD,
“Who execute a plan, but not Mine,
And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,

In order to add sin to sin;

² Who proceed down to Egypt

Without consulting Me,

To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh

And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

³ “Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame

And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.

b) **God sometimes allows affliction to get us to surrender.**

I am a very determined and persistent person. Consequently, my nature is to persist on something of importance to me in spite of obstacles, distractions, delays and challenges.

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I used to say, ‘When I encounter a brick wall, I will go over it, around it, through it, or under it if necessary to get where I am trying to go. The bigger that barrier becomes, the more determined I become.’ However, over the past many years of challenges I have encountered, I have eventually come to understand that “brick wall in my way” may not actually be an obstacle after all. Instead, sometimes those brick walls I encounter are actually like the barriers that line the freeways here in Southern California – they are actually “safety walls” to keep me in my lane, and are there to keep me on my correct path and to prevent me from being distracted. So now when I encounter repeated barriers to “my goal”, instead of assuming I just need to plug in even harder, I first stop and pray, “Lord, is this a barrier that requires persistence, or is this a safety wall to keep me on my path of destiny?”

V. 7 Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty. Therefore, I have called her “Rahab who has been exterminated.”

c) He then waits until we are willing to do things his way.

I can also now recognize that trait of dogged determination to achieve my own agenda in other people as well. When I see that pattern in other people, I so desperately want help them see what they are doing. Unfortunately, however, I have discovered the hard way that some people will only learn this lesson the hard way. Some people may even need to have an “80-MPH-collision with a brick wall” before they are willing to give up on their own agenda and learn to listen to God and to do things his way. As much as I would love to save people from that heartache, I must accept the fact that God gave them as much free will as he gave me; and that some lessons in life must, unfortunately, be learned the hard way.

V. 9 - For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen To the instruction of the LORD;

d) The people are not yet ready to give up their idolatry.

Sometimes our trials and tribulations are a result of our unwillingness to give up whatever interferes with our willingness to surrender to God (idolatry) and to be willing to do things God’s way.

V. 15 - For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said,

“In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength.” But you were not willing,¹⁶ And you said, “No, for we will flee on horses,” Therefore you shall flee! “And we will ride on swift *horses*,” Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

e) Passage is in future tense = prophetic

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During this season where God is trying to get your attention, he is also speaking promises to you. However, these promises are prophetic; and consequently will happen sometime in the future – after you have surrendered.

V. 18 - Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

f) He WILL provide – in a minimal fashion only

Other scriptures promise that God will be there and meet our needs during seasons of trials. And this is true. However, as I pressed in to understand what the first half of this verse says, I realized it is saying he will provide your basic needs, but will still keep you in a state of want, like a parent who “grounds” their teenager for rebellion, because he is still working on getting you to surrender. One thing I have learned through my formal education is that when we are comfortable, we become stagnant and don’t grow. Consequently “comfort zone” is actually a barrier to God’s agenda for our lives. However, when we face challenge, balanced with some support, we will grow and progress.

V. 20 - Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, *He*, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.

C/R: 1 Kings 22:27 - and say, ‘Thus says the king, ‘Put this man in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely.’”

g) Listen to your conscious – it is from God and he should be your teacher

Primary passage in context here:

Your conscious is not a visible teacher, but an invisible one: A voice in your head that tells you what is right and what is wrong. I have also learned that God can reveal to you what should be your next step through your conscious. Once you have learned how to listen to and respond to your conscious, then he will bring you earthly teachers to help you discern your way.

Isaiah 30:21 - Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

h) Then God’s people will turn away from their idolatry, and see the value of doing things God’s way.

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This commentary on V. 22 says it best: They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, [Isa. 30:22](#). The deliverance God shall work for them shall convince them that it is their interest, as well as duty, to serve him only; and they shall own that, as their trouble was brought upon them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition that they should not return to them. This is also the good effect of their seeing their teachers and hearing the word behind them; by this it shall appear that they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy—they shall break off from their best-beloved sin. (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

V. 22 - And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, *and* say to them, “Be gone!”

1) **Other Relevant Passages:**

To help understand this passage more fully, let us review some other scriptures which are relevant to this message.

a) **Even the best-intentioned believers can have difficulty following their own conscious**

Over the last few weeks, God has impressed upon me the idea that even his people are far from him. It has taken me a while to understand what he meant by that and why he was sharing this with me. While doing this study, it is becoming clear to me that he is telling me that most people today have grown numb to their conscious. Consequently, they will have difficulty trusting it when it does try to speak to them. I now understand the reason they don't always hear him is because their thought life is often “choked out by the cares of the world.” As the parable of the Sower and the Seeds reveals, for some, the seed (*God's word*) were scattered among the thorns, but were choked out.

Matt 13:1-9 - That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some *seeds* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and *yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matt 13:22 - And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

b) The “world” tells you that you can be and have anything you want given enough effort

In today’s world, we are told that you can do and be anything you want given enough effort. However, this is not true. The scriptures and all the scientific research on personality development are now saying the same thing – we are wired to respond to the world in a particular fashion. And that “wiring” is different for each of the different personality types. The world also tells us we are the masters of our universe and that we can do whatever we want, and that no one else has a right to complain because “It was MY CHOICE!” However, the world also forgets to tell us there are consequences to our choices and actions. Also the world does not understand that for believers, God has a plan for their lives, which can only be discovered through surrendering to his sometimes unpredictable ways of leading.

James 1:13-15 - Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Rom 12: 2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The scriptures also tell us we created to serve a particular function and that we are interdependent on each other:

Rom 12:3-5 - For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1Cor 12:17 - If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

We are born with a particular nature; but our environment will impact the development of our nature and talents. *(If you would like to explore how external factors affect the development of one’s nature further, work through the handout “True Self” to help you identify how your environmental influences have positively and negatively affected your personal development.)*

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c) **Does this mean you don't need to worry about work?**

I am not saying we should not be concerned about working. The scriptures tell us we are to work:

2 Thes 3:10 – “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is **not willing** to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

In addition, the Parable of the Talents also tells us we have been given talents to be used in service to him:

Matt 25:14-30 - “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

“Now after a long time the master of those slaves *came and *settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’

“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2) **So What Should I Do Now? -- Get up and start walking**

As you take in the information I give you, get in the habit repeatedly of asking yourself, “So how is this information speaking to me personally.” As you spend enough time in this process, you should start to notice patterns and themes regarding what the information is saying to you. For example, are you hearing “rest”, “develop new skills,” “get a ‘survival

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job’ for now”, “update your resume”, “wait on God”, “get more information about _____”, “I am doing the right things, but I need to keep doing them”.

Also get in the habit of asking “How is God speaking to me personally through this information?” Sometimes he will just give you words of edification or encouragement to continue. Other times, you will sense that he is telling you to do something specific, such as the things listed above. The important thing is to respond in faith and obedience once you get a sense of what you should be doing. – Whether or not it makes sense to you right now is not important.

As an education and career counselor, I am always preaching to my students/clients about the importance of having goals. The sooner you know what you are trying to accomplish, the more efficient your goal setting and decision making process can be. However, sometimes in life it is just not possible to know or understand “the big picture” before you start your journey. While I still believe it is crucial to have the big picture in mind and to have specific long-range and short-range goals, sometimes you just can’t begin with “the end in mind”, and just need to step out in faith. In these situations, you need to take an “emerging/unfolding” approach to your journey where you allow the big picture, patterns and goals emerge as you undertake your journey.

This is the philosophy behind expecting young adults to spend the first two years of their college education on general education. The assumption is that as you learn more about the world, you will also learn more about yourself, and consequently be able to make your plans based on what you discover about yourself from the journey. For example, I discovered my talent for writing by taking freshman English. That ultimately led to my undergraduate major of Communication – Public Relations. Learning my PR skills is what helped me to understand and believe it would be possible to do what God had called me to do.

Prov. 3:5-6 – Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

2 Cor 5:7 – for we walk by faith, not by sight

(If you would like to explore the concept of starting with the big picture vs. taking an emerging approach further, work through the handout “Dream Chaser’s & Goal Setter’s Journey” to help you see visually the process of finding and achieving the dream and many of the variables that affect the process.)

(If you would like to explore the concept of identifying what kind of jobs will take you to your dream job, then work through the worksheet, “Reaching Career Goals”.)

3) **Summary**

What these verses teach us can be summarized as, “Surrender to God’s way, wait on his timing, listen to your conscious, then get up and start moving, and take things one step at a time as God’s leading unfolds before your eyes.

4) Reflection:

To help you fully process this lesson, you are encouraged to take the time to answer the following questions. Follow-up reflection is a necessary part of the learning process. Feel free to write on additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Can you think of a time when you went out on your own plans and your own will, but did not first seek God’s guidance? What was the outcome? Were there any consequences?

Do you know how to hear God’ voice when he speaks to you?

Are there areas of surrender or control which you are still struggling with?

Do you ever find that circumstances interfere with your ability to listen to your conscious?

What is the next step you should be taking right now?

How is this lesson speaking to you personally?

CROSS REFERENCES

2Cor 1:3

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

Ephesians 1:3

³ ^(A)Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in ^(B)the heavenly *places* in Christ,

1Pet 1:33

^(A)Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ^(B)according to His great mercy ^(C)has caused us to be born again to ^(D)a living hope through the ^(E)resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Rom 15:5

⁵ Now may the ^(A)God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you ^(B)to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

2Cor 1:4

⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Isa 51:12

¹² “I, even I, am He who ^(A)comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of ^(B)man who dies
And of the son of man who is made ^(C)like grass,

2 Corinthians 7:6

⁶ But ^(A)God, who comforts the depressed, ^(B)comforted us by the coming of ^(C)Titus;

2 Corinthians 7:7

⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

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2 Corinthians 7:13

And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of ^(B)Titus, because his ^(C)spirit has been refreshed by you all.

2Cor 1:5

⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

2 Cor 4:10

¹⁰ ^(A)always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that ^(B)the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Phil 3:10

¹⁰ that I may ^(A)know Him and ^(B)the power of His resurrection and ^(C)the fellowship of His sufferings, being ^(D)conformed to His death;

Col 1:24

²⁴ ^(A)Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh ^(B)I do my share on behalf of ^(C)His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

2Cor 1:6

⁶ But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

2Cor 4:15

¹⁵ For all things *are* ^(A)for your sakes, so that the grace which is ^(B)spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

2Cor 12:15

¹⁵ I will ^(A)most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If ^(B)I love you more, am I to be loved less?

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Eph 3:1

¹ For this reason I, Paul, ^(A)the prisoner of ^(B)Christ Jesus ^(C)for the sake of you ^(D)Gentiles—

Eph 3:13

¹³ Therefore I ask you not ^(A)to lose heart at my tribulations ^(B)on your behalf, for they are your glory.

2Tim2:10

¹⁰ For this reason ^(A)I endure all things for ^(B)the sake of those who are chosen, ^(C)so that they also may obtain the ^(D)salvation which is in ^(E)Christ Jesus *and* with it ^(F)eternal glory.

2Cor 1:7

⁷ and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.

Rom 8:17

¹⁷ and if children, ^(A)heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, ^(B)if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

2Cor 1:8

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

Rom 1:13

¹³ ^(A)I do not want you to be unaware, ^(B)brethren, that often I ^(C)have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some ^(D)fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

Acts 19:23

²³ About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning ^(A)the Way.

1Cor 15:32

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³² If from human motives I ^(A)fought with wild beasts at ^(B)Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, ^(C)LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.

Acts 16:6

⁶ They passed through the ^(A)Phrygian and ^(B)Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in ^(C)Asia;

2Cor 1:9

⁹ indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

2Cor 1:10

¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

Rom 15:31

³¹ that I may be ^(A)rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my ^(B)service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the ^(C)saints;

1Tim 4:10

¹⁰ For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed ^(A)our hope on ^(B)the living God, who is ^(C)the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

2Cor 1:11

¹¹ you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.

Romans 15:30

³⁰ Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by ^(A)the love of the Spirit, to ^(B)strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

Phil 1:19

¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance ^(A)through your prayers and the provision of ^(B)the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

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Philemon 1:22

²² At the same time also prepare me a ^(A)lodging, for ^(B)I hope that through ^(C)your prayers ^(D)I will be given to you.