



# THE PASTOR'S PEN

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## The Problem With Saying “God Told Me To”

In my studying I often come across articles that are so well written that they need to be shared. This is one of those articles. In today’s world we are constantly hearing people say that God has told them to do things that are often the very opposite of what another person has claimed that God revealed to them. Because of this, conflicts arise in the churches and confusion is the result as both sides claim to be the final word in the matter.

How do we know who is right? As the unbelieving and doubting population listen to these claims, they point out the contradictions and conflicting views. They then use these claims as proof that God is not real or that if He is real, He is unreliable. This is why we need to be careful about declaring that we know exactly what God wants for us or from our church.

Seeing the problems that people have created, Nathan Eckman wrote the following article. While he is not a theologian (he works for the Marine Corps and attends Regent University), he makes some very good points that we all need to consider before we start saying that, “God told me....” Read on and see if you agree or disagree with him.

Seeking God’s will,

James

*If you’ve spent much time around Christians, you’ve probably heard someone refer to how God “told” them to do something. If you’re like me, you might have wondered what exactly they meant by that. Surely, God still speaks to His people in various ways, but could it be that we sometimes default to the explanation “God told me to” when our reason and emotional articulation fail? We don’t know why we are where we are—and we’re scared—so to avoid scrutiny from loved ones we throw up a reason no man dares question.*

*But when we claim our actions are dictated by God, we can damage cohesion among fellow believers and alienate ourselves from non-believers. We sometimes act like God’s direction for us privately is an unquestionable absolute. We claim where we are is unquestionably where God wants us, and shut out any questions or concerns from family and friends.*

*Declaring God told us to attend one church over another, for example, is the off-Internet equivalent of, “share this post if you’re not ashamed of God.” Just like many fearfully share those posts, many refuse to ask the intimate concern, “how are you so sure this is God’s will for you?” We’ve placed a barrier between our neighbor and ourselves, where we know what God wants and our friends do not. We eradicate conversation and close ourselves off and reserve admonishment, prayer requests and thought-provoking conversation for those not as in touch with what God wants from them.*

*Saying God unequivocally spoke His particular plan for our lives to us can also misrepresent God to other*

*believers and non-believers. If our minds change and we discover we've made a brash conclusion we can appear manipulative, using the will of God to eliminate earthly opposition from our wants. A change of plans would make God seem caprice, as if His mind wavers and plans change, and He can't decide what it is He wants from us.*

*To deny any direction from the Lord would be as foolish as declaring our entire understanding of it. So what should we make of these emotions, and unexplainable longings which we attribute as God's voice? Here are a few alternative ways to describe God directing your life.*

### ***Preface it With "I Feel"***

*When areas are gray and we're searching the Bible for an answer it doesn't specifically speak on (Should I watch this particular TV show?) it's best to remember our conclusion is based, ultimately, on how we feel and our personal*

*convictions at that point in time. And like all feelings, they'll most likely eventually change. We can acknowledge that we think the Holy Spirit is encouraging us toward a certain direction, but also acknowledge that we're not 100 percent sure.*

### ***Acknowledge Your Need for Continued Guidance***

*Even if you're convinced this is exactly what God wants you to do, throw a "but" on the end of the sentence for friendliness sake. "I feel God is telling me to spend this summer in Africa BUT I'd really appreciate some prayer as I continue to seek the Lord in this."*

### ***Recognize it's Only a Glimpse***

*What you know of your direction is an infinitesimal portion of the entire plan. Our prayers and our dreams are always too small, and so are our revelations. Recognize the Almighty's grand nature and understand what you know of your direction is an infinitesimal portion of the entire plan.*

### ***Practice Prayer***

*Deep thinking isn't praying. Logical flow charts depicting why God would have you fired at this time in your life isn't praying. Prayer silences us. Stills us. Through prayer we're reminded God is greater than any trouble. Pray. Be still and know He is God. Few people have ever bowed their head disobediently in prayer—it's the first step to obedience. If we want to obey God in our grand life decision, let's begin to obey Him with smaller decisions first.*

### ***Ask Around***

*We're feeble. Sometimes we can hardly decide where we want to eat on a Saturday night, let alone what job offer we should accept next or where God is calling us. Find strength in numbers and ask friends—rooted in Scripture and full of wisdom—to talk with you about your dilemma. Embrace the community around you and be willing to listen to them if they question the direction you're headed.*

*Let's let conversations about our direction become exactly that: conversations. Let's understand God's direction comes like the pages of a good book: the more we learn, the more questions we have. In the adventure and excitement of walking with our Lord, let us remain humble, expressing utmost vulnerability and understand that God—and His plan—is always greater than what our mouths can declare.*

So, now that you have read it, what do you think about Mr. Eckmans's ideas?

*James*