

God's Leading: A Thanksgiving Reflection

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | November 23, 2023



Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7 NIV84).

Over the past couple of years, this passage of Scripture has come to be a staple in my daily spiritual life. I have memorized it, recited it, and repeatedly found comfort in it. That's why for this blog, I want to rejoice in the Lord and give Him thanks for His gracious leading in my life. The following is just a short synopsis of God's wonderful leading in recent years.

Come and Reason Ministries was founded in 2010 as a not-for-profit Christian ministry with the goal of creating and sharing materials that help people grow in their knowledge of God and His methods and principles for human thriving, and to develop their God-given reasoning abilities to think and discern for themselves. We have sought various outlets to share our resources, and one of those has been the American Association of Christian Counselors annual meetings, where we have hosted a booth in their exhibit hall every year since our inception.

Through this outreach, we have met many wonderful Christians and made many friends who share our passion to advance God's kingdom of love in practical ways that result in health and wellbeing for people, both physically and mentally. Through these contacts, many doors for sharing have been opened—such as being introduced to editors at Intervarsity Press who accepted and published *The God-Shaped Brain*, as well as invitations to speak at various denominational and non-denominational churches and organizations around the country.

Now the story gets interesting! My wife, Christie, recalls that for the past several years, beginning around 2018 or 2019, Karl Benzio, MD, a psychiatrist, friend, and founder of Honey Lake Clinic (HLC), had frequently mentioned to me that they were searching for a Christian psychiatrist to be their medical director. I have no recollection of these comments, but Dr. Benzio has confirmed that he did, indeed, discuss this with me on more than one occasion at AACC events. I must not have paid this much attention or registered the need, likely because I had my full-time private practice in Chattanooga and didn't know any psychiatrists interested in moving to Florida. So, after three years of mentioning this opportunity and my mind not even noticing it, God moved in a different direction. However, God was already preparing our ministry for what was about to happen, and we didn't even know it.

In February 2021, Come and Reason Ministries' board members participated in a brainstorming retreat to pray and strategize how we could be more effective in advancing the message God has given us. From its inception, the ministry had been renting space at Collegedale City Hall for three hours each Saturday morning to conduct our class. This put us at the whims of the local government, policies, and competing events, and we occasionally had to move locations to conduct our class. Additionally, we had no facility for any other meetings or activities, such as potlucks and fellowship. We also realized that at any time, the city could cancel our agreement and we would be left scrambling for a place to meet. We were convicted that we needed to buy our own property to both ensure a stable meeting place and to expand our meeting and fellowship opportunities, as well as our sharing ministry. (We now have a great packing and shipping room to mail our free resources.)

After a prayerful search, we purchased our current building on July 20, 2021, and began renovations shortly thereafter, projecting that the renovations would take six to eight months, with a move-in no later than February 2022. Our plans included not only an expanded kitchen to accommodate potlucks, but also a state-of-the-art broadcast studio to allow our weekly classes to be live-streamed and for remote interactions. As things often go, it was delayed. But as you will see, God knew of our need before we did.

On April 25, 2022, I was nominated by Dr. Benzio to be Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine. The recruitment pitch stated that they wanted a chair to develop an integrated Christian psychiatry residency training program that would incorporate biblical truth with modern neuroscience. This vision was exactly what I had spent my career developing and the focus of many of my books, so after much prayer, Christie and I were convicted that God was leading. I accepted the job in July of 2022 with my start date as September 16.

What I didn't know, but God did, was that the professional building in Chattanooga where I located my psychiatric practice had been sold and that when my lease expired the new owner was not renewing any tenant leases. I would be out scrambling for a new professional office. My lease expired on September 30, 2022—the Lord's timing was perfect!

I moved to Lynchburg on September 14, 2022 and our ministry had our grand opening on October 22,

2022; and because of our ministries' decision to purchase the property and build a broadcast studio, I was able to continue teaching live interactive classes to our local group and live stream to our larger online audience. God foreknew and planned for these events! But that is not all ...

After I moved into temporary housing in Lynchburg in September 2022, we put our home in Chattanooga in the hands of a real estate agent to sell, but there was no interest shown at all; no one wanted to buy it. But we believed God was working, so we kept trusting. And we are so thankful the house did not sell at that time. For, as you might already know, the job at Liberty University did not work out. The university believed they would be able to obtain a contract with the local hospital for access to their inpatient psychiatric unit; however, that did not happen. And without an inpatient psychiatric unit, a residency program could not be established. Therefore, my job there ended on April 21, 2023—and I did not have a clue as to what my next job would be!

It just so happened that I had been scheduled for over six months to attend a mental health conference in Rome, Georgia, that began three days later on April 24, 2023. And it was at that event that I was introduced to the CEO of HLC and discussions began for me to be their medical director.

After an interview and onsite visit, I signed a contract on July 7, 2023, to be their medical director. Providentially, our home in Chattanooga came under contract on July 26, 2023, seven days before my first day at HLC, which was August 2, 2023. God was working!

But God knew that we not only needed to sell our Chattanooga home, but we also needed to find a home near HLC. Several homes in which we had serious interest sold to other buyers within hours of coming on the market, even before we could place an offer, but we were not discouraged because we knew God was leading and that those homes must not have been the ones for us. Eventually, we found a home and placed a contract, which was accepted—and the timing could not have been more perfect!

We closed on our Chattanooga home on October 31, 2023, and on our new home on November 2, 2023. Well, our wedding anniversary is November 1—we believe God was letting us know our marriage and our home are book-ended by His care!

I have no doubt that God has been guiding my entire life, but it hasn't often been so clearly marked out as this for me to see and recognize. I am so thankful to God for His love, goodness, faithfulness, and guidance in my life. When new difficulties and trials occur, I will remember God's leading in times like this. I find this insight to be true in my life:

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history (E.G. White, LS 196.2).

I encourage each of you to reflect on where God has led in your life and remember His leading, as it will bring encouragement as we face the events about to break upon the world.