



Message: **Father, Are You There?** | June 14, 2026 | **BL, Bosc, MZ** | Speaker: **Bob Koestler**

Good morning and welcome. We are so glad you are with us this morning to worship and to be in fellowship.

I want to start today with a story that Matthew West, the Christian singer and songwriter, has shared many times. Matthew West is known to write most of his songs based off letters written to him from people going through their joys and struggles of life. Who knows? If you write a letter to him about your situation – he may just write a song about it. Who knows? In fact, he wrote an entire song, and even a book, around an event he went to with his daughter. It's one of those stories that sticks with you because it's simple yet so profound. And as a Dad myself, this story of a father and his kid tugged at my heart, too.

Let's pray and we'll get started.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are the perfect Father who never leaves, who always listens, and whose voice we can trust. Speak to us today through Your Word. Remove every blindfold of doubt, fear, and distraction, and help us hear Your voice clearly. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Alright – Let me start with the story

One summer, Matthew West took his daughter to a father-daughter camp deep in the woods. One of the activities at the camp was what they called "a trust exercise". The process was for a group of counselors to blindfold all the daughters while the camp leaders instruct the dads, "In this exercise, you are going to guide your daughter through the woods, but you only get to give her three instructions. Repeat them as many times as you want before the walk begins."

The three instructions were:

1. I will never leave you.
2. You can ask me anything.
3. You should only listen to the sound of my voice.

The counselors stated the fathers and daughters could repeat these instructions over and over but only up to when the exercise began.

At first, the going was easy, right? Matthew had his hand on his daughter's shoulder, and they were walking and talking. They were making good progress.

Then came the first silent signal from the counselor - Dad had to remove his hand. Then the second signal - Dad could no longer speak unless she asked him something. The fathers and daughters had not counted on these wrinkles in this little game.

You can imagine what happened. The girls started drifting off the path. Matthew's daughter began to wander. Right then, the counselor stepped in and said, "Here, follow me - I'll get you caught up with the group. Trust me. Listen to me." But instead, the counselor intentionally walked her straight into a ditch. She was standing there, blindfolded, right in front of a tree, completely off course, and didn't have a clue where she was or what she was doing.

For a couple of minutes, silence. Matthew stood in the woods, watching her, wondering what she would do. Then he heard four beautiful words from his little girl: "Dad...are you there?"

Matthew said he just stood in the woods with tears running down his face and answered, "Yeah, baby, I'm right here."

Friends, how many of you have been in that exact ditch? Life has you blindfolded - maybe with grief, or financial pressure, or a health diagnosis, or confusion about which way to go next? You can't feel God's hand guiding you anymore? You don't hear His voice because of all the noise? Other voices are shouting directions: "Follow me, follow me. I'll get you caught up." But those voices lead you into ditches and off the path God has prepared for you.

Today, from God's Word, I want to remind you of the same three instructions our Heavenly Father has given you. If you'll memorize them, repeat them, and live by them, I know they will guide you safely home.

Let's look at them one by one.

#1 I will NEVER LEAVE you.

Hebrews 13:5 says: "Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.'"

Did you catch that? God Himself said it. It's not a suggestion. It's a promise straight from His mouth. God may be sometimes quiet, but He is never absent.

Let's flip back to the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 31:6 (NLT): "So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."

And Jesus Himself repeated the promise in Matthew 28:20 (NLT) right before He ascended to heaven: "Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Three different books of the Bible, three different authors, same unbreakable promise: "I will never leave you. I will never abandon you. I am with you always".

In the father-daughter story I just told, when Matthew had to remove his hand, the daughter couldn't feel him anymore. But he was still right there – watching every step. How often do we say, "God, I don't feel You near me. Where did You go?" The answer is the same one Mr. West gave his daughter: "I'm right here."

Maybe you're in a time right now where God's hand feels removed. The diagnosis came. The job ended. The marriage is struggling. The kids are wandering. You pray and it feels like the ceiling is brass. Hear the promises again: "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." "God will never leave me." Say that out loud with me: "God will never leave me."

That promise your heavenly Father gives to you is the same promise that held Israel through forty years in the wilderness. It held David when Saul was hunting him. It held Daniel in the lions' den. It held Paul in a Roman prison. And it will hold you in whatever ditch you're standing in today.

#2 You can ASK ME anything

Prayer is God's open invitation. Jesus said it plainly in John 14:13-14 (NLT): "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!"

Matthew 7:7 (NLT) – "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you."

Philippians 4:6 (NLT) – "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done."

And James 1:5 (NLT) – "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."

Notice what the daughter did when she realized she was lost. She didn't panic and run. She didn't try to figure it out on her own. She simply asked, "Dad, are you there?" Isn't this prayer in its purest form? It might have taken her a while, but she remembered what her Dad had instructed and said, "Dad, are you there?"

That's all God is waiting asking from you today. You don't have to have fancy words. You don't have to have it all together. He's not waiting for you to be perfect. You can start with what the daughter said: "Father, are You there? I'm scared. I'm confused. I don't know which way to go. Help me." Even when you feel lost, God is waiting for you to call out to him. Don't stop praying.

Our Heavenly Father is not offended by your questions. He is not annoyed by your honesty. He is a good Father who loves to be asked; in fact, scripture says He WANTS to be asked.

In the story, the moment she asked, the dad was already standing there ready to answer. The same is true for you. The moment you whisper, "Father, are You there?" - He answers, "I'm right here, child. I never left."

So ask Him anything: "Lord, how long?" "Lord, what do I do next?" "Lord, give me wisdom for this decision." "Lord, heal my heart." "Lord, show me how to glorify you in my situation."

In Matthew West's song written from this story about his daughter, he sings it clearly. "Don't stop calling on Jesus name. Keep on pounding on Heaven's door. And let your knees wear out the floor. Don't stop believing 'cause mountain's move with just a little faith. And your Father's heard every single word you're saying. So don't stop praying."

#3 Only Listen to the Sound of MY VOICE

Jesus describes this beautifully in John 10:3-5 and 27 where He says, "The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

In 1 Peter 5:8 it says, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the evil one". In the camp story, the counselor's voice sounded helpful, right? "Follow me, I'll get you caught up" - but it led straight into a bad situation. Other voices of this world might sound helpful but they will

do the same to you: the voice of fear, the voice of social media, the voice of “everyone else is doing it,” the voice of your own doubts, the voice of the evil one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The voice that says “whatever it takes” as long as I get my way.

The story shows how easily we drift when we stop listening. But Jesus says to know His voice and not follow the stranger.

How do you learn to recognize His voice? You spend time with Him in His Word. You have conversations with Him in prayer. You sit quietly sometimes and you just listen. I had a friend named Jeff who told me he loved walking in the woods because that’s where he would talk to God and ask questions...and hear God answer back. The more you read the Bible; the more you talk with God; the more His voice becomes familiar; the clearer and louder His voice gets.

When the counselor spoke, the daughter could have followed further and ended up even deeper in trouble. But because she had been talking with and learning to listen only for her dad’s voice, she paused in her struggle and called out and heard the voice of truth.

So here are the three instructions again. Will you say them with me: (and if you’re at home, please play along...)

1. I will never leave you.

2. You can ask me anything.

3. You should only listen to the sound of my voice.

Commit today to repeating these three truths each day. Tape them on your mirror and read them every morning. Put them in your phone. Teach them to your kids. When life blindfolds you - and it will – stop and remember these God promises.

If you’re standing in a ditch right now - feeling lost, off track, wondering if God is still there - do what the girl did. Right where you are, whisper: “Father, are You there?” or, depending on your situation, go ahead and shout it: “Father, are You there?” Either way, keep asking. Keep calling. Keep praying.

And then be still and hear Him answer, louder and clearer than any other voice: “Yes, My child. I’m right here. I never left. Ask Me anything. Now, listen to my voice, and I will lead you safely home.”

Let’s pray -

Lord, thank You for these three instructions. Seal them in our hearts. When we feel blindfolded, help us remember: You are a God that stays with us. That we can ask you anything. And help us to separate Your voice from all others. We want to listen only to Your voice. In Jesus’ mighty name we pray. Amen.

Go in the peace and presence of your Father who is always right there with you. God bless you!

Next steps:

Read 1 Thessalonians 5: 61-18

Create a prayer routine – a place – a time

Read Philippians 4: 6-7