

Teach All Nations Ministries

Life Application Bible Study

“How to Hear God’s Voice”

Hearing For Understanding

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. (KJV)

Why is understanding important? This may seem like an odd or silly question to ask, but understanding is one of the most neglected factors a Christian faces. When a person is faced with a decision to make, he or she seeks to make the best decision possible. The Christian should want all of his/her decisions to be of God. To better understand the decision making process, one must first learn the “five voices” which determine each and every decision we make. Let’s examine these individually.

- (1) The voice of God
- (2) The voice of your conscience
- (3) The voice of your reasoning
- (4) The voice of your flesh, and
- (5) The voice of the devil

The Voice of The Devil - (Psalm 55:1-7)

Psalm 55:1-7 (GW)

- ^{55:1} *Open your ears to my prayer, O God. Do not hide from my plea for mercy.*
² *Pay attention to me, and answer me. My thoughts are restless, and I am confused*
³ *because my enemy shouts at me and a wicked person persecutes me. They bring misery*
crashing down on me, and they attack me out of anger.
⁴ *My heart is in turmoil. The terrors of death have seized me.*
⁵ *Fear and trembling have overcome me. Horror has overwhelmed me.*
⁶ *I said, "If only I had wings like a dove— I would fly away and find rest.*
⁷ *Indeed, I would run far away. I would stay in the desert. Selah*

This is how the voice of the devil sounds. When he speaks, his voice comes to:

- Deceive you, (Revelation 20:7-8)
- Cause oppression, (Acts 10:38)
- Discourage you, (Numbers 32:6-10)
- Cause you to be bitter, (Colossians 3:19)
- Cause confusion, (Acts 19:32)
- Cause you to rationalize sin, (Isaiah 5:20)
- Blind your mind, (II Corinthians 4:4)
- Cause you to lie, (I John 2:4)
- Cause you to doubt God's Word, (Hebrews 3:12)
- Cause division in your family, church, business, (Mark 3:25)
- Cause you to disobey the Word of God, (Joshua 5:6)
- Inspire rage, anger and malice, (Ephesians 4:31)
- Bring you fear, (Mark 4:40)
- Torment you, (Matthew 8:6)
- Cause you to lose hope, (Job 7:1-15)
- Cause you to be dismayed, (Joshua 1:9)
- Cause you to seek revenge, (Ezekiel 25:15)
- Cause you to curse God, (Job 2:9)
- Stir up unforgiveness, (Matthew 6:15)
- Cause you to be ashamed of the gospel, (Mark 8:38)
- Cause you not to hear God's voice, (John 10:5)

If you hear: fear, confusion, torment, doubt, justification of sin, etc., you don't have to pray about it or seek counseling. You are listening to the voice of the devil!

The Voice of Your Flesh - (Galatians 5:16-21)

Your flesh has a voice! It speaks to you in a commanding and authoritative sound pitch. It doesn't matter if you are an apostle, prophet, pastor, CEO, Governor, Police Chief or an average citizen. Your flesh speaks to you constantly. Anytime you follow the voice of your flesh, the net result will always be negative. You can never follow the voice of your flesh and things turn out, "ok!" The fifth chapter of the book of Galatians reveals the sound pitch of your flesh. You know you are listening to and being led by the voice of your flesh when you engage in:

- (1) Adultery - unlawful sexual relations between a man and a woman
- (2) Fornication - pornography, harlotry, incest
- (3) Uncleaness - homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, sexual perversion
- (4) Lasciviousness - undisciplined, lewd, overeater, lazy, shiftless
- (5) Idolatry - worship sports stars, movie stars, music icons, preachers, money, etc.
- (6) Witchcraft - includes drug use, spells, luck charms, horoscopes, zodiac signs, rebellion
- (7) Hatred - hold grudges and malice and be angry at someone
- (8) Variance - to quarrel with words, stir up strife and incite debates
- (9) Emulations - the spirit of jealousy, rivalry spirit
- (10) Wrath - creating domestic and civic turmoil
- (11) Strife - getting pay back for a wrong, angry contentions
- (12) Seditions - stirring up strife in the church, government, home, etc.
- (13) Heresies - causing discord, unrighteous indignation, wrong interpretation
- (14) Envyng - to wish ill will toward a person, organization or group of people
- (15) Murder - to spoil or mar the happiness of others, to kill
- (16) Drunkenness - public or private intoxication, alcoholic, addicted to
- (17) Reveling - clubs, house parties, carousing, obscene music

The voice of your flesh will never inspire you to do the will of God. It will only talk you into committing adultery, fornication, listening to obscene music and engaging in any of the other seventeen destructive behaviors you just read. You are to never listen to the voice of your flesh! What you do to the voice of your flesh is bring it into subjection to the Written Word of God, (See I Corinthians 9:27).

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (KJV)

^{9:25} *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

²⁶ *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

²⁷ *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

The Voice of Your Reasoning - (Acts 28:1-6 and Mark 2:6-8)

The Lord God has given us the ability to reason. We have that ability so that we may rationally consider all options, blessings and curses, obstacles, situations, consequences, advantages versus disadvantages and profits versus losses. You can always tell when you are listening to the voice of your reasoning because you will weigh the things you see and hear in the natural. You will deliberate and think things through, and afterwards, make your decision. *Caution: if the answer of your mind contradicts the Written Word, or contradicts what God has said to you, then you must abandon the voice of your reasoning, (See Numbers 13:26-33).*

Numbers 13:26-33 (GW)

- ^{13:26} They came back to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. They gave their report and showed them the fruit from the land.
- ²⁷ This is what they reported to Moses: “We went to the land where you sent us. It really is a land flowing with milk and honey. Here's some of its fruit.
- ²⁸ But the people who live there are strong, and the cities have walls and are very large. We even saw the descendants of Anak there.
- ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev. The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the mountain region. And the Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and all along the Jordan River.”
- ³⁰ Caleb told the people to be quiet and listen to Moses. Caleb said, “Let's go now and take possession of the land. We should be more than able to conquer it.”
- ³¹ But the men who had gone with him said, “We can't attack those people! They're too strong for us!”
- ³² So they began to spread lies among the Israelites about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored is one that devours those who live there. All the people we saw there are very tall.
- ³³ We saw Nephilim there. (The descendants of Anak are Nephilim.) We felt as small as grasshoppers, and that's how we must have looked to them.”

The Voice of Your Conscience - (Acts 24:15,16 and Hebrews 10:22)

Your conscience is the place where you recognize the difference between what is right versus what is wrong. It is the place where you establish morals and values, or where you reject good morals and values and become reprobate in your mind. Your conscience is going to fall into one of the four categories:

Acts 24:15-16 (GW)

^{24:15} *I hope for the same thing my accusers do, that people with God's approval and those without it will come back to life.*

¹⁶ *With this belief I always do my best to have a clear conscience in the sight of God and people.*

- (a) A good conscience, (I Timothy 1:5 and Acts 24:16)

1 Timothy 1:5 (KJV)

^{1:5} *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:*

- (b) A weak conscience, (I Corinthians 8:7)

1 Corinthians 8:7 (GW)

^{8:7} *But not everyone knows this. Some people are so used to worshiping false gods that they believe they are eating food offered to a false god. So they feel guilty because their conscience is weak.*

- (c) A seared conscience, (I Timothy 4:1,2)

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (GW)

^{4:1} *The Spirit says clearly that in later times some believers will desert the Christian faith. They will follow spirits that deceive, and they will believe the teachings of demons.*

² *These people will speak lies disguised as truth. Their consciences have been scarred as if branded by a red-hot iron.*

- (d) A evil conscience, (Hebrews 10:22)

Hebrews 10:22 (GW)

^{10:22} *We have been sprinkled {with his blood} to free us from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with clean water. So we must continue to come {to him} with a sincere heart and strong faith.*

This next point should be obvious. The voice of your conscience is good to listen to as long as you have a good conscience, but when a person has a weak, seared or evil conscience, it would be unadvisable for them to follow the voice of their conscience.

The Voice of God - (I Samuel 3:1-10 and John 10:1-5)

You know you are hearing the voice of God when you hear these sounds.

- Instruction in righteousness, (II Timothy 3:16)
- Correction in righteousness, (II Timothy 3:16, Proverbs 3:11-12)
- Causes you to profit in Christ, (II Timothy 3:16, John 15:16)
- Brings to your remembrance the Word of God, (John 14:26)
- Guides you into Truth, (John 16:13)
- Exhorts you, (Jude 3, Romans 12:1)
- Comforts you, (John 14:16, Psalm 23:4)
- Rebukes and reproves you, (Titus 1:13, II Timothy 4:2)
- Convicts you of sin, (Romans 6:1-23)
- Leads you to salvation, (Romans 10:9-10, II Timothy 3:15)
- Assures you of the Heavenly Father's love toward you, (I John 3:1, Jeremiah 31:3)
- Admonishes and warns you, (Ephesians 6:4, Acts 21:4,10-14)
- Edifies you, (Ephesians 4:12)
- Increases our faith, (Romans 10:17)
- Cause you to triumph in life through Christ, (II Corinthians 2:14)

The Seven Elements To Clearly Hearing God's Voice

Now that you know the five voices, and how they sound, there are the seven elements that must be in place in your life, if you are going to properly discern which voice is speaking.

1. You must study the Word of God for yourself, (See II Timothy 2:15)
2. You must meditate on the Word of God day and night, (Joshua 1:8)
3. You must spend time praying, (Mark 1:35)
4. You must spend time communing with the Holy Spirit, (II Corinthians 13:14)
5. You must be planted in a good church home, (See 92:13)
6. You must rationally consider all options, (Luke 14:28-30)
7. You must seek counsel from wise counselors, (See Proverbs 11:14)

If you follow those instructions, you will come to the place, where you quickly recognize which voice is speaking to you. It is an awesome feeling to know, that you know, that you know - *the voice of the Holy Spirit!*

This portion of the series is designed for Intercessors and Worshipers. Depending upon your level of spiritual maturity and desire for RELATIONSHIP with God determines how much you get from this segment.

The Tabernacle Experience - God's Design for Approaching Him

First of all, there is a basic approach laid out in the Bible for those who would draw near to God. It is found in the tabernacle experience. The one who wants to experience God in the Holy of Holies (one's spirit) must learn to live this tabernacle experience, which begins with the gate of salvation. We enter this gate with thanksgiving, clothing ourselves with the white raiment of righteousness which Christ has provided for us (Ps. 100:4; Is. 61:10).

We then come immediately upon a brazen altar, where we offer our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1). We do this not only at the point of salvation, but also as a daily experience, as we awaken each morning.

Next, we come before the laver, where we are washed with the washing of the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26). As we look intently upon the Word, we allow it to cleanse our lives, purifying our actions. Therefore, the pattern of regular Bible meditation becomes a part of our daily approach to God.

Then we enter the holy place, the realm of our souls, and God deals with our minds, wills and emotions. First we go to the table of showbread, a place where the priests ate together around a table. This represents the fellowship we enjoy in the family of God as we partake together of God's provision. As the grain is ground fine to make the bread, so our wills are ground fine as we fellowship with other believers. As we allow this process to happen, choosing to allow our wills to be ground fine within the bond of unity of the fellowship to believers, we are prepared to go ever further into the depths (heart) of God.

Next, we stop at the golden lampstand, made of beaten gold representing the cultivating of divine nature, and lit by oil, representing the illumination of the Holy Spirit. As we examine the Word under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we find revelation knowledge pouring into our souls, transforming our lives and taking us even deeper into the presence of God (II Cor. 3:18).

We then move to the altar of incense, where we learn to offer continuous praise and worship unto the Most High God, the Maker of heaven and earth. As a fragrant aroma ascended perpetually from this altar, so our praise and worship ascends perpetually before the nostrils of the Lord (Ps. 141:2). We have learned to be worshipers. Through revelation knowledge, we have seen that the Most High rules in the affairs of man, and we have learned to worship Him everywhere, in everything (Dan. 4:17). We have learned to worship in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).

Entering the Holy of Holies and Experiencing Direct Fellowship

Now we are ready to ascend directly into His manifest presence, fixing our gaze upon His glory and speaking face-to-face and mouth-to-mouth with the Most High God. Oh, what a privilege! Oh, what glory! To stand and fellowship directly with the Lord of heaven and earth Himself! The veil has been rent, the way has been opened, through the atoning blood of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior (Heb. 10:19,20).

It is in this manner that God has prepared a way for us to enter before Him and fellowship with His Holy Spirit. The way is clearly established in the Old Covenant and torn open for all to partake in the New Covenant. Now, when storms and gales hinder our access before the King of Kings, we can go back and re-walk the path which He has prepared for us. We can ask:

A Checklist for Tuning Our Hearts to God's Voice

1. Am I singing in thankfulness for the robe of righteousness which He has allowed me to put on? Do I see myself wearing it? Do I see myself cleansed and spotless before the King?
2. Have I laid down my will in all matters this day, and sought only the will and purposes of the Father in all areas?
3. Am I being washed daily by the constant application of the Word of God in my life?
4. Is my heart full of love for those in the body of Christ, with whom I live? Have I closed off my heart to any Christian brother? Have I allowed my will to be ground fine before my brothers?
5. Am I prayerfully pondering the Word and waiting before the Holy Spirit, allowing revelation knowledge to illumine my life?
6. Am I a constant worshiper? Has all grumbling been replaced with worshipping in my life? Do I dwell only on that which is pure, good, honest?
7. Do I stand, fixing my gaze on the manifest glory of Almighty God, receiving His spontaneous ideas, visions, and feelings?

And Now, for a Fine-Tuning Dial (Heb. 10:22)!

Usually, if you walk through the tabernacle experience, any block you may have as you approach God in prayer is erased. If not, God has provided a fine-tuning dial in Hebrews 10:22:

"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

In this verse are found four more keys for removing blocks to effectively hearing the Master' 's voice.

The **first** key is that we must have a sincere heart. There can be no hypocrisy, no double-mindedness, no halfheartedness. Only total, pure, childlike dedication to the desires and purposes of Almighty God.

Secondly, we must have a full assurance of faith. In other words, we cannot doubt that there is a river flowing within us. We must believe that the spontaneous bubbling that wells up within us as we seek God in prayer is actually God speaking to us and flowing within us (Jn. 7:38,39). If we do not have a fullness of faith, if we doubt that He is "Immanuel," God with us, then we will cut off the flow of His Spirit.

Therefore, we must believe that He is a Rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him, and receive in faith that which is flowing within us, trusting that indeed it is the Spirit of Almighty God (Heb. 11:6). If it is not, then Christianity is a lie. However, I am persuaded that it is the truth.

Thirdly, we must have our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. If there is sin, it must be brought before the cleansing flow of Christ's blood and removed as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Then it must be forgotten, as all of our attention is turned upon our Maker. All nagging unrest must be brought before the purifying blood of Christ for removal. Then the heart is free to soar into the heavens with God.

Finally, (Fourth) we must be cleansed with the washing of water of the rhema word, or the voice of God (Eph. 5:26). Those things which God is speaking to us must be acted upon and obeyed, or our ability to go on with God is destroyed.

When you go before God in prayer, begin by quieting yourself in His presence. Use the eyes of my heart to see Him present with you. Tune to the inner river (i.e., spontaneous flow), and begin writing down and recording the flow that is welling up within you. (See this pattern in Hab. 2:1,2.)

If you get stuck and some block seems to be hindering your ability to hear God's voice and see His vision, review the above questions concerning living the tabernacle experience. Often as you go through this checklist, you will identify the block and can remove it.

If the block still remains, ask yourself the four questions found in Hebrews 10:22. —*Is my heart sincere, honest, and committed? Am I free of reservations as I approach God? Do I have a full assurance of faith that He is within me and welling up through my spirit (which is joined to His Spirit - I Cor. 6:17)?* In addition, you must ask whether you have been obedient to the previous words which God has spoken to me.

Summary: Three Ways of Tuning Our Hearts (4 Keys, Tabernacle Experience and Fine Tuning Dial)

These two patterns, the tabernacle experience, and the fine-tuning dial of Hebrews 10:22, (when coupled with the four keys found in Hab. 2:1,2) offer ready access for most of us almost all of the time, so we can readily hear God's voice within our spirits, and write down the spontaneous flow of thoughts, visions and feelings which bubble up within us as we seek the face of God. Thus, we find that many of the most common blocks and problems to hearing the voice of God are removed as we follow these biblical patterns.

Three Reasons You May Still Find "*Errors*" in Your Journaling

Once we begin recording the things we sense God speaking to us, we may still find errors, or "supposed errors," in our journals. This can come from many things. Here are listed, very briefly, only a few of the most common situations.

One problem is that when we pray, we often fix our eyes on the thing we are praying about, rather than on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Therefore, the answer comes back from the thing, rather than from our Lord. The solution to this problem is to be very careful to fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:2), rather than on any thing, or person, or issue. If we are bringing a person or issue to God in prayer, then we should actually see ourselves presenting this before Him and watch what He does or says concerning it. Then the spontaneous flow will be more pure.

A second issue is that some of God's commands are simply positioning moves and are never meant to be fully carried out. Instead, God re-directs us in midstream. An example of this may be seen in Genesis 22, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. However, as Abraham began to act in obedience to this order, God changed it, telling him not to sacrifice his son. Now, was Abraham's first word from the Lord

wrong? No, God was simply positioning Abraham in order to fulfill one of God's goals for his life. Once the test was completed, God discontinued the action midstream with new orders. I find this happens often in my journal. Many orders are simply positioning moves, both for me and for others.

A third, and final, problem which we will discuss is the problem of improper interpretation. It is very easy to interpret the words of your journal to say what you think they mean, rather than simply seeing them for what they are. Often, you may go back to your journal, thinking "my journaling has been wrong", then be amazed to see that the actual words of the journaling were fulfilled. It is "your" inner interpretation of these words that was not correct. Let us be careful to hear that which the Lord is speaking.

OUR DAILY WALK

To Receive The Abundance Promised, We Must Have A Relationship and Conversational Rapport With The Holy Spirit. To Do This We Must Have Some Basic "Understanding" of Him.

HOLY SPIRIT

THE IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Who is the Holy Spirit?

BIBLE READING: Mark 1:9-13

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The moment Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens open and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending on him, and a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son; you are my Delight." (Mark 1:10-11, TLB)*

The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity. As Jesus was baptized, a revelation of God was given. The Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus, and the voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's approval of Jesus as his divine Son. That Jesus is God's divine Son is the foundation for all we read about Jesus in the Gospels. Here we see all three members of the Trinity together—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Supernatural Power Was Now Evident At This Point)

BIBLE READING: Matthew 18:15-20

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *I also tell you this—if two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask for, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I will be right there among them. (Matthew 18:19-20, TLB)*

The Holy Spirit is God living in and among those who believe. Jesus looked ahead to a new day when he would be present with his followers not in body, but through his Holy Spirit. In the body of believers (the church), the sincere agreement of two people is more powerful than the superficial agreement of thousands, because Christ's Holy Spirit is with them. Two or more believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, will pray according to God's will, not their own; thus their requests will be granted.

BIBLE READING: John 3:1-21

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Jesus replied, “What I am telling you so earnestly is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven; so don’t be surprised at my statement that you must be born again!”* (John 3:5-7, TLB)

The Holy Spirit is God at work in believers. Who is the Holy Spirit? God is three persons in one—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God became a man in Jesus so that Jesus could die for our sins. Jesus rose from the dead to offer salvation to all people through spiritual renewal and rebirth. When Jesus ascended into heaven, his physical presence left the earth, but he promised to send the Holy Spirit so that his spiritual presence would still be among mankind (see Luke 24:49). The Holy Spirit first became available to all believers at Pentecost (Acts 2). Whereas in Old Testament days the Holy Spirit empowered specific individuals for specific purposes, now all believers have the power of the Holy Spirit available to them. (For more on the Holy Spirit, read John 14:16-28; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; and 2 Corinthians 1:22.)

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What does the Holy Spirit do?

BIBLE READING: Judges 3:7-11

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.* (Judges 3:10, NIV)

The Holy Spirit empowers believers. This phrase, “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him,” was also spoken of the judges Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, among others. It expresses a temporary and spontaneous increase of physical, spiritual, or mental strength. This was an extraordinary and supernatural occurrence to prepare a person for a special task. The Holy Spirit is available to all believers today, but he will come upon believers in an extraordinary way for special tasks. We should ask the Holy Spirit’s help as we face our daily problems as well as life’s major challenges.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 10:16-42

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *When you are arrested, don’t worry about what to say at your trial, for you will be given the right words at the right time. For it won’t be you doing the talking—it will be the Spirit of your heavenly Father speaking through you!* (Matthew 10:19-20, TLB)

The Holy Spirit is present in times of hardship. Jesus told the disciples that when arrested for preaching the gospel, they should not worry about what to say in their

defense—God’s Spirit would speak through them. This promise was fulfilled in Acts 4:8-14 and elsewhere. Some mistakenly think this means we don’t have to prepare to present the gospel because God will take care of everything. Scripture teaches, however, that we are to make carefully prepared, thoughtful statements (Colossians 4:6). Jesus is not telling us to stop preparing, but to stop worrying.

BIBLE READING: John 4:1-26

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.* (John 4:23-24, NIV)

The Holy Spirit helps us worship God. “God is spirit” means he is not a physical being limited to one place. He is present everywhere, and he can be worshiped anywhere, at any time. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Is your worship genuine and true? Do you have the Holy Spirit’s help? How does the Holy Spirit help us worship? The Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26), teaches us the words of Christ (14:26), and tells us we are loved (Romans 5:5). True worshippers will gather at specified or appointed times within sanctuaries or gathering places to corporately hear the word of God for the Body of Christ and experience His presence in line with His promise to “be in the midst”!

BIBLE READING: John 14:15-31

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *If you love me, obey me; and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, for it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you do, for he lives with you now and some day shall be in you.* (John 14:15-17, TLB)

The Holy Spirit transforms us from within. Jesus was soon going to leave the disciples, but he would remain with them. How could this be? The Counselor—the Spirit of God himself—would come after Jesus was gone to care for and guide the disciples. The regenerating power of the Spirit came on the disciples just before his ascension (20:22), and the Spirit was poured out on all the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2), shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within us and all believers, helping us live as God wants and building Christ’s church on earth. By faith we can appropriate the Spirit’s power each day.

The Holy Spirit works in every part of our life. The following chapters teach these truths about the Holy Spirit: he will be with us forever (14:16); the world at large cannot accept him (14:17); he lives with us and in us (14:17); he teaches us (14:26); he reminds us of Jesus’ words (14:26; 15:26); he convicts us of sin, shows us God’s righteousness, and announces God’s judgment on evil (16:8); he guides into truth and gives insight into future events (16:13); he brings glory to Christ (16:14). The Holy Spirit has been active among people from the beginning of time, but after Pentecost (Acts 2) he came to live in all believers. Many people are unaware of the Holy

Spirit's activities, but to those who hear Christ's words and understand the Spirit's power, the Spirit gives a whole new way to look at life.

The Holy Spirit helps us understand and remember the Bible.

Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember what he had been teaching them. This promise ensures the validity of the New Testament. The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and teachings, and the Holy Spirit helped them remember without taking away their individual perspectives. We can be confident that the Gospels are accurate records of what Jesus taught and did (see 1 Corinthians 2:10-14). The Holy Spirit can help us in the same way.

As we study the Bible, we can trust him to plant truth in our mind, convince us of God's will, and remind us when we stray from it.

The Holy Spirit gives us peace. The end result of the Holy Spirit's work in our life is deep and lasting peace. Unlike worldly peace, which is usually defined as the absence of conflict, this peace is confident assurance in any circumstance; with Christ's peace, we have no need to fear the present or the future. If your life is full of stress, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with Christ's peace (see Philippians 4:6-7 for more on experiencing God's peace).

Now That We Know Who God Is And How He Speaks, Let's Examine The Communication Process..... PRAYER!

PRAYER

THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

What is prayer?

BIBLE READING: Genesis 18:16-33

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *So the other two went on toward Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham a while. Then Abraham approached him and said, "Will you kill good and bad alike? Suppose you find fifty godly people there within the city—will you destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes?"* (Genesis 18:22-24, TLB)

Prayer is an opportunity to bring our will into line with God's plan. Did Abraham change God's mind? Of course not. The more likely answer is that God changed Abraham's mind. Abraham knew that God is just and that he punishes sin, but he may have wondered about God's mercy. Abraham seemed to be probing God's mind to see how merciful he really was. He left his conversation with God convinced that

God was both kind and fair. Our prayers won't change God's mind, but they may change ours just as Abraham's prayer changed his. Prayer helps us better understand the mind of God.

Prayer is an opportunity to demonstrate our trust in God. Why did God let Abraham question his justice and intercede for a wicked city? Abraham knew that God must punish sin, but he also knew from experience that God is merciful to sinners. God knew there were not ten righteous people in the city, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede. He was also merciful enough to help Lot, Abraham's nephew, get out of Sodom before it was destroyed. God does not take pleasure in destroying the wicked, but he must punish sin. He is both just and merciful. We should be thankful that God's mercy extends to us.

BIBLE READING: Psalm 4:1-8

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Mark this well: The Lord has set apart the redeemed for himself. Therefore he will listen to me and answer when I call to him.* (Psalm 4:3, TLB)

Prayer is speaking with God. The godly are those who are faithful and devoted to God. David knew that God would hear him when he called and would answer him. We too can be confident that God listens to our prayers and answers when we call on him. Sometimes we think that God will not hear us because we have fallen short of his high standards for holy living. But if we have trusted Christ for salvation, God has forgiven us, and he will listen to us. When you feel as though your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, remember that as a believer, you have been set apart by God—and he loves you. He hears and answers, although his answers may not be what you expect. Look at your problems in the light of God's power instead of looking at God in the shadow of your problems.

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 4:14-16

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.* (Hebrews 4:16, TLB)

Prayer is an awesome privilege. Prayer is our approach to God, and we are to come boldly. Some Christians approach God meekly with heads hung low, afraid to ask him to meet their needs. Others pray flippantly, giving little thought to what they say. Come with reverence because he is your King. But also come with bold assurance because he is your Friend and Counselor.

MOTIVES FOR PRAYER

Why should we pray?

BIBLE READING: Genesis 25:19-34

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Isaac pleaded with Jehovah to give Rebekah a child, for even after many years of marriage she had no children. Then at last she became pregnant.* (Genesis 25:21, TLB)

Prayer reflects our dependence on God. As Isaac pleaded with God for children, so the Bible encourages us to ask—and even plead—for our most personal and important requests. God wants to grant our requests, but he wants us to ask him. Even then, as Isaac learned, God may decide to withhold his answer for a while in order to (1) deepen our insight into what we really need, (2) broaden our appreciation for his answers, or (3) allow us to mature so we can use his gifts more wisely.

BIBLE READING: Exodus 17:1-7

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *But, tormented by thirst, they cried out, “Why did you ever take us out of Egypt? Why did you bring us here to die, with our children and cattle too?”* (Exodus 17:3, TLB)

Prayer is far better than complaining to each other. Again the people of Israel complained about their problem instead of praying. They had followed God’s leading into the desert, but now were doubting his ability to take care of them. Some problems can be solved by careful thought or by rearranging our priorities. Some can be solved by discussion and good counsel. But some problems can be solved only by prayer. We should make a determined effort to pray when we feel like complaining, because complaining only raises our level of stress. Prayer quiets our thoughts and emotions and prepares us to listen.

BIBLE READING: Judges 16:23-31

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Then Samson prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord Jehovah, remember me again—please strengthen me one more time, so that I may pay back the Philistines for the loss of at least one of my eyes.”* (Judges 16:28, TLB)

Prayer can restore relationship with God. In spite of Samson’s past, God still answered his prayer and destroyed the pagan temple and worshipers. God still loved him. He was willing to hear Samson’s prayer of confession and repentance and use him this final time. One of the effects of sin in our life is to keep us from feeling like praying. But perfect moral behavior is not a condition for prayer. Don’t let guilt feelings over sin keep you from your only means of restoration. No matter how long you have been away from God, he is ready to hear from you and restore you to a right relationship. Every situation can be salvaged if you are willing to turn again to him. If God could still work in Samson’s situation, he can certainly make something worthwhile out of yours.

METHODS OF PRAYER

How should we pray?

BIBLE READING: Ezra 8:1-36

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Then I declared a fast while we were at the Ahava River so that we would humble ourselves before our God; and we prayed that he would give us a good journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled. (Ezra 8:21, TLB)*

We should pray with an attitude of deep respect for God. Ezra knew God's promises to protect his people, but he didn't take them for granted. He also knew that God's blessings are appropriated through prayer; so Ezra and the people humbled themselves by fasting and praying. And their prayers were answered. Fasting humbled them because going without food was a reminder of their complete dependence on God. Fasting also gave them more time to pray and meditate on God.

Too often we pray glibly and superficially. Serious prayer, by contrast, requires concentration. It puts us in touch with God's will and can really change us. Without serious prayer, we reduce God to a quick-service pharmacist with painkillers for our every ailment.

BIBLE READING: Nehemiah 2:1-10

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *"Well, what should be done?" the king asked. With a quick prayer to the God of heaven, I replied, "If it please Your Majesty and if you look upon me with your royal favor, send me to Judah to rebuild the city of my fathers!" (Nehemiah 2:4, TLB)*

We should pray with confidence in God's grace. With little time to think, Nehemiah immediately prayed. Eight times in this book we read that he prayed spontaneously (2:4; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29). NEHEMIAH PRAYED AT ANY TIME, EVEN WHILE TALKING WITH OTHERS. HE KNEW THAT GOD IS ALWAYS IN CHARGE, IS ALWAYS PRESENT, AND HEARS AND ANSWERS EVERY PRAYER. NEHEMIAH COULD CONFIDENTLY PRAY THROUGHOUT THE DAY BECAUSE HE HAD ESTABLISHED AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD DURING TIMES OF EXTENDED PRAYER (1:4-7). IF WE WANT TO REACH GOD WITH OUR EMERGENCY PRAYERS, WE NEED TO TAKE TIME TO CULTIVATE A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH TIMES OF IN-DEPTH PRAYER.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 6:5-15

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Don't recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! (Matthew 6:7-8, TLB)*

We should pray with humility and sincerity. Some people, especially the religious leaders, wanted to be seen as “holy,” and public prayer was one way to get attention. Jesus saw through their self-righteous acts, however, and taught that the essence of prayer is not public style, but private communication with God. There is a place for public prayer, but to pray only where others will notice you indicates that your real audience is not God.

BIBLE READING: Colossians 1:1-14

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Whenever we pray for you, we always begin by giving thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard how much you trust the Lord, and how much you love his people.* (Colossians 1:3-4, TLB)

We should pray for others. Sometimes we wonder how to pray for missionaries and other leaders we have never met. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. His prayers teach us how to pray for others, whether we know them or not. We can request that they (1) understand God’s will, (2) gain spiritual wisdom, (3) please and honor God, (4) bear good fruit, (5) grow in the knowledge of God, (6) be filled with God’s strength, (7) have great endurance and patience, (8) stay full of Christ’s joy, and (9) give thanks always. All believers have these same basic needs. When you don’t know how to pray for someone, use Paul’s prayer pattern for the Colossians.

MODEL PRAYERS

What are the characteristics of prayers in the Bible?

BIBLE READING: Joshua 7:1-26

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.* (Joshua 7:6, NIV)

Biblical prayers are marked by humility. Joshua and the elders tore their clothing and sprinkled dust on their heads as signs of deep mourning before God. They were confused by their defeat at the small city of Ai after the spectacular Jericho victory, so they went before God in deep humility and sorrow to receive his instructions. When our life falls apart, we also should turn to God for direction and help. Like Joshua and the elders, we should humble ourselves so that we will be able to hear his words.

Biblical prayers are marked by honesty. Imagine praying this way to God. This is not a formal church prayer; it is the prayer of a man who is afraid and confused by what is happening around him. Joshua poured out his real thoughts to God. Hiding your needs from God is ignoring the only one who can really help. God welcomes your honest prayers and wants you to express your true feelings to him. Any believer can become more honest in prayer by remembering that God is all-knowing and all-powerful and that his love is everlasting.

BIBLE READING: 2 Chronicles 6:1-42

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You are the God who keeps his kind promises to all those who obey you, and who are anxious to do your will.* (2 CHRONICLES 6:14, TLB)

Biblical prayers are wide-ranging and specific. As Solomon led the people in prayer, he asked God to hear their prayers concerning a variety of situations: (1) crime (6:2-23); (2) ENEMY ATTACKS (6:24-25); (3) DROUGHT (6:26-27); (4) FAMINE (6:28-31); (5) THE INFLUX OF FOREIGNERS (6:32-33); (6) WAR (6:34-35); (7) SIN (6:36-39). GOD IS CONCERNED WITH WHATEVER WE FACE, EVEN THE DIFFICULT CONSEQUENCES WE BRING UPON OURSELF. HE WANTS US TO TURN TO HIM IN PRAYER. WHEN YOU PRAY, REMEMBER THAT GOD HEARS YOU. DON'T LET THE EXTREMITY OF YOUR SITUATION CAUSE YOU TO DOUBT HIS CARE FOR YOU.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 6:5-15

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. . . . And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."* (Matthew 6:9-13, NIV)

Biblical prayer is personal. The phrase "Our Father in heaven" indicates that God is not only majestic and holy, but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God's holy name. We can honor God's name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God's name lightly, we aren't remembering God's holiness.

Biblical prayer recognizes God's position. The phrase "Your kingdom come" is a reference to God's spiritual reign, not Israel's freedom from Rome. God's kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham (8:11; Luke 13:28), is present as Christ reigns in the believer's heart (Luke 17:21), and will be complete when all evil is destroyed and God establishes the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1).

Biblical prayer recognizes our position. When we pray "Your will be done," we are not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying that God's perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next.

Biblical prayer demonstrates complete dependence. When we pray, "Give us today our daily bread," we are acknowledging that God is our sustainer and provider. It is a misconception to think that we provide for our own needs. We must trust God daily to provide what he knows we need.

Biblical prayer asks God for guidance. God doesn't lead us into temptations, but sometimes he allows us to be tested by them. As disciples, we should pray to be delivered from these trying times and from Satan ("the evil one") and his deceit. All

Christians struggle with temptation. Sometimes it is so subtle that we don't even realize what is happening to us. God has promised that he won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to give you strength to overcome it and choose God's way instead.

BIBLE READING: John 17:1-26

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *I am not praying for these alone but also for the future believers who will come to me because of the testimony of these. My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind, just as you and I are, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me.* (John 17:20-21, TLB)

Biblical prayer recognizes the spiritual warfare around us. This entire chapter is Jesus' prayer. From it, we learn that the world is a tremendous battleground where the forces under Satan's power and those under God's authority are at war. Satan and his forces are motivated by bitter hatred for Christ and his forces. Jesus prayed for his disciples, including those of us who follow him today. He prayed that God would keep his chosen believers safe from Satan's power, setting them apart and making them pure and holy, uniting them through his truth.

Biblical prayer is not escape from the world. Jesus didn't ask God to take believers out of the world, but instead to use them in the world. Because Jesus sends us into the world, we should not try to escape from the world, nor should we avoid all relationships with non-Christians. We are called to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), and we are to do the work that God sent us to do.

Biblical prayer binds us with other believers. Jesus prayed for all who would follow him, including you and others you know. He prayed for unity (17:11), protection from the evil one (17:15), and sanctity (holiness) (17:17). Knowing that Jesus prayed for us should give us confidence as we work for his kingdom.

Now That We Know How To Speak and Listen, Let's Determine His Overall Will For Our Lives!

GOD'S WILL

How can we know God's will for our lives?

BIBLE READING: Numbers 9:15-23

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *So it was that they camped or traveled at the commandment of the Lord; and whatever the Lord told Moses they should do, they did.* (Numbers 9:23, TLB)

God guides his people moment by moment. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night guided and protected the Israelites as they traveled across the desert. Some have said this pillar may have been a burning bowl of pitch whose smoke was visible during the day and whose fire could be seen at night. However, a bowl of pitch would not have lifted itself up and moved ahead of the people, and the Bible is clear that the cloud and fire moved in accordance with the will of God. The cloud and the fire were not merely natural phenomena; they were the vehicle of God's presence and the visible evidence of his moving and directing his people.

What we learn is that the Israelites traveled and camped as God guided. When you follow God's guidance, you know you are where God wants you, whether you're moving or staying in one place. You are physically somewhere right now. Instead of praying, "God, what do you want me to do next?" ask, "God, what do you want me to do while I'm right here?" Direction from God is not just for your next big move. He has a purpose in placing you where you are right now. Begin to understand God's purpose for your life by discovering what he wants you to do now!

BIBLE READING: Esther 4:1-17

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *If you keep quiet at a time like this, God will deliver the Jews from some other source, but you and your relatives will die; what's more, who can say but that God has brought you into the palace for just such a time as this?* (Esther 4:14, TLB)

God's will is worked out in everyday events. After the decree to kill the Jews was given, Mordecai and Esther could have despaired, decided to save only themselves, or just waited for God's intervention. Instead, they saw that God had placed them in their positions for a purpose, so they seized the moment and acted. When it is within our power to save others, we must do so. In a life-threatening situation, don't withdraw, behave selfishly, wallow in despair, or wait for God to fix everything. Instead, ask God for his direction, and act! God may have placed you where you are "for such a time as this."

BIBLE READING: Matthew 21:18-22

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *You can get anything—anything you ask for in prayer—if you believe.* (Matthew 21:22, TLB)

Our prayers must be in harmony with God's will. This verse is not a guarantee that we can get anything we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that would violate his own nature or will. Jesus' statement is not a blank check. To be fulfilled, our requests must be in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God's will, and then God will be happy to grant them.

BIBLE READING: Philippians 2:1-30

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (Philippians 2:12-13, NIV)

Our greatest happiness is found in willingly obeying God. What do we do when we don't feel like obeying? God has not left us alone in our struggles to do his will. He wants to come alongside us and be within us to help. God helps us want to obey him and then gives us the power to do what he wants. The secret to a changed life is to submit to God's control and let him work. Next time, ask God to help you want to do his will.

It is God's will that we become like Christ. To be like Christ, we must train ourself to think like Christ. To change our desires to be more like Christ's, we need the power of the indwelling Spirit (1:19), the influence of faithful Christians, obedience to God's Word (not just exposure to it), and sacrificial service. Often it is in doing God's will that we gain the desire for it (see Philippians 4:8-9). Do what he wants, and trust him to change your desires.

The Last Part Of “Hearing God's Voice Is Truly Acknowledging His Words..... This Is Acknowledgment is Made Evident Through The Principle Called OBEDIENCE!

OBEDIENCE

THE FREEDOM OF OBEDIENCE

In what ways is obedience to God true freedom?

BIBLE READING: Genesis 3:1-24

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”* (Genesis 3:10-11, NIV)

Obedience keeps our relationship with God open and free. Adam and Eve got what they wanted: an intimate knowledge of both good and evil. But they got it by doing evil, and the results were disastrous. Sometimes we have the illusion that freedom is doing anything we want. But God says that true freedom comes from obedience and knowing what not to do. The restrictions he gives us are for our good, helping us avoid evil. We have the freedom to walk in front of a speeding car, but we don't need

to be hit to realize it would be foolish to do so. Don't listen to Satan's temptations. You don't have to do evil to gain more experience and learn more about life.

BIBLE READING: Deuteronomy 30:11-19

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Look, today I have set before you life and death, depending on whether you obey or disobey. I have commanded you today to love the Lord your God and to follow his paths and to keep his laws, so that you will live and become a great nation, and so that the Lord your God will bless you and the land you are about to possess.* (Deuteronomy 30:15-16, TLB)

Obeying God is in our best interest. God has called us to keep his commands, while reminding us that his laws are not hidden from us or beyond our reach. Have you ever said you would obey God if you knew what he wanted? Have you ever complained that obedience is too difficult for a mere human? These are unacceptable excuses. God's laws are written in the Bible and are clearly evident in the world around us. Obeying them is reasonable, sensible, and beneficial. The most difficult part of obeying God's laws is simply deciding to start now.

BIBLE READING: 1 Chronicles 15:11-29

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The Lord destroyed us before because we handled the matter improperly—you were not carrying it.* (1 Chronicles 15:13, TLB)

Obeying God, even when we don't understand, is true freedom. When David's first attempt to move the ark failed (13:8-14), he learned an important lesson: when God gives specific instructions, it is wise to follow them precisely. This time David saw to it that the Levites carried the ark (Numbers 4:5-15). We may not fully understand the reasons behind God's instructions, but we do know that his wisdom is complete and his judgment infallible. The way to know God's instructions is to know his Word. But just as children do not understand the reasons for all their parents' instructions until they are older, we may not understand all of God's reasons in this life. It is far better to obey God first, and then discover the reasons. We are never free to disobey God just because we don't understand.

BIBLE READING: Romans 5:1-21

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The Ten Commandments were given so that all could see the extent of their failure to obey God's laws. But the more we see our sinfulness, the more we see God's abounding grace forgiving us.* (Romans 5:20, TLB)

Freedom to obey comes through God's grace. As a sinner, separated from God, you see his law from below, as a ladder to be climbed to get to God. Perhaps you have repeatedly tried to climb it, only to fall to the ground every time you have advanced one or two rungs. Or perhaps the sheer height of the ladder seems so overwhelming that you have never even started up. In either case, what relief you should feel to see Jesus offering with open arms to lift you above the ladder of the law, to take you directly to God! Once Jesus lifts you into God's presence, you are free to obey—out

of love, not necessity, and through God’s power, not your own. You know that if you stumble, you will not fall back to the ground. Instead, you will be caught and held in Christ’s loving arms.

THE BENEFITS OF OBEDIENCE

What can we expect from God when we obey him?

BIBLE READING: Exodus 15:22-27

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *If you will listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and obey it, and do what is right, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you. (Exodus 15:26, TLB)*

Obedience to God often keeps us from harm. God promised that if the people obeyed him they would be free from the diseases that plagued the Egyptians. Little did they know that many of the moral laws he later gave them were designed to keep them free from sickness. For example, following God’s law against prostitution would keep them free of venereal disease. God’s laws for us are often designed to keep us from harm. Men and women are complex beings. Our physical, emotional, and spiritual lives are intertwined. Modern medicine is now acknowledging what these laws assumed. If we want God to care for us, we need to submit to his directions for living.

BIBLE READING: Joshua 1:1-18

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Constantly remind the people about these laws, and you yourself must think about them every day and every night so that you will be sure to obey all of them. For only then will you succeed. (Joshua 1:8, TLB)*

Obedience to God is pleasing to him. Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must (1) be strong and courageous, because the task ahead would not be easy, (2) obey God’s law, and (3) constantly read and study the Book of the Law—God’s Word. To be successful, follow God’s words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world’s standards, but you will be a success in God’s eyes—and his opinion lasts forever.

BIBLE READING: 2 Chronicles 14:1-15

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *King Abijah was buried in Jerusalem. Then his son Asa became the new king of Judah, and there was peace in the land for the first ten years of his reign, for Asa was careful to obey the Lord his God. (2 Chronicles 14:1-2, TLB)*

Obedience to God often leads to peace. Asa’s reign was marked by peace because he “was careful to obey the Lord his God.” This refrain is often repeated in Chronicles—obedience to God leads to peace with God and others. In the case of Judah’s kings, obedience to God led to national peace, just as God had promised

centuries earlier. In our case, obedience may not always bring peace with our enemies, but it will bring peace with God and complete peace in his future kingdom. Obeying God is the first step on the path to peace.

THE CHALLENGE OF OBEDIENCE

How is obedience challenged?

BIBLE READING: Exodus 5:4-9

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Load them with work and make them sweat; that will teach them to listen to Moses' and Aaron's lies!* (Exodus 5:9, TLB)

Obedience is often challenged by difficulties. Moses and Aaron took their message to Pharaoh just as God directed. The unhappy result was harder work and more oppression for the Hebrews. Sometimes hardship comes as a result of obeying God. Are you following God, but still suffering—or suffering even worse than before? If your life is miserable, don't assume you have fallen out of God's favor. You may be suffering for doing good in an evil world.

BIBLE READING: Joshua 9:1-6

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land to ask for a peace treaty with you."* (Joshua 9:6, TLB)

Obedience is often challenged by deception. As the news about their victory became widespread, the Israelites experienced opposition in two forms: direct (kings in the area began to unite against them) and indirect (the Gibeonites resorted to deception). We can expect similar opposition as we obey God's commands. To guard against these pressures, we must rely on God and communicate daily with him. He will give us strength to endure the direct pressures and wisdom to see through the trickery.

How does obedience challenge us?

BIBLE READING: Matthew 5:17-20

KEY BIBLE VERSE: *And so if anyone breaks the least commandment, and teaches others to, he shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But those who teach God's laws and obey them shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Matthew 5:19, TLB)

Obedience challenges us to go beyond mere understanding. Some of those in the crowd were experts at telling others what to do, but they missed the central point of God's laws themselves. Jesus made it clear, however, that obeying God's law is more important than explaining it. It's much easier to study God's laws and tell others to obey them than to put them into practice. How are you doing at obeying God yourself?

Obedience challenges us to go beyond mere outward conformity. The Pharisees were exacting and scrupulous in their attempts to follow their laws. So how could Jesus reasonably call us to a greater righteousness than theirs? The Pharisees' weakness was that they were content to obey the laws outwardly without allowing God to

change their hearts (or attitudes). Jesus was saying, therefore, that the quality of our goodness should be greater than that of the Pharisees. They looked pious, but they were far from the kingdom of God. God judges our hearts as well as our deeds, for it is in the heart that our real allegiance lies. Be just as concerned about your attitudes that people don't see as about your actions that are seen by all.

Obedience challenges us to act out of love for God. Jesus was saying that his listeners needed a different kind of righteousness altogether (love and obedience), not just a more intense version of the Pharisees' righteousness (legal compliance). Our righteousness must (1) come from what God does in us, not what we can do by ourselves, (2) be God-centered, not self-centered, (3) be based on reverence for God, not approval from people, and (4) go beyond keeping the law to living by the principles behind the law.

You Now Have The Tools To Hear God With Understanding.

May You Treasure His Voice!