

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BUSH STILL BURNS

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter you will be able to:

- Write the Key Verse from memory.
- List steps for finding God's will.
- Explain how to have assurance of the will of God.
- Identify three keys for receiving direction from God.

KEY VERSE:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we examined the Biblical record of God's communication with man in the past. But the question is, does God still speak to men today?

The Apostle Paul summarized:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, who He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

God spoke in various ways in times past. He continued to speak to men in the time of Paul. Paul said the greatest message God ever communicated was through His Son, Jesus Christ.

TIMES PAST: THE BURNING BUSH

God communicated His message in Biblical times by many methods. One method He used is recorded in Exodus chapter 3:

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. (Exodus 3:1-4)

From a burning bush which was not consumed, God to Moses called Moses to deliver the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Yes, God definitely spoke to men in times past!

THE PRESENT TIME: THE BUSH STILL BURNS

But does God still speak to men today in such miraculous ways? Were these forms of communication limited to Old Testament times before the infilling of the Holy Spirit was given?

The bush still burns! You may not actually experience this specific form of guidance given Moses, but God still speaks to men in miraculous ways just as He did in Old Testament times.

In Hebrews 1:1-2 Paul pointed out that God continues to speak to the world through Jesus Christ. Not only does God speak through the written Word which records the life and teachings of Jesus, but Jesus promised:

Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. (John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit continues to speak by Jesus communicating God's message to man.

After the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, special revelations from God continued just as in Old Testament times. People dreamed dreams, saw visions, talked with angels, heard the audible voice of God, and experienced other miraculous revelations from God.

Miraculous communication from God did not cease with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit just added a new dimension of guidance. That dimension included inward direction, intercession according to the will of God through the prayer language of other tongues, and special spiritual gifts through which God speaks.

The final book of the Bible, Revelation, is an extended record of a vision God gave to the Apostle John. Right up to the end of His written Word, God is speaking to man in miraculous ways.

God continues to speak to man through these methods. Modern church history contains many well documented instances of miraculous communications from God to man because. . .

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

WHAT IF THERE IS NO BUSH?

But what happens if God does not choose to speak to you through a miraculous method. What if you do not experience a dream, vision or miracle? What if He does not speak to you through an audible voice or through supernatural gifts of prophecy, tongues, or interpretation? What if there is no burning bush?

Some people wait all their lives for a supernatural revelation from God. Multitudes of believers waste their lives, immobile and ineffective, waiting for some unusual or dramatic message from God.

The early church did not do this. They rejoiced when God chose to lead through miraculous methods, but in the many decisions of everyday life they were not guided by angels, dreams, and visions. Yet they moved ahead as a mighty force for God.

So, what do you do if there is no burning bush? Here are seven steps to finding God's will:

1. PRAY:

Pray for God's direction in your life. Jesus taught His followers that part of the regular pattern of prayer was to be for the will of God to be done:

**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.
(Matthew 6:10)**

When you pray, express your desire for God to reveal His will to you. Moses did this:

Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. (Exodus 33:13)

David did this:

Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. (Psalms 25:4)

Ask for wisdom to make the right choices:

If any of you lack wisdom (in determining the will of God) let him ask of

God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

**For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.
(James 1:5-7)**

Request the prayers of other believers. God often reveals His will through spiritual gifts exercised in group prayer meetings. Paul and Barnabas received confirmation of their calling to missionary service in such a gathering.

2. STUDY THE SCRIPTURES:

Earnestly search God's written Word to determine if specific guidance is given for your situation. Determine if there are general Biblical principles or biographical examples which apply.

Searching the Scriptures does not mean letting the Bible fall open and taking the first verse your eyes fall on as your answer. Searching the Scriptures is a detailed examination of the Word and application of its principles to the decisions you must make. Every open door, every opportunity, every other leading you think might be from the Lord should first be tested by the written Word of God. Jesus used this principle. When He was tempted by Satan to act apart from God's will he answered repeatedly "It is written. . ." (Matthew 4). He analyzed everything on the basis of God's written Word.

As you search the Scriptures, be sure to study the many promises for direction. We have listed some of these in the "For Further Study" section of this chapter. As you study these passages it will increase your faith that God does speak and that you can know His voice.

3. LISTEN TO THE INNER VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Through prayer and study of the Scriptures, God speaks His will into your spirit by the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. We discussed this at length in the last chapter. Part of the "voice of the Holy Spirit" is the prayer language of other tongues. When you are not certain of God's will in a matter, pray in the prayer language of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit knows the perfect will of God and will pray through you in harmony with that will:

**. . .He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the spirit,
because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.
(Romans 8:27)**

Remember--Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "shew you things to come." This means He reveals God's plan to you. He guides you according to the will of God.

4. SEEK CHRISTIAN COUNSEL:

As we mentioned in the last chapter, God uses Christian counselors to assist believers in the decision making process. The Bible states:

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is a safety. (Proverbs 11:14)

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. (Proverbs 12:15)

It is important that believers seek counsel only from mature Christians. Never seek counsel from secular psychologists or psychiatrists. They will give worldly counsel. They are "blind leaders of the blind":

Woe unto you, ye blind guides. . . (Matthew 23:16)

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. . . (Psalms 1:1)

Never seek counsel from new Christians, as they lack experience and spiritual maturity.

Some people only go to a counselor hoping to get them to agree with their own opinions. You will receive little benefit from counseling if this is your attitude. Some believers consult many counselors comparing the counsel they receive. They appear to be taking a poll as to how many are in favor of one course of action as opposed to another. This is not the purpose of counseling. Most important, always remember that all counsel of man must agree with the written Word of God.

5. ANALYZE THE CIRCUMSTANCES:

Analyze the circumstances relating to the decision you need to make. These should be considered in relation to the guidance God gives through prayer, study of the Word, the inner voice of the Spirit, and Christian counsel.

Circumstances should not be used alone to determine God's will, but they do define the context of the decision which is to be made. Sometimes circumstances limit choices or provide opportunity for new direction in life.

6. USE THE BIBLICAL KEYS TO DIRECTION:

In the natural world, keys open doors. In the spiritual world, God has provided keys to open the door to His will. The keys are found in the book of Proverbs:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The First Key: Trust.

Do not fear what God may ask of you. Know that His plan for you is best. Certainly, men should be able to trust one who would give His only Son to die for them. Your trust must be in the Lord and not in man:

Thus saith the Lord, Cursed by be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. (Jeremiah 17:5)

The Second Key: Lean Not To Your Own Understanding.

Do not depend on your own human reasoning. This does not mean there is no place for intelligent judgment. The book of Proverbs is filled with commands to use understanding and common sense. God is not saying you should abandon sound judgment. He is simply saying do not depend solely on human reasoning when you are seeking the will of God.

When David was returning the ark to Jerusalem, He did not ask God for direction. He leaned on his own understanding and started to move the ark in the most practical way possible (II Samuel 6:1-7).

But this was not God's way and judgment fell. It was God's will to bring the ark back to Jerusalem, but David had not aligned God's will with His way. This is an important principle of guidance.

The Third Key: In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him.

To acknowledge God in all ways is to honor Him in thought, word, and deed. Give Him first place in your life:

That in all things He might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18)

Joshua made a serious mistake when "he asked not counsel of the mouth of the Lord" concerning a treaty with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9). His decision resulted in an alliance with an ungodly nation, something which was forbidden by God.

The three keys. . .

- Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. . .
- Lean not to thine own understanding. . .
- In all thy ways acknowledge Him. . .

These keys open the door. . .And He shall direct thy paths.

7. CHOOSE THE WAY OF WISDOM:

In decisions specifically dealt with in the written Word of God, you must always make a decision consistent with the revealed Word. In other decisions, after prayer, study of the Word, listening to the voice of the Spirit, seeking counsel, and analyzing the circumstances, you can make a choice according to "the way of wisdom." (Remember--you prayed for wisdom from God. Now you make a choice on the basis of that wisdom.)

The way of wisdom is the option in any decision which offers the greatest opportunity for spiritual advancement in every area of life. It is the option in harmony with what God has revealed through prayer, the written Word, the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, and Christian counsel.

Ability to recognize the way of wisdom increases through spiritual maturity:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Spiritual maturity comes from relationship with God, prayer, and meditation in His written Word.

ASSURANCE OF THE WILL OF GOD

And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from the Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts-deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds- (in that peaceful state) to which (as members of Christ's) one body you were also called (to live). . . (Colossians 3:15 The Amplified Version)

An umpire is a person responsible for reviewing a sports event to determine if the game is being playing according to the rules.

In the spiritual world, the peace of God is the umpire of the will of God. Your actions and decisions are reviewed. When they are in harmony with God's will, you will have peace in your spirit. When you are confused or frustrated, do not act. Wait until you receive peace concerning the decision you are making. Lack of peace is a signal from the umpire that something is wrong:

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. . . (I Corinthians 14:33)

A STEP AT A TIME

One final important principle in the matter of God's will is to recognize God reveals His plan a step at a time. This means He does not reveal the entire plan for your life, with all the details, at one time. God does not just speak once in a lifetime to you. You cannot develop a relationship with someone on the basis of one conversation. Relationship is a continuing process of communication. God continues to speak, and you increase in your ability to recognize His voice.

God has reasons for revealing His will a step at a time. Often, you are not ready to know the whole plan because it might overwhelm you or cause feelings of inadequacy for the task ahead. Jesus once said to His disciples:

**I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.
(John 16:12)**

God told Israel that he would defeat their enemies in Canaan "little by little" as they were ready and able to assume responsibility for the new land He was giving them.

God also does not reveal His entire plan because we tend to worry over the future. The Bible warns:

**Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take
thought for the things of itself. (Matthew 6:34)**

Do not worry about the future. Make only the decisions necessary for today. The future is controlled by God. This does not mean you should not do wise planning for the future. But you are not to worry about it. What is important is to live in the revealed will of God for this day. Learn to hear His voice in your daily Christian walk. A daily walk in His will results in a life-long walk in His will.

God does not reveal His total plan because He wants you to learn to live by faith. It is easier to take the first step if one knows where the path is headed. It is not as easy to make a step of faith into the unknown.

The Bible states regarding Abraham:

By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (Hebrews 11:8)

Nothing can build faith in God better than walking a step at a time. Taking a step at a time as God reveals it means you cannot move too hastily. Moses moved too quickly and killed an Egyptian. Abraham moved ahead of God's plan and tried to substitute Ishmael for the chosen heir.

The book of Esther stresses the importance of waiting on God. The people of God were in danger of being destroyed by an evil man named Haman. He had asked the King to destroy all Jews.

Queen Esther was aware of the plot. She knew it was not God's will for the Jewish people to be destroyed, but she did not act in haste. She waited until God gave her a plan and then she waited an extra day before talking to the King. During that waiting period an important thing happened. The King discovered that Mordechai, a Jew, had saved his life from a plot to murder him.

When this was made known, then Esther revealed Haman's plot against the Jews. The king acted against Haman's plan, the Jews were saved, and Haman was punished for his evil--all because Esther waited one more day before acting.

THE BUSH STILL BURNS

In a spiritual sense, the bush still burns. God still guides us and desires to speak to us:

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)

God wants to reveal His will and communicate His plans. He continues to guide and direct. God is a still God who speaks if you will only listen.

SELF-TEST

1. Write the Key Verse from memory.

2. What is the assurance God gives when a believer is functioning in His perfect will?

3. What are the three keys to determining God's will given in Proverbs 3:5-6?

4. What does it mean to "acknowledge God" in all ways?

5. List seven steps for finding God's will discussed in this chapter.

6. Read the following statements. If the statement is True, write the letter T on the blank provided in front of it. If the statement is False, write the letter F on the blank in front of it.

a. _____ An excellent method of using the Bible to determine God's will is to open it at random and take the first verse that stands out to you as your answer.

b. _____ God usually reveals His entire plan for your life, with all the details, in one miraculous revelation.

c. _____ God does not speak today through dreams, visions, and other similar miraculous methods.

(Answers to tests are provided at the conclusion of the final chapter in this manual.)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Compare Proverbs 3:5-6 and Romans 12:1-2. There are two positive commandments in each passage (things to do) and one negative commandment (something not to do). List these on the following chart:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Romans 12:1-2

Positive Commandment:

Negative Commandment:

Positive Commandment:

2. Rev. George Mueller was a great spiritual leader who founded and directed an orphanage in England and various missionary works throughout the world. In his writings, Rev. Mueller set forth his formula for determining the will of God:

"I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regards to a given matter.

Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of His will.

Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or a single impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

Next, I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright. Thus, through prayer, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace and continues so after two or three more repetitions, I proceed accordingly.

In trivial matters and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective."