

HEARING GODS VOICE

Testing Impressions, Confirming Major Guidance

INTRODUCTION: WHAT SEEKING GOD REALLY MEANS

Isaiah 55.6: **"Seek the Lord while he may be found."**

- We are so accustomed to thinking of God's love for us and the fact that we are loved by God, that the idea of "seeking" Him while He may be found seems to contradict the love of God.
 - Why would I need to seek a God who loves me so intensely?
- Seeking God does not suggest that He isn't present with us or near to us. But in areas of our lives where fear or anger dominate may show us that there are specific circumstances in our lives where we haven't found God.

Prayer is seeking God in the places we are not yet finding Him. Where we lack peace and joy, shows us the areas where we have not found God.

- We need to "seek" in the sense of being "re-filled".

"Why do I need to be refilled if God loves me and I have the Holy Spirit?"

- Because you HAVE been assaulted and you are GOING to be assaulted by the messaging of the world.
- It quite important for us to begin our prayer time assuming we need to re-seek God.

When we assume that our filters are dirty, we will spend time changing the filters. That is what seeking God is. We are acknowledging that at the moment we begin to pray we are most likely operating in our natural mind. I'm not saying that God can't lead us in that space, but we cannot assume that God is speaking in our natural mind.

The Holy Spirit works powerfully in us to help us see that seeking God is pleasure.

When God calls us to seek Him, he is giving us permission to stop trying to figure things out.

- There are many necessary disciplines in our lives, but seeking God should not be one of them.
- If seeking God becomes a discipline, then we will either lean stronger and stronger on our will, or we will lose heart over time because there is no joy in it.
- God's invitation to seek Him is to walk away from where you are not finding him. Where you are anxious or angry or frustrated *don't* try to find God by solving things. God wants you to first 'repent'... that is 'turn 100% opposite of these dominating emotions and look at God.
 - We think that to seek God and find God means to break through our fear or anxiety or anger. That is exactly what the devil wants you to think!
 - Because if you think that you are to press through or break through, then you're going to associate seeking God with breaking through... Overtime it just gets too wearisome.

Seeking God becomes His invitation to walk away from your control.

- Seeking God is God's invitation to walk away from my natural mind.
 - Think about all the scriptures about seeking. We have avoided them because we recoiled at the idea that God isn't present with us. We recoil at the idea that we have to work at finding God.
 - And that approach to seeking God misses the whole point. You don't have to work at finding God; just keep turning back to God away from all the disabling emotions that may be crippling your soul.
 - And yet... when you turn to God – and find yourself nestled in His everlasting arms – you can then turn back around and address the fears, the angers, the disappointments, the hopelessness and confess them, be set free from them, renounce any power of the enemy we've allowed to oppress us!

Seeking God is complete and total freedom!

- And we need to seek Him as regularly as we would change our air filters.

THE 4 GREEN LIGHTS OF GUIDANCE [From Bob Mumford's book *Take Another Look At Guidance*]

When it comes to seeking God's guidance about key decisions, look for 4 'green lights'

1) When you seek God's guidance, look for His confirming peace.

- Colossians 3.15: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."*
- Isaiah 55.12: *"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace."*

"Never run before God's guidance. If there is the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. Whenever there is doubt - don't." (Oswald Chambers)

2) When you seek God's guidance, listen for a confirming Scripture.

Psalm 119.105: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

3) When you seek God's guidance, wait for confirming circumstances.

Proverbs 16.9: *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

4) When you seek God's guidance, submit your guidance to those in authority whom you trust and who reflect the character of Jesus.

Hebrews 13.17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.*

The greater the issue – marriage, career, choice of college – the more we need all of these green lights.

TESTING OUR GUIDANCE

- Because listening to God is so personal; because 'hearing Him' accurately is such an important measurement of our intimacy with Him, we are often reluctant to 'test' what we hear. Our fear is that if we place our impressions under scrutiny, we'll find our spiritual sensitivity wanting. *"If I'm not hearing accurately",* we reason, *"I must not be as close to God as I thought."*
 - To test our 'words', consequently, is to court the possibility of disillusionment. Yet, deception is vastly worse than disillusionment, so it behooves us to vigorously examine our guidance

TESTING OUR IMPRESSIONS

(1) When seeking God in-the-moment, look for a sense of "peace" or "dispeace".

(2) The Lord's voice does not push or drive.

(3) If the impression is from the Holy Spirit, there will be a growing sense of joy and confidence in the repeated urgings that come to our minds.

- If we sense more fear than faith, after a few moments of pondering, chances are it isn't God who is speaking.
- There is a 'leading' quality to His voice. If it's God, you will sense an increase in excitement, peace, and/or courage

“If the suggestion is from Him, it will continue and strengthen; if it is not from Him, it will disappear and we shall almost forget we ever had it.” (Hannah Whiteall Smith)

(4) Send up ‘bullet prayers’ like Nehemiah did (Neh. 2:4), asking Him to bring to mind a confirming passage of Scripture that would indicate which course you are to take.

- This is one reason it is so important to commit Scripture to memory. The more Scripture we know, the deeper the well the Spirit can draw from to give us ‘on-the-spot’ guidance.

(5) The best way to test impressions from the Lord is to develop your discernment filters, and the best way to develop your discernment filters is to have a depth of knowledge in the Scriptures, and an understanding of the character of God.

(6) Check to see if the impression is coming out of a personal ‘push’ to prove God.

- Remember Satan tried to get Jesus to prove God’s power and compassion, and Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 6.16, responds, ***“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”***
- I know that in Malachi 3.10 God says to put him to the test to see if he will not pour our blessings on you... But that is in relation to bringing the tithe into the storehouse.

(7) Ask yourself, “Does this impression I’m receiving spring from God’s compassion for people? Or from a desire to glorify Him in some way?”

- “Or upon closer examination, is it springing from a hidden place in my heart of wanting to be recognized, or wanting to advance my own agenda, or even out of an irritation towards others?”

(8) One of the best ways to discern whether our impressions come from us or God is the wisdom filter of James 3.17

- **James 3.17: *The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.***
 - Pure: “Does this impression feed my ego? Does it primarily serve my interests and desires over others? Is it driven out of ambition? Or wanting to get even?”
 - Peaceable: Does this impression make me more eager to honor all my brothers and sisters in Christ? Does it stir desire in me to be a peacemaker and reconciler?
 - Gentle: Does this impression agitate me? Or does it encourage me to act in patience, from a place of inner calm?
 - Reasonable [Open to reason]: Does this impression make me want to check it with others’ thoughts? Am I open to the sound judgements of those in authority that I trust?
 - Mercy: Does this impression make me more compassionate? Make me want to see people ‘after The Spirit’?

HEARING GOD’S VOICE: THE PLACE TO BEGIN

The place to begin to hear God’s Voice is to cultivate the habit of meditating in Scripture [Psalm 1]