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Articles

Are You Hearing from God?

By Kevin Van Wyk

Have you ever been desperate to hear from God? Have you longed to know what his specific will is for you?

I certainly have. Sometimes it's been huge decisions, like whether to marry Stephanie, to go to seminary, or to move to Alto. Others are much simpler, like what sermon series to tackle next, who should I contact today, or when to have a difficult conversation.

Some would say God is not concerned with our day-to-day decisions, just his ultimate will... the big picture. While I wrestle with God having a specific plan for the Bucks to win and the Brewers to lose, God does clearly guide believers in the New Testament. The book of Acts is filled with examples of God directing decisions, changing travel plans, restructuring the church, and giving words to speak.

We can't know these plans unless we listen. But, this is dangerous...

"It's hard to overemphasize the dangers inherent in believing that one is receiving "inspired" messages from the Spirit. Scripture is inspired and therefore authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16). But the "nudges," "feelings," intuitions, and random thoughts a person has while meditating cannot be put on the same level as Scripture. To assume that the voice a person hears in his mind is the voice of God is to leave the door wide open for self-delusion and even demonic deception."

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/listening-prayer.html>)

Yet, we clearly see that the Holy Spirit does speak to his people and give direction when they pray... *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:2-3)*

So, should we listen for God? To say "no" rejects all forms of communication beyond reading the Bible... prophecy, teaching, preaching, visions, and dreams. However, the Bible affirms that God does use these methods to communicate. Believers are urged to "wait" and be "watchful." When Jesus retreated to quiet places, he certainly did not just speak to the Father. He heard the Father and then spoke what the Father told him. So, "yes," we must listen to God, and finding a quiet place with no TV, radio, or phone will certainly help.

At the same time, remember that God speaks on his terms. He mostly interrupts people and speaks when they are not really listening. Often he speaks through other people and even more so through the Bible. The act of listening is not about emptying your mind, but about...

- surrendering your will to God,
- slowing down enough to hear God, and
- actually responding with obedience to God.

There are dangers in elevating our thoughts above the Bible, but also in rejecting, quenching, and grieving the Holy Spirit. His Word and Spirit speak together! You don't need to chant mantra's, follow a labyrinth, or practice deep breathing.

If you want guidance from God, start here...

1. Read your Bible. Everything you hear, whether it be your conscience or a sermon, must show itself right according to the Bible. So, the more you know, the more likely you are to discern God's voice from your own voice or the voice of the evil one.

2. Surrender to God's will. Pray with Jesus, "Not my will, but your will be done."
3. Seek counsel from Godly believers you trust. Ask these people to pray with you and to give you insight into what God desires.
4. Find a quiet place to read the Bible, pray, journal, and reflect on what God is saying to you.
5. Do what God says. I believe we often blame God for "going silent" when it is really our unwillingness to obey. We just keep wanting to hear a different message. What command are you wanting God to change?
6. **GO DEEPER:** See RightNow Media for the first two videos below. Signup for a free account at <https://www.altoreformedchurch.org/resources.html>

Level 1: Whisper, Mark Batterson, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/280942>

Level 2: Shift, Louie Giglio, <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/1203>

Level 3: Systematic Theology, Chapter 30, Wayne Grudem, <https://www.monergism.com/systematic-theology-mp3-lecture-series>

May God give you great wisdom and humility as you seek to follow him.

Honoring Authority

By Doug Shotsky

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

I am so thankful for the many amazing Godly leaders that the Lord has placed in my life over the years. I have learned so much from them, and who I am today has so much to do with the investment they have made into my life.

The scripture above, Hebrews 13:17, holds a particularly special place in my heart. It's one of those types of things that you're thankful for now but weren't especially thrilled about at the time.

I was 20 years old living at a men's ministry, and I remember breaking one of the rules and as consequence I had to write this scripture at least 100 times! What made things even worse, was that this was Super Bowl Sunday, and I wasn't going to be allowed to watch the game had I not got the scriptures all done (I had a sore hand but got em' done!). Of course, in my mind at the time it was a stupid rule (we usually think all rules that have a negative consequence are stupid), but nonetheless I had worn shorts downstairs instead of getting changed before coming down, and that was against the rules.

To this day, not only do I still remember that scripture, but I learned some valuable spiritual lessons that have served me well on my journey with Jesus.

1. God is the one who places spiritual authority in our lives. Romans 13:1 says, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." (NLT) That's a pretty stern warning!
2. They are accountable to God, so if they misuse their position or are wrong about something, then that is on them not on me. What is on me is whether or not I'm respecting or obeying them. Biblically we have the examples of David and Paul.

King Saul tried to kill David over and over, because he was jealous of him, but David respected that Saul was God's anointed

authority so much that he had the chance to kill him twice, and let him go because he dared not harm God's anointed (1 Samuel Chpts. 24 & 26). I hope that God would give me such grace.

When the Apostle Paul was speaking to the Sanhedrin, Ananias the high priest ordered those around him to strike Paul in the mouth. Paul, not knowing that Ananias was the high priest hurls an insult at him. Those near him immediately responded by saying, "How dare you insult God's high priest!" After hearing this, here was Paul's response: "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'" (Rom. 23:4-5)

3. Lastly, I learned that it's better for everyone if I give my leaders reason to watch over my soul with joy, rather than with sorrow. In the case of spiritual leaders, not only am I loving my brother, but as the scripture above says, "That would certainly not be for your benefit." I love what Zig Ziglar has to say about this, "You can have everything in life you want if you'll just help enough other people get what they want." It's not about getting stuff, but in the end if you invest in others, they'll be more likely to be willing to invest in you. After all, you reap what you sow!

RightNow Media Parenting Resources

By Adrea Daane

I spent part of my week doing research on parenting resources in RightNow Media. With so many options I began to get overwhelmed. After watching several hours of materials, I came up with two different resources that I found to be the most helpful and engaging. Now, these might not be for you, and if not, I encourage you to do a little research yourself and see what interests you. As

parents we are given the most important opportunity...to shape these little people into adults who love Jesus and grow into people who lead lives that are pleasing to Him. This is a daily struggle for myself and I'm guessing others feel like they're stuck or failing miserably. These resources, although they didn't change my parenting overnight, gave me some confidence in who I should try to be as a parent in the eyes of God.

The first resource I dove into was "[Have a New Kid By Friday](#)". This was a great 5-day resource that gave great insights into "why your kids do what they do and what you can do about it". This program looked into how to change your child's attitude, behavior, and character in 5 days and focused on how as parents we need to change our parenting and in doing so, can impact our children.

"[Intentional Parenting](#)" by Doug Fields was the second resource I found to be helpful. This video series was shorter in length and focused on how as parents we tend to fall back onto quick fix parenting when we should be more intentional. Doug took me through a five-session course where he discussed his 10 ways in which we as parents can and should become more intentional. During each episode my heart was invigorated, and my spirit was lifted into taking on this new challenge. Now comes the hard part...putting those lessons into action and not just putting them in my mental shelves of knowledge.

I challenge each of you as parents, if you're looking for some encouragement or guidance in your parenting, to go to RightNow and do some digging. Keeping Jesus at the center of how you parent and the focus of your home is crucial to building up little people in Christ. I know this is something I want to continue to push myself to be better at, because it's not just affecting me...it's affecting my kiddos too.

Youth Ministry Update

By Jessa Ter Beest

Summer is just around the corner and we have exciting things ahead in youth ministry!

A group of 18 of us are gearing up to head to Memphis, Tennessee from June 15-22 for a mission trip with Servant Life: Street Reach. Our main ministry while we're there will be to put on something similar to vacation Bible school, but instead of having children come to a church to attend, we will be meeting them where they're at in their neighborhood at a park or even just in an empty parking lot. Street Reach has many teams they work with over the summer so these mini vacation Bible schools pop up all around the city of Memphis. Our job each day will be to teach a Bible lesson, put together a craft, and lead games and music with the kids. In the evenings we will connect with the local churches and learn more about their ministry in Memphis. Please be in prayer that God would use us in big ways and change us in big ways too!

Another big event this summer is Lifest which will be July 10-14. It's a Christian music festival in Oshkosh and all incoming 6th graders through college age kids are invited to camp with us and fill up on the Holy Spirit through the best worship experiences! More details and signups will come out for that later this month.

Ruth Brewer, Ashlan Bruins, Hannah Derksen, and Stella Harmsen have all completed their 10 weeks of Bible reading for our trip to the water park this summer and there are a handful of other kids right behind them that should make it by the end of the school year! We're so excited to reward the kids for such an awesome job with that this semester! Once again, if you'd like to sponsor that trip for one of the kids, just put a check written to ARC for \$30 in the Youth Director mailbox with "bible reading" in the memo. Thanks for supporting our kids!

This summer we'll also have our usual weekly Bible studies for high school and we're going to start one for middle schoolers, as well as local mission trips at the food pantry! More details on that coming later this month.

Please keep us all in your prayers as we transition into summer and all the craziness that entails! We are so thankful for you and all the support you give us!

Library Update

By Sharon DeMotts

I think you'll agree that our church library is a well-used, busy place. Recently Jean & the librarians spent some time going through books that had taken up room on the shelves for quite some time. It was a serious weeding process & you probably noticed the tables of books in the foyer "free for the taking". I hope many of you took advantage of them & added to your own home library. We found good homes for what was remaining & now are waiting for the new books to come in. That's always an exciting time of year for all the readers!

Next time you see Jean Stelsel, our head librarian, & Renee Bruins, give them a "high five" for all the time they put in to keep your church library such a "well-oiled machine".

Golden Lifers Update

By Roxy Schouten

Golden Lifers have been studying various Psalms. Recently we came across the word "light". We have a pretty good idea what that means because we encounter that every day when we switch on a light or stand out in the sunshine and even see the moon and star light. But what has always puzzled me was that in Genesis 1 when God created "light" the sun, moon and stars were not created until days later. Jesus said He was the Light of the world and we, as born-again believers, are called to be a "light" to the world. The word "light" appears 272 times in the KJV Bible.

A major clue to the basic meaning can be found in seeing how it was written the very first time it appeared in the Bible in Genesis 1:3. This was right after a description of the earth in the previous verse and described as "without form, and void and darkness". That certainly describes something God would not want to put His new creation into.

In the original Hebrew there were three picture words that described "light". Reading right to left as Hebrew is read in its essence says, "order created from the top". Right in the middle of the three pictures is a picture depicting a "nail". Putting this all together we have a command for "light" to mean that Someone from the top or in authority is creating "order". The "nail" in the middle indicates that Jesus (who gave His life by being nailed to the cross for our salvation) already is announcing what John 1:1 says – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Continuing on in verse 3 – "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made".

We see a lot of disorder in our world. This was not God's created mess. He is the LIGHT and He is ever calling us to be a LIGHT in this world to help bring "order" out of disorder created by Satan/Lucifer/Devil the source of darkness. Every time we do not practice and endorse "light" we contribute to the darkness. Oppositely when we are God's ambassadors in this world for Him we are "light" and dispel the darkness.

We see and experience this in our own bodies as all the impulses and processes in our bodies are fighting to bring us back into "order out of the chaos". Germs, injuries and the environment fight to bring chaos and darkness into our bodies and lives. Someday that will end, and we will be in God's Light forever when he takes us Home.

As Golden Lifers we are still trying to dispel the darkness and being "light". From youth to the grave we long to be the Light that Jesus has called us to be. Let all of us – young and old – strive to live out Jesus command and invitation in Matthew 5:14-16 to be "LIGHTS". What a Savior we serve who gives us all the weapons we need to fight the battle described in Ephesians 6. Look up those verses and don your battle gear every day.

God bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance to you and give you peace (shalom). Num 6:24-26.

Messages

A big thank you to all who donated food and help for the community Easter meal at the Union, and to all those who ate and visited with people from our community. So grateful for the ways we can serve Jesus together!

The Outreach Committee

Thank you for the generous donation of duffle bags, teddy bears, coloring books, blankets, and hygiene products. These items will be greatly appreciated by new foster children coming into care. We are blessed to be a part of your community.

Pillar & Vine

Many thanks for your recent donation. We could not carry out our mission without the generosity of people like you. You are appreciated!

Waupun Food Pantry

Events

May 12th – Last day of Sunday school for kids

News

New Members

4/7/19 – Dave & Stephanie Lenz

4/14/19 – Ryan & Breanna Vande Zande

Baptisms

4/14/19 – Maron Jean, daughter of Ryan & Breanna Vande Zande

Births

4/16/19 – Gavin Lloyd, son of Jared & Ashley Stelsel

Christian Literature – It's once again time to go through your Christian literature. We will be collecting materials for ICLD during the month of May. If you have any items you'd like to donate, please place them in the box located in the lobby under the bulletin board. Any questions, contact Paul Elenius.

Wisconsin Inmate Education Association Update **Beams of Light...Called Dreams**

On my first visit to our classroom, I was taken back a bit about how spacious it felt. Not in terms of physical space, for prison is not a place that physically allows much space, but in thoughts, knowledge, and...dreams.

Each man shared with me what he dreamed to do one day and how this opportunity allowed him to achieve those dreams.

One student mentioned to me that he didn't have a "date" to look forward to (as I learned that he will be in prison for life), but "I have hope", he said. He went on to explain that now he has a purpose for his remaining days. He is learning to focus his energy on good things instead of causing trouble. Now he has focus, purpose, and he will be able to positively influence those who have a "date".

Two different men talked to me about starting a nonprofit when they get out. They want to use their experiences, and their soon to be earned Trinity degree, to help troubled youth, admitting that they were once forgotten, troubled youth themselves.

Another commented that a friend on the outside contacted him, instead of a pastor or friend, for advice. His friend thought that his opinions mattered. Although he wasn't used to people coming to him for help, he offered counsel and was thrilled to do so.

These men are gatekeepers to change. They can either ignite a positive or negative change in the people that surround them.

These men are gatekeepers of dreams. They have the ability to crush dreams or ignite them.

My journey has only just begun, but one of my hopes is to spark the dreams in those who have long ago lost the hope to dream. It is a dream bigger than making a better life for themselves, but one focused on bettering their fellow inmates, their families, and their communities.

Catherine (Draeger) Pederson
Executive Director
WIEA