



**CALLED  
WILLING  
PREPARED**

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# FORWARD →

So often there is no clear plan to help a person who is called by God to grow and develop in such a way they will be qualified to go when God wants them to go.

The concept of this material is that when a leader (pastor, supervisor, etc.) becomes aware that God is calling one of his or her people they will have a resource to help mentor and encourage them as they learn what God's call means and they prepare to obey that call.

It could also be that the person being called senses a need to be mentored in relation to the call of God. In this case the goal would be that they find a mature Christian willing to help mentor them. Again, the material serves the same purpose, helping the mature Christian mentor the one who has been called by God.

# INTRODUCTION

You have just heard God speak. You may have been reading a passage in the Bible and God opened your eyes and your heart to its meaning and the direction God wants you to follow. Much like Josiah, as he heard the words of the Law being read to him, he knew immediately that he needed to obey what he had just heard. (2 Ch 34:18-21)

You have just heard God speak. You may have been at church and God used the pastor's message to open your heart to what He wanted you to do. Much like the Ethiopian who listened as Philip explained God's word, he desired to be obedient to what he had heard, and so he was baptized. (Ac 8:29-39)

You have just heard God speak. You may have been at camp, at a retreat, or in a time of meditation and you heard the voice of God speaking to you. Much like Isaiah who had a vision and heard the God ask "who will go," (Is 6:1-8) or Paul on the road to Damascus confronted by the Lord (Ac 9:4-16), their lives would never be the same.

## QUESTION?

God has invited you to serve in the kingdom. But what does that mean? What do you need to do next? How will you know when you will be ready? How do you keep your eyes focused on Jesus and what He has called you to do?

These are all important questions and need to be taken seriously.

Answering these questions is part of the process - from receiving God's call to doing what He has called you to do. Sometimes this involves discovering very specifically what God has for you.

Sometimes the time between the call and doing what God has called you to do is short. Sometimes it will take a longer time of preparation before you are ready to do the work you are called to do.

I was called by God to be a missionary when I was eleven years old. It took 23 years of learning and preparation I before started the work God had called me to do. Even then I kept studying and growing, to be ready for the next phase of the work He called me to do.

That sounds like a long time. And it is. But even Paul went through an extended time of preparation before he actually began the first phase of his call. He spent 13 years getting ready to go and serve in Antioch. Then there was another year of teaching in the church and a couple of years as a co-worker with Barnabas before Paul was truly ready to do what God had called him to do.

What is important is that in every case (yours as well) God has a plan to help those called to maintain their focus on the call. He will provide guides and teachers to supply the training, encouragement, and direction needed to carry out His specific call for you.

Hopefully, this material will help you understand the issues that you will face as you seek to understand God's call and what is needed to keep your eyes on Him and not lose your way and allow God to prepare you for the work He has called you to.

**“For many are invited, but few are chosen.” (Mt 22:14)**

Yes, many are invited (called). But so many do not do what is needed to keep their hearts and minds focused on what God wants for them. They do not do the work of preparation needed for what He has called them to do.

It is our prayer that you will find someone to be your mentor and guide you through this material. We pray also that it will be a source of encouragement to help you become a qualified and approved worker, one who is not only called but prepared and willing to go where God sends you 2 Ti 2:15.



# THE CALL

## LESSON 01

Jesus uses three interesting stories to talk about God's invitation to be part of the kingdom. All of them relate to being invited to attend a special banquet, and what happened to those who did not respond properly to the invitation.

The central idea is that God is inviting us to be part of His kingdom. All of us receive an invitation to enter and to celebrate, but it is not enough to have the invitation. It is what we do with the invitation.



The call of God is like receiving an invitation to be part of a special event. While having this invitation is a great honor, what is more important is what we do with the honor we have been given. Jesus' three stories deal with the different responses to the invitation and the results based on their responses.

Let us start with some questions to get us thinking about the meaning and purpose of an invitation.

Have you ever received a formal invitation to a special event? What was it?

How did you know you were invited? What information was included in the invitation?

What kind of preparations did you have to make before attending the event?

How were you expected to respond to the invitation? Many of us have not had a formal invitation but have been invited to many other events, like birthday celebrations, graduation parties, etc. How did you know you were invited?

How was that invitation different or the same as the formal invitation?

The three stories.

1. Luke 14:16-24. *In this story a person decided to give a great banquet. We can assume he was wealthy and powerful because he invited a lot of guests. The party was so big that he had to send his servants out twice to find enough people to replace the invited guests who ignored his invitation.*

We are told three excuses that people used to say they could not come to the banquet. List the three excuses below. In the space provided explain why you think they were good or bad excuses.

Excuse 1 :

Excuse 2 :

Does it make sense to buy something without ever seeing it (vs 18)? Why?

Does it make sense to buy something before testing it (vs 19)? Why?

Does it make sense to plan a family event on the day of the great banquet (vs 20)? Why?

When God calls you what should you do?

What excuses have you heard people make for not doing what God called them to do?

What kind of excuses do people make when invited to church, to a Bible study, or to help in evangelism?

2. *Mt 22:1-14. This time it is the wedding banquet of the king's son. As in the previous story, there are people who ignore the invitation. In this case they react negatively, even violently.*

Why would people attack the representatives of the king (vs 6)?

Why would they be so disrespectful of their leader (vs 5)?

The king responded harshly and destroyed those who had been invited. Their rejection of the invitation resulted in them being permanently excluded from any future invitation.

The second part of the story is similar to the first. The king sent out his servants to find people to replace those who refused to come. They invited everyone they met. So the people went home and prepared for the banquet.

However, one person came in the wrong attire. He did not take the event seriously and was not properly prepared to enter and be part of the celebration. He was thrown out.



When you receive an invitation what are you expected to do before arriving at the party?

What happens when you don't do what is expected?

Why is it important to properly prepare for the event you were invited to?

3. Mt 25:1-13. *This time everyone is properly attired and has what they need as they wait for the moment they are invited into the wedding. Or do they?*

We are told that five of the virgins brought extra oil just in case the bridegroom would be delayed in arriving. Does this sound familiar? The other five were dressed correctly, had the right objects with them, but did not plan to wait.

When training for a job do you only do half of the training? Or, when you have an assignment for school do you only do half the work? What would happen if you only invested half the time needed to complete what is required of you?

When decorating for a party do you only decorate half the space? How would that look?

When driving to another place what would happen if you only had half the money needed for gas? Will you arrive?

If the plane leaves at 5, and you don't arrive until 5:30, will the plane wait for you? Why? Why not?

Why didn't the bridegroom let those who arrived late to enter?

How do you think God will respond if you choose not to be prepared? Not to come when invited? Not to be ready at the correct time?

Why would God turn you away if He invited you to come?

What does Jesus mean when he says, "for many are invited, but few are chosen," in Mt 22:14 ?

Why is mentoring and preparing important when one receives a call (invitation) from God?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT KIND OS SOUL ARE YOU ?

## LESSON 02

God has planted a seed in your life. To do this He has used one of many methods, or even a combination of them. He has used His Word, the life of another person, a preacher, or an event. There are several parables that talk about the soil (person) receiving the seed. In all of them the key concept is that there is a sower or means by which the seed, or the message of God, is sown; distributed. This concept is so important that not only is the parable given but its interpretation as well. (Mt 13:1-23)



The most common interpretation is that God and the workers in His kingdom are distributing (sowing) the seed of the gospel. The seed is being received by those who are not part of the kingdom. There are four types of soil (responses to this seed), only one of which is positive or lasting. The idea is that the gospel is being presented to the lost and they respond in one of four ways. But these passages can also be applied to those being called by God. His call is received and there are different responses to it. Consider the following questions:

Read Luke 8:1-15

If the seed is God's call to work in the harvest, what kind of response does each soil represent?

1. Path –
2. Rocky –
3. Weedy –
4. Good –

Be careful as you answer the next questions – Can the type of soil be changed?

1. Can a path become good soil? If so how?

2. Can rocky ground become good soil? If so how?

3. Can weedy ground become good soil? If so how?

4. Can good soil become bad soil? If so how?

The description of good soil contains the following descriptions

- Mt 13:23 – hears the word and understands it
- Mk 4:20 – hears the word, accepts it, and produces
- Lk 8:15 – hears the word, retains it, and produces by persevering

Use these ideas - understand, accept, retain, and persevere - to explain what makes soil good and productive.

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners. Does that mean we are all bad, unproductive soil?

Why would God plant the seed of the gospel in sinful soil?

Keep this in mind. The nature of the soil is not revealed until after the seed is sown. God is calling everyone. The nature of each person is revealed after He calls them.

Reflect on the other parable of the sower found in Mt 13:24-28. The farmer sowed good seed on good soil. What happened? How did he respond?

Here is the difficult question. What kind of soil are you?

Your answer should be based on what is happening in your life and the choices you are making.

Can you change and become good soil? If so what do you need to do?

Here are some stories to think about.

What kind of soil was Saul in Acts 8? What kind of soil was Paul in Acts 16? What happened?

What kind of soil was Mark in Acts 15:37-38? What kind of soil was Mark in 2 Ti 4:11? What happened?

What kind of soil were James and Jude, the brothers of Jesus, in Mk 3:21 and Jn 7:3-5? What kind of soil were they in Ja 1:1, 2:2 and Jude 1 and 25? What happened?

How does this topic relate to you and how will you respond to God's call? What do you need to do?

**Read to God's words below from Isaiah 55:10-11.**

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

God has sown the seed of His Word, His call into your life. It will accomplish its purpose.

What do you think that purpose is in your life?

What part do you play in fulfilling that purpose?

We need to understand that our life is like soil and God is seeking to plant in us several critical seeds. The first is the seed of the gospel, the second is the seed of His word, and the third, the seed of His call. The truth is, everyone is like soil and we are not just one type of soil. Our lives are a mixture of the four areas. There are places we don't want God to touch. There are places that we don't want to allow Him to deepen. There are places where we just don't want to refocus on God. And then there are places where we are glad to let God in.

Truthfully speaking Satan is trying to keep it that way. He does not want us to realize that we can change the nature of the soil in our life. We can remove rocks, pull up weeds, and do the hard work of breaking up hard patches.

The following studies will focus on key areas that prevent our lives from becoming good soil; a place where God's call is present and we become rooted, grow, and produce fruit. This is what God wants, for us to be able to produce fruit (Jn 15:8). Some of the topics will be easy to study, others will be challenging because they deal with the rocks, weeds, and hard patches of our lives. We pray that you will allow God to work in your life so you will hear the word, retain it, persevere, and produce good fruit.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHO DO YOU LISTEN TO ?

## LESSON 03



### REHOBOAM

You have just heard from God. He is calling you. The next steps are critical. Who you talk to and how you respond to the advice and counsel of others will be important. There are several groups to whom you will probably share what God has said to you. They will influence greatly the next steps that you take.

The two most common groups are your peers - people of your same age group, and those who are older and/or have some experience in what God's call means. Both groups will be excited that God has spoken to you but will have very different perspectives on what you must do next.

Before we consider what that might look like let us take a look at a couple of Biblical situations where a person was given a great opportunity to serve. As we look at these examples we need to consider who they spoke to and the advice they received.

Rehoboam – He was the son of the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon. His grandfather was David, the man who served God with all his heart and who created the kingdom where he was about to serve as king. The people made a request of Rehoboam and he sought advice from two groups, his friends and the counselors of his father.

### **Read 1 Ki 12 and 2 Ch 10.**

First describe the petition of the people. Why do you think they made this petition?

What was Rehoboam's response?

What was the advice of his father's counselors?

What was the advice of his friends?

Can you think of why his friends would respond the way they did and why Rehoboam would listen to them and not to the wise counselors?

What happened?

Explain the following two words and how they may have affected the thinking of Rehoboam and his friends?

Privilege

Entitlement

**Read 1 Ki 19:19-21, 2 Ki 2:1-15**

God had selected Elisha to succeed Elijah. The day he was called he killed all his oxen and sacrificed them to God and followed Elijah. What did this sacrifice represent? How did he know that he needed to make this sacrifice?

It would be a number of years later before we see any mention of Elisha. But in those years of following Elijah he had seen God use Elijah and heard him defy King Ahab and judge Queen Jezebel. His strength and faith gave courage to other prophets to speak out and obey God's directions. A day came when Elisha reappears and is with Elijah.

What were people telling Elisha? Why would they say this?

Why did Elijah try to discourage Elisha on three occasions?

What was Elisha's response? Was he ignoring their words or were they a test?

What was Elijah's counsel for Elisha? Did Elisha understand what he was told?

**Read Psalm 1**

David identifies two sources of counsel? What are they?

What would be the counsel of the wicked? Why is it considered chaff?

How does one know if the counsel received is good or evil?

**Read Mt 19:16-24; Mk 10:17-22; Lk 18:18-23**

Consider one more story. The story of the rich man who consulted Jesus about what he needed to do to truly follow Jesus. He came seeking advice but chose to reject it. Why?

What was the barrier to listening to the wise advice?

Is this the only barrier that prevents people from hearing wise counsel? List others and why they prevent us from hearing and following the good advice we receive?

The rich man wisely came to the right source for advice. How do we know who is the best source of advice?

Who would you talk to for advice about:

Marriage

Career

Finances

God's call

Is it the same person or group in each case? Why or why not?

Why would we pick different people to give us advice for different aspects of our life?

Why would a person not go to a pastor or key leader for advice related to God's call?

Who do you go to for counsel on spiritual matters? If you don't have a specific person(s) think about why not?

Receiving advice is not always easy because it makes us vulnerable, we open the door to giving control to someone else, or we risk being evaluated by that person. We don't like admitting that we don't have all the answers and need help. This is a dangerous way to think because it means we may not receive or apply critical information and guidance. As a result, we may make the wrong choices. Just as serious is depending on the wrong person or group for advice. Just as we go to specific people, people with experience, for advice on issues related to our life, we should do the same when it comes to spiritual matters. Getting the wrong advice is as dangerous or even more so than not getting advice and trusting in our own abilities.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING?

## LESSON 04



### TIMOTHY

Whether we realize it or not, we are studying every day. For much of our early life this studying is in a formal context. We go to school to study language, math, history, and many other topics. This may start as early as age 4 and continue for many years. Most people finish secondary school. Then some seek employment while others continue on into technical school or university, another 2 to 6 more years of study. There is a smaller group that continues studying to earn even higher degrees adding more years. All of this is the formal study we do.

Along with all of this we are doing other types of studies and are being taught a number of skills in informal settings. We learn about love, patience, anger, relating to people, obedience, etc. The teachers are our parents, our siblings, our friends, and the people around us. Much of the time we are not even aware that we are studying and learning. This type of learning begins the day we are born and can continue until we die, if we let it.

There is a third type of study that is mixed in all of this. It has to do with special areas of life. Areas we choose to study. They involve sports, special interests, hobbies, religion, and similar topics. In these areas we have more freedom to choose who will be our teacher, and what we will use to help us in studying and becoming familiar with the area. The more time invested, the better we will become in the area of interest.

God's call fits in the third type of study. While you may be receiving some information related to this in the first two areas, topics like choosing a career or succeeding in life, what you are learning are principles that can be helpful, but not necessarily adequate in dealing with God's call. Therefore, in this third area what we study is critical to understanding, and growing in our ability to respond to this call and effectively prepare to do what God asks us to do. The first two areas build foundations. School helps us discover our interests and general abilities. And in the

informal setting we learn about connecting with other people. God uses and guides this process to help prepare us for hearing and fulfilling his call.

Timothy received some great insights into what to study. We will look at several of them and consider a couple of examples, positive and negative.

**Read 1 Ti 4:12-16**

Paul starts by stating don't let your age affect you and fulfilling your call. Why would he say this?

He then states that you should be an example in five key areas. Here are the five areas. Why are they so important to preparing for God's call? Can you find other Scriptures to support your thoughts?

In Speech

In Life

In Love

In Faith

In Purity

Paul mentions that Timothy has been given a gift. Is this important? How does this affect one's ability to understand and obey God's call?

Paul uses four phrases related to a commitment to study and grow. Explain the importance of each.

Be diligent

Give yourself wholly

Watch your life and doctrine

Persevere

Why is it important for others to be aware of what you are doing or “see your progress”?

How could Paul’s study plan make it possible to save yourself and those who hear you?

Read 2 Ti 3:15. This passage builds on the one above (1 Ti 4:12-16). Use what you have already learned or studied in this lesson to explain the key terms of this passage.

Approved

Unashamed

Correctly handles the truth

**Read 2 Co 10:18. Why are you studying?**

How does what you study affect being approved?

There are two people in the Old Testament that started their ministry (or calling) at a young age. One was terrified at what God was asking him to do. The other ignored his responsibility. The first was Jeremiah who was called to be a prophet at a young age, the second was Jehoiakim.

Read Je 1:4-10 Think about the life of Jeremiah and when he lived. You may need to read the last chapters of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles to learn about the world in which he lived. Keep this in mind, he began his ministry in the time of Josiah, a godly king, and ended his ministry during the fall of Jerusalem and its exile.

Read Je 1:11-19 What did God expect of Jeremiah? What did Jeremiah need to do to carry out the call given to him?

Read Je 36:5-6 (2 Ki 24:1-2). Jehoiakim was 25 when he became king. His brother had served as king before him and had been removed by Babylon. Two members of his family only served three months before being deposed. All of them grew up during the reign of King Josiah, a good king, and listened to the teachings of Jeremiah.

How did Jehoiakim treat the words of God written by Jeremiah? (Je 36:23)

What happened to Jehoiakim? Read 2 Ch 36:5-6

How did his actions affect those around him? Reread 1 Ti 4:16

**Read 2 Ti 2:15 and reflect on the importance of studying and preparing**

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT DO YOU WANT ?

## LESSON 05



### JAMES AND JOHN

This is a valid question. But do we take it seriously? Every day people ask what we want. We are in the store and a person asks what we want. We are at a restaurant and we are asked what we want. We are at the university to register for classes and we are asked what we want. When it comes time for birthdays,

Christmas, and other events, our friends and family want to know what we want.

Sometimes we know what we want, sometimes we take a little time to think about it. In some occasions we actually spend extended time thinking about what we want. Other times we are forced to stop and think about it. The call of God is like that, or should be. It should force us to stop and evaluate our life and what we really want.

James and John were two brothers and they were young. As was common in that era they followed their father's career and began working as fishermen. That is until the day Jesus arrived and suggested they could want something else. He called them, or asked them if they wanted to follow Him. They responded. But there were times when they did not understand what their response meant.

On one occasion they thought it meant having power (Lk 9:53-55). They wanted to punish those who rejected Jesus. This is not what Jesus wanted and so He rebuked them. Another time they asked to be seated at the right and left of Jesus throne (Mt 20:20-23; Mk 10:35-45). Again they were rebuked and told to seek something else.

So what do you want?

What did Jesus tell James and John they should desire?

What could be the cost of wanting this?

What happened to James and John? Read Ac 12:1-3, Re 1:9.

These brothers wanted to follow Jesus and so left their family and their work. But, at times, they were confused about what that meant.

Do you think James wanted to die?

Do you think John enjoyed exile on Patmos for being a follower of Jesus?

James and John made a number of promises along the way they were not able to keep.

These two, along with all the other disciples said they wanted to follow Jesus to Jerusalem even if it meant dying with Him. What happened? (Mt 25:56)

Who was the only disciple present at the crucifixion? What do you think John wanted that day? What did he receive? (Jn 19:25-27)

Remember Elisha. He was called by Elijah to follow God as a prophet. What did he tell Elijah he wanted just before Elijah ascended into heaven? (2 Ki 2:9-11) What did he mean?

What did Simon the Sorcerer want? Read Ac 8:9-24.

Why did he want this?

What was right and wrong with what he wanted?

Can we want the right things for the wrong reasons? (Ph 1:15-18)

What will happen as a result of this error? Read the seven woes in Mt 23:13-34. The Pharisees made a show of doing the right things. What was wrong?

Read the following and write down what they wanted and how that desire and its fulfillment affected their lives.

Mk 6:25

Mk 10:51

Jn 17:15

Ti 3:8

Think about the following people.

What did Elijah want when he was on the mountain waiting for God?

What did David want when he was running from Saul?

What did Jonah want as he fled from Nineveh?

What did Moses want as he approached the burning bush?

What did Stephen want as he faced his accusers?

Consider Paul's declaration of what he wants.

Phil 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Take a moment, a long moment and evaluate what you want. What happens when we don't let God guide us in evaluating what we want?

What happens when we do listen?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# HOW DO YOU REACT?

## LESSON 06

### JONATHAN

God has a plan for each of us. But it is not uncommon for people to choose what they think is the best plan for themselves. Perhaps they see what others are doing and decide that is what God wants them to do. Or they see the recognition that comes from what some are called to do and believe that God is calling them to do the same. The persuasion of parents, friends, and others can often influence what people think God is calling them to do and as a result actually prevent them from hearing what God really wants to say.

The story of Jonathan and David can illustrate this for us. Jonathan was the son of King Saul. He was an intelligent and courageous individual. He was also the heir to the throne of Israel. David was the son of a lowly shepherd. But, unlike Jonathan, he was anointed by the prophet of God to be the next king.

**Read 1 Sa 18:1-3, 19:1-4, 20:2-17, 23:16-18.**

How did Jonathan respond to David?

How did he respond to the threat against David's life?

What was the key in helping them understand how they should react in this situation?

Jonathan had many chances to end David's threat to his right to become king. Think about how you would react if your best friend was selected for the job you really wanted and expected.

Many times God did not choose the first born, the one who everyone thought had the right to inherit the throne or fulfill God's plan.

Jacob was chosen over Esau Ge 25:28. Did Jacob handle the situation correctly? (Ge 25:29-34 and Ge 27)

Judah was chosen over Simeon, Levi, and Rueben. Do you know why they lost the birthright to Judah? Read Ge 34 and Ge 35:22)

Another similar situation is that of Adonijah and Solomon. Adonijah wanted to be king. His father and God had chosen Solomon for that position. How did Adonijah react? (1 Ki 1:4-10)

How did Solomon react to this after he was made king? (1 Ki 1:46-53)

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven he met with Peter to deal with Peter's failure. He did this by asking Peter three times if he loved Him. (Jn 21:15-22)

How did Peter respond to the questioning?

What was Jesus' response to him?

Peter then asked what would happen to John. Why?

How did Jesus respond?

When God calls a person how should we respond?

How could our response affect how we perceive what God wants us to do?

What is more important, what I do or who I serve?

**Read Lk 14:8-11. What is more important – receiving an invitation or where you sit once you arrive?**

How does that relate to how we react to what God calls us to do?

Which is better, being the one served, or being the one who serves?

One of the biggest dangers in receiving a call is comparing our call to that of another person. We may see them as a threat to us because of their relationship to others around us. We might become jealous and try to undermine them. We can lose sight of what God wants us to do because we want what someone else has. We try to make excuses to avoid obeying. Or... we listen and follow God's direction for us.

Consider the following situations and how these people responded to God's call to others. What can we learn from them about how we should react when God calls people that we know?

Jonathan and David (see above scriptures)

Aaron and Miriam and their response to Moses' call - Nu 12:1-15

Dathan and Korah - Nu 16:12-33

Peter and John – (see above scriptures)

Gideon - Ju 6:12-30

Moses - Ex 4:1-17

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHY DO YOU LISTEN ?

## LESSON 07

### JOASH

#### THIS IS A KEY ISSUE.

Many a person has entered ministry because it was what their parents wanted, or what they saw others doing. Instead of listening to God they let others speak for God. Why do people listen to others before seeking out God? Or before they seek God's confirmation of what another person has said?

Having said this, I recognize that one of the ways that God speaks to people is through others. There are many positive examples of God sending a person to tell another that God was calling them. We have talked about one of these already (Elijah calling Elisha). There are others. Here are a few of the better-known stories.

- Ananias tells Saul what God wants him to do (Ac 9:10-18)
- Barnabas went to bring Saul from Tarsus to work in Antioch (Ac 11:25)
- Moses told Aaron that God wanted him to be His spokesperson (Ex 4:14)
- Samuel tells Saul and David that they have been selected to be king (1 Sa 10:1; 1 Sa 16:13)

These men listened and obeyed. But there are many stories of people who did not listen to those who were close to God but who listened to false prophets instead.

One of those stories is about King Joash. His grandmother tried to have him killed, but he was rescued by his aunt and her husband Jehoida the high-priest. The king listened to Jehoida while he was alive, but when Jehoida died the king refused to listen to his son Zedekiah and then had him killed. King Joash abandoned God and worshipped idols. (Read 2 Ch 22-24)

Why do we listen to the advice of others (parents, teachers, bosses)? List 4 reasons and explain why you would listen to them.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Should we use the same reasons when seeking advice about spiritual matters and serving God?

Why would Joash listen to the High Priest Jehoida and not his son Zechariah who succeeded his father as high priest?

What do you think the officials may have said to change the Joash's mind so that he abandoned all that Jehoida had taught him?

How do we know who we should listen to?

There will be many voices talking to you about what you should do and what you shouldn't do. Some will focus on whether obeying God will bring you or them any benefit. In Sierra Leone many parents did not want their children to become pastors because there was no benefit for the parents. They were more concerned about the ability of their children to take care of them later in life than having them obey God.

This was a Peter's challenge to the Sanhedrin, when he said "we must obey God rather than men." (Ac 5:29)

The Sanhedrin wanted the apostles to listen to them. Peter challenged them. Are there areas in your life where you are listening to the wrong people? How does their counsel affect your ability to obey God?

**Read Ecclesiastes 12:9-13**

The author gives some great advice about who to listen to. What do the books represent in this passage?

What is the effect of spending too much time listening to the words of man?

Where should we turn first to evaluate the words of those around us?

Read the description of God's call for Joshua in Dt 31:7-23.

How does having the right counsel affect God's call for us and what others think of us?

What could happen if you chose to listen to the wrong people?

**Read about Eli's sons in 1 Sa 2:22-36 and 1 Sa 3:11-14. They refused to heed the advice of their father and Samuel.**

What were they doing?

What was going to happen to them?

What was Eli's advice to his sons?

Why was he warned and judged as well?

Do any of the above reasons help you in deciding who you should listen to when seeking spiritual advice and guidance?

How has this lesson guided you in confirming your call? Are you consulting the right people? Are there changes you need to make as you continue to seek God's direction for your life?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT?

## LESSON 08

### DANIEL

Keeping one's mind clear when confronted with change is always a challenge. Imagine what was involved for someone who had become part of the spoils of war and was forced to learn the language and culture of his captors. How does one maintain a clear mind and know what is right and what is not?

Captured, forced to leave home, and live in another country Daniel and his three friends were ordered to learn the culture and language of Babylon. They were given incredible quarters, amazing food, but with supervision 24/7. But Daniel chose to follow his godly convictions in the area of diet. Why? It would have been easier to decide that his former childhood culture had no value. After all it had not saved or protected him. So why follow his former belief system?

### Read Daniel 1:1-16

Daniel made a critical decision, not to defile himself. What does this word mean?

In this story the focus is on food. What are other activities or things that may cause a person to be defiled in the eyes of God? List a couple and explain why.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How could this happen?

How did God honor the decision of Daniel and his friends to place Him first?

**Read Ro 14:1-13.** This passage is about doing what is right. It is also about understanding the impact of our choices on others and the fact that what is acceptable is not always right.

Is this true? Why or why not?

Paul uses two ideas to illustrate his point. Food and days. Do you know people who judge others based on what they eat or how they celebrate special days?

Why do you think they do this?

How does that affect their relationships with others?

Verse 7 says none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. What guidelines does this give us when deciding whether something is right or wrong?

Explain what you think Paul means by the phrase “stumbling block” (vs 13)?

**Read verses 19-21.** How does this impact your thoughts on your answer above?

How does this relate to knowing what is right or wrong?

**Now read 1 Co 8:1-13**

The focus here is on eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols.

What is the key point Paul is trying to make in this passage?

Is there anything similar to this that affects people today?

There are two ways to deal with issues like this - law and love. Explain how you think each of these impacts our ability to decide what is right and wrong in our relationships with other.

Law

Love

Go back to the story of Daniel and his friends. The focus was on food. But was that the only issue?

What was Daniel trying to keep in focus?

When making decisions about right and wrong what do we need to keep in focus?

If your goal is to obey God's call then how important is it to determine what is right and wrong for you?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT ANCHORS YOU ?

## LESSON 09

### ISAIAH

Life can be a confusing and distracting process. Sometimes we think we know what we want and where we are going and in the next minute nothing is certain. When those moments of chaos come and they will, we need something to hold on to in order to not lose sight of our goals and direction.

There are many sources that provide us with anchors to hold us in place and ride out the storms that create turmoil and confusion in our lives. Sometimes they are our parents, sometimes other family members. They can be key leaders or friends who provide us with encouragement and support, either by our relationship with them, or because of their story and what they did in order to reach their goal.

When it comes to spiritual matters the list of people is often the same but with one important addition, your relationship to God and His words and direction for your life. It is about having a clear idea of what God has said to you; clear enough so that when the trials, challenges, and yes, attacks come, there is no question in your mind about who you are, what God wants, and what you need to do.

Isaiah had such a defining moment that anchored his life throughout his ministry.

#### **Read Isaiah 6:1-13**

What was Isaiah's first reaction to the vision? How did God handle this reaction?

What was Isaiah's reaction to the voice of the Lord?

What was Isaiah asked to do?

How long was Isaiah to carry out the work God gave him?

Isaiah served during the reigns of five kings.

- Uzziah – who served God, but was punished for his pride
- Jotham – who served God
- Ahaz – who sacrificed his son to other gods
- Hezekiah – who sought to restore the worship of God
- Manasseh – who was the most wicked king to ever rule Judah and, according to tradition, had Isaiah sawn in two.

Why do you think it was so important for Isaiah to have this vision?

### **Read 1 Ki 19**

Elijah had just won a great battle and destroyed the priests of Baal. Then his world fell apart and he wanted to die. God sent him on a forty-day journey to a specific mountain.

Describe what happened on the mountain?

What sign are you looking for in your life?

Why is God's voice the most important sign? Why?

How did God answer Elijah's complaint? There are two parts to God's response, both are important.

**Read 1 Kings 19-20 to 2 Kings 2.**

How did Elijah's life impact others?

**Read 1 Sa 24 and 26**

David was anointed to be king but Saul was trying to kill him.

How did David handle these situations? Why did he respond this way?

David was an outcast, a fugitive, yet he chose to be obedient to the word of the prophet who anointed him as the future king. How should one's belief in God's call affect their lives in times of difficulty?

Why is it so important to be sure God is in control and wait for His timing?

**Read Ne 1:1-2:8.**

Nehemiah received a message that created a great burden in his heart. He began praying for God's direction.

What was Nehemiah's request?

What was the response he received?

Now take time to read the entire book of Nehemiah and using the list below, describe the threats he faced, and how he responded to it.

1. Mocked
2. Ridicule
3. Plot
4. Internal conflict
5. Assassination
6. False report
7. Intimidation
8. Betrayal

How do these threats reflect the ways in which those called by God are attacked and discouraged?

Reflect on the importance of clearly knowing what God wants you to do and how it will anchor you in obedience to him.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# ARE YOU ENCOURAGED BY YOUR FAMILY?

## LESSON 10

### DAVID-FAMILY

God's call is an event - filled with emotion. It can be an exciting and humbling moment for the one that God has called. It can also raise questions and doubts that must be dealt with. The most common group we go to when great things happen is our family. They usually want to celebrate with us and are often the people that are there when we need encouragement and help in the times when doubts and struggles occur.

Unfortunately, it does not always happen that way. There are times when our families are the ones that doubt God's call. Sometimes the family becomes the greatest barrier. David had this type of experience.

Read the following passages – 1 Sa 16:1-13; 17:27-30

Samuel arrived to anoint a son of Jesse as the next king. Who did Jesse present to Samuel to be considered?

Where was David?

Why do you think David was not even considered as a candidate by his father?

In the second passage, why do you think David's oldest brother was so critical of David?

Families and friends don't always respond positively when God calls. Based on the above passages and your own reflection, give four reasons for such a reaction.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Jesus talks about family and friends being divided and betraying each other.

Read Lk 12:51-53; Mt 10:21-22; 24:10-13

Why do you think this will happen?

What are you expected to do when confronted by the doubt and betrayal of those close to you?

What does it mean to stand firm?

How does one find the strength and courage to follow God when this choice is opposed by their family?

At one point in Jesus' ministry people were bringing their children to meet Jesus and be blessed. The disciples became offended by this and started to drive them away until Jesus stopped them.

Read the following passages: Mt 19:13-15; 21:15-16; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17

Why would the disciples be upset about parents bringing their children to Jesus?

Why would the parents want Jesus to meet their children?

What is more important than the blessing and support of others, even our families?

How will this give us the strength to obey God's call?

Now read the following stories and consider how the parent's approval affected God's call for the person involved.

1 Sam 1:10-28, 2:18-21 - Samuel

Lk 1:57-80 – John the Baptist

2 Ti 1:5      Timothy

Does your family believe God has called you? Why or why not?

How will this affect your ability to follow God's direction?

Read 1 Ki 1 – this is the story of the crowning of Solomon as king. What lessons can be learned about opposition and support from family?

Now Read 1 Ch 22 about God's choice of Solomon as king and David's preparations for his son Solomon.

How do you think this impacted Solomon's choices and early life as king?

Why is it important to have the support and encouragement of family? Read Judges 6:28-31

What can you do to help them believe God has called you and begin to be a source of encouragement to them?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN OTHERS OPPOSE YOU ?

## LESSON 11

### DAVID-SAUL

We have just talked about the support of family and friends. These are people you know and hope will be ready to encourage you as you follow God's leading. There is another group that is important and can be a source of encouragement or opposition to what God is doing in your life.

As before, there is not always a positive response to your desire to do what God wants. There will be people who don't believe you or think that you can't serve God. Sometimes this is based on your past behavior and the belief that you will not change. Sometimes it is based on your age, physical ability, or other perceived limitations.

At times these people are correct. They have seen your past behavior and choices. As a result they are unwilling to believe that God has spoken to you. So now what?

Let's consider a few situations and consider what happened in each case.

Read the following passages

1 Sa 17:30-40;

Saul tried to discourage David at least twice from fighting Goliath. Why would he do this?

What were the reasons or actions Saul used to convince David he couldn't fight Goliath? How did David respond to each of these?

Timothy was given some wise advice related to one of Saul's responses. Read 1 Ti 4:12. What is it?

Timothy also received some important advice to help overcome the response of others. Read 2 Ti 2:20—24. What is it?

Is your lifestyle causing problems for others to trust you and believe God is calling you?

What changes do you need to make?

What can you learn from the negative response of others?

Explain the importance of Paul's recommendations about being an example: (1 Ti 4:12)+

In speech

In life

In love

In faith

In purity

Is it important to gain the approval of the pastor and other leaders? Why?

Mark failed and ran away during the first missionary journey. As a result Paul did not want him to come on the second journey. Barnabas chose to leave Paul and work with Mark. (Ac 15:39)

Why do you think Mark abandoned them on the first journey? (Ac 15:37)

Read 2 Ti 4:11 – What do you think happened for Paul to change his evaluation of Mark?

Read Ac 16:1-3 – Who recommended Timothy to Paul? Why would they do this?

Evaluation – Mark failed on the first journey, was restored by Barnabas, later approved by Paul. Finally Mark was used by Peter to write the first gospel. Reflect on the importance of the approval and support of a key leader in your life.

Return to the story of David. He was anointed by Samuel. Saul at first belittled him, then saw him as a source of music to ease his suffering, watched him become a successful leader, and finally feared him and tried to kill him.

What do you think David did to keep his eyes focused on God?

I will repeat this question. How important is the approval of key people?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT ARE YOUR GIANTS ?

## LESSON 12

### DAVID – GOLIATH

What scares you and makes you so afraid you want to run and hide? What causes you to freeze and stutter when you are asked to speak, to share your thoughts, or do anything in public?

We all have something that makes us afraid and unable to take critical steps in following God's call and direction. This means that each of us has to learn to deal with the giants in our lives. This involves several key steps. First, the willingness to see what causes us to be afraid. Second, knowing why this causes such a reaction in us. Third, realizing that part of our fear relates to the nature of our relationship with God. Fourth, deciding on what you must do to face your giant. Fifth, following through on that decision.

Let's look at David's encounter with the giant Goliath. He was big, I mean he was really big. David may have been a little over five feet and Goliath over 9 feet; almost twice as tall and incredibly strong. His spearhead weighed about 16 pounds. That is the weight of a shot put. The record distance for throwing a shotput is about 70 feet (23 meters). And Goliath's spearhead was attached to a spear. Imagine someone strong enough to throw a 16+ pound spear at you, and throw it fast enough you have to move quickly to avoid it. That was Goliath.

### Read 1 Sa 17

Who was Goliath?

What was his threat or challenge?

Why was everyone so afraid of him?

How did David interpret this threat?

Why was David so confident that he could defeat Goliath?

What was David's purpose in confronting and fighting Goliath?

Who suffers from your failure to confront the giant in your life? There are at least three different groups in this story. List and explain why they suffered.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Did David have reason to believe he could defeat Goliath? Why was that important?

**Read Jonah 1-4**

Why did Jonah try to run away? Think of three possible reasons and explain them

1.

2.

3.

What happened to Jonah?

What is worse, facing our fears or the consequences of running away?

What happens to those around you when you run away or you fail when faced by a giant?

What happened when Jonah finally obeyed?

**Read Judges 6-8**

Gideon was afraid. What were his excuses?

How many times did God have to do something to help Gideon overcome his fear? List and explain each.

1.

2.

3.

**Read Acts 4:15-31, 5:17-41**

The disciples all ran away in fear when Jesus was arrested.

Has the threat to their lives changed since the death and resurrection of Jesus?

What had changed? Why are they now willing to risk their lives and face their giant?

What is the giant in your life? What causes you to not do what God wants you to do?

What needs to change in your life for you to overcome your giant?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# DOES IT MAKE SENSE ?

## LESSON 13

### **SAMSON**

Understanding what God wants is an important part of knowing what we are to do. Samson's parents were told that they were to have a son (Ju 13:2-24). His name would be Samson and he would be endowed with special strength to lead and save the people of Israel. One requirement was that he be a Nazirite from birth (read rules in Nu 6:2-12). While this information was written down his parents did not know it and so asked for instructions from the angel on how to raise Samson.

They struggled with these directions and as a result Samson often broke the rules of the Nazirite vow. He drank wine, he had contact with dead animals, and additionally he sought to marry a Philistine which was also prohibited. His life was one of errors and a lack of understanding. As a result, he had limited effectiveness and was very unpopular with his own people.

### **Read Ju 14-16**

At what point did Samson understand the link between his vow and his strength?

Why were his own people afraid of him?

Why break all the rules except one?

There were two other people called from birth to serve the Lord at special times. The first was Samuel. He was dedicated from birth by his mother. The second was John the Baptist, he was to be the voice in the wilderness preparing the way for the Messiah. They were not called to be Nazirites but in many ways fulfilled most of the requirements of that vow; most specifically the aspect of consecrating their lives to God.

**Read 1 Sa 2:21, 3:1-21**

What was different in how Samuel was raised when compared to Samson?

How did Samuel respond to God's voice? Why did he respond that way?

What did he need learn in order to understand that it was God speaking and make sense of what he was hearing?

After this did Samuel have any problem knowing the difference between God's voice and that of other people? Why?

How did his life affect other people?

**Read Mt 3:1-13; Mk 1:4-8; Luke 1:76-80, 3:2-18; Jn 1:23-36**

Did John have any problem understanding his purpose and God's call? Why?

Explain briefly the ministry of John and how God used him to help others understand and make sense of their world.

Make a list of at least three other Biblical men and women who had a clear call from God. How did they respond? Did they have questions? Did God answer them? (Here are a few: Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah)

Paul fought the call of God. At first he completely misunderstood the teaching and life of Jesus. His misunderstanding led him to attack Christians, even imprisoning and killing them.

What happened to change his life? (Acts 9)

Did he understand immediately what God was calling him to do? (9:6-18)

Does God want you to understand the meaning of his call and purpose for your life? Explain why you think that?

What are some ways that you can grow in your understanding of what God wants you to do in His kingdom?

Choose one of the disciples and review his life. How did Jesus help him understand what He meant when he called them to be fishers of men?

**Read Je 29:11 and Ps 33:11-12; Ph 2:13**

What can you learn from these passages that will help you understand better God's plans for your life?

Write out briefly what God's mission means for your life?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT IS WISDOM ?

## LESSON 14

### DAVID – SOLOMON

Wisdom is one of those words that is filled with meaning. It is about knowing what to do and what not to do. It is about understanding not just how things work but why they work and most importantly how that knowledge may affect others. Wisdom is the ability to see the value of what exists and build on it instead of starting from the beginning. It knows how to benefit from others, what they have done, learned, and experienced.

They say wisdom is wasted on the young. So often people wish they could go back and redo so many things because at last they have gained wisdom and can see what they should have done or how it could have been done better. This is true of activity, relations, and many other aspects of life.

There are several questions for each person called by God related to gaining the wisdom. First is, who can help you understand what you are being asked to do? Second is knowing who can help you gain the wisdom you need to do what you are called to do. Third is how do you learn to build on what others know and have done?

David and Solomon represent one of the best examples of wisdom. Solomon sought wisdom. But do we understand why he did this? There are many lessons to be learned from what David did for his son Solomon and how Solomon responded to his father's actions.

### Read 1 Ch 28:5-21

What does David say about God's plans?

What has David done to prepare his son to become king and take over the work of leading the people?

What specific instructions does David give to Solomon to help prepare him for the work ahead (vs 8-9, 20)?

How would you respond if your father gave you these instructions related to your life and your responsibility?

How would you respond if your father said that God had told him what you were to do with your life?

**Read 1 Ch 29:1**

Would you like your father to make this statement about you? Is this true? How would you respond?

**Read 2 Ch 1:7-10**

Why did God honor the request of Solomon?

Solomon made a wise choice and gained more wisdom as a result. Why was his choice correct or incorrect?

What made Solomon a wise person? (Was it understanding he was in fact inexperienced and unable to lead the people or was it the wisdom he gained from God) Explain the difference.

**Read Dan 5:1-30**

What was the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had learned?

What rules did Nebuchadnezzar establish related to the articles from the temple of God?

What was Beltashazzar's error?

Do you listen to your parents or those in authority? Why?

What can you learn from others that will save you time and help you grow in your ability to be wise?

**Read 2 Ti 1:5 and Pr 1:8-9. 4:1-4, 5:1-2**

Review your attitude towards the faith and life of your parents. How does your attitude towards them and what they have to teach you affect your ability to fulfill God's call in your life?

Write a set of rules about listening to your parents and adults that will help you make use of their wisdom and experience.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# HOW STRONG IS YOUR DESIRE ?

## LESSON 15

### **OTHNIEL**

How bad do you really want...? What are you willing to give up or do in order to win, succeed, or go where you want to go? So much of life is measured by desires. Desires for comfort, success, friendship, and on the list goes. We make decisions based on desire. Do you want this or that? It depends on the level of your desire? What do you want to do with your time - be with friends or get another project done? Which desire is stronger?

Desire also determines the level of risk a person will take to gain what they desire. This is especially true when it comes to areas of peer pressure, of being accepted by others, or of succeeding in a career. The risk involved is not always physical. There are emotional risks, financial risks, relational risks. One could make a long list of risks that they manage everyday which are all tied to desire. You will choose to take more or less risks based on what you want and how high it is on your list of things you desire.

Desire is a word that occurs many times in the Bible related to our relationship with God. The most common one being found in Ps 37:4 that if you delight in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart. This is a powerful promise. But what is the cost or risk of one delighting in the Lord over everything else?

**Read the following scriptures and reflect on the word desire.**

Ps 34:12

Ps 40:6

Ps 51:6

Ps 37:23

Ps 145:19

Mk 4:19

Ro 8:5

**Read Jo 15:16-17**

Caleb made an offer that Othniel could not refuse. He offered his daughter in marriage to the one who would defeat a specific enemy. Othniel didn't hesitate and attacked, and won Caleb's daughter. You don't take such risks if you don't know what you want and how much you will risk to obtain your desire.

**Read Ju 3:9-11**

What was Othniel called to do? How did his earlier willingness to take a risk affect God's choice of him being the first judge of Israel?

**Read 1 Sa 14:1-14**

What risk did Jonathan take?

Why was he willing to take this risk?

David took a great risk to face Goliath. Why?

What would have happened if he had failed?

How much does your fear of failure affect what you will risk to obtain what you desire?

**Read Da 3:13-30**

Daniels three friends risked their lives by refusing to bow down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. Why?

What was the result of their desire?

**Read 2 Ki 2:1-15**

What did Elisha want from Elijah? What did he need to do in order to receive what he desired?

How was he treated by the other prophets for his faithful pursuit of what he desired?

Think about the following

David risked years of exile. Why?

Abraham risked sacrificing his son. Why?

Noah gave up 100 years of his life to build an ark. Why?

Jacob worked for 14 years as a shepherd under Laban. Why?

**Read the following and reflect on these passages and your desire to serve God.**

Ph 1:23

Ph 3:10

1 Ti 2:8

What will a man give to save his soul?

What will you give so that a man's soul will be saved?

Is that related to God's call and his mission?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT IS INFLUENCE OR WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF INFLUENCE ?

## LESSON 16

### JOSIAH

Influence is about how we are affected by others and how we affect others. We often talk about peer pressure and the negative impact of the influence of others. However, influence has a number of functions - it pushes us to be like others, to conform to the structures that exist, and to make others happy. But the issues are: who will we imitate, what are the structures, and what kind of happiness?

Influence can have negative and positive focuses and, as a result, negative and positive outcomes. What we often don't consider is that what might look like a positive influence does not produce the same results. For example, what happens when one person sees another person respond to an invitation to repent and to seek God's forgiveness. He may decide to do the same. While this looks good it can create a problem. The person may have responded, not because God was speaking but, through the influence of others. He wanted to imitate the others actions.

There are several questions that come out of this. Can you truly influence someone to make the right choice when it comes to seeking God's forgiveness? Can you truly influence someone so that they hear God speak to them? Can you truly influence a person to obey God?

Let us consider some examples.

### **Read 2 Ki 22-23; 2 Ch 34-36**

How did Josiah respond when he heard the words of the Book of the Law?

How did he try to influence the rest of the people of Judah and of Israel?

Did it work?

Was the work that Josiah did wrong?

Describe the behavior of the three sons and grandson that served as kings after him?

Why do you think they behaved the way they did?

**Read 2 Ki 21; 2 Ch 33**

Hezekiah was a good king but his son Manasseh became the most evil king ever. Why do you think this happened?

What changed when Manasseh was imprisoned?

How did the people respond to the change in his life? (1 Ch 2:17) Why?

**Read Acts 8:9-24**

How can the desire to influence others affect your choices?

Is this different from allowing others to influence you in order to gain their approval?

**Read 1 Ki 18**

Elijah has triumphed over the false god Baal and all his priests. How did the people respond?

Did everyone respond this way? Who didn't and why?

**Read 1 Ki 19 to 2 Ki 2**

How long did that victory influence the choices and decisions of the people of Israel and their leaders?

Was there anyone that Elijah influenced in a positive manner? Who? How?

**Read Ac 26:29.**

What was Paul's desire?

How can you be a positive influence that helps others to desire to hear God speak? To be like Paul?

**Read Jo 24:16-17, 31**

How long did the influence of Joshua last?

What is the importance of the word 'experience' in making it possible to effectively influence others?

**Read 1 Co 1:21-31**

How can a person be sure their influence truly leads others to God and not just to follow the leader because it looks and feels good?

Why did you respond to God's call? How did others influence you in your decision?

We need to influence others and let others influence us in following God.

Evaluate the above statement. What are the benefits and dangers in this?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT WILL IT COST ?

## LESSON 17

### JEREMIAH

We all look for the price on the item we want to buy. Actually, we almost never buy anything without first looking at the price tag. The more expensive the item the more we study the price tag and ... if it is something we desire greatly we contemplate how we will pay for it. This, also means considering what we will not be able to buy or have to make is possible to purchase what we desire.

But it is not only material things that have price tags. Education comes with a cost. How many years will we have pay to reach our goal, a goal that will allow us to have the job or career we want. Relationships have a price tag as well. What time, finances, and other relationships will we have to sacrifice in order to develop the critical relationships we want? And how will that investment affect the relationships that we already have with family, friends, and others?

One last item related to cost. Too often we only consider the cost of obtaining what we want. There is also the cost of maintaining that item. For example, there is the cost of purchasing a car, but there are also the costs of fuel and maintenance. Failure to pay these costs means the car will not go anywhere and will not last.

Our relationship with God comes at a price as well. The price of our restoration, the cost was paid by Jesus on the cross. This does not have to be paid again. But developing that relationship has costs and, like any other good thing we own, there are the costs related to maintaining that relationship and helping others to enjoy what we have.

So what does the call of God cost? And will you be willing to pay the price?

### **Read Je 1, and 16:2**

Jeremiah lived and served during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachim, and Zedekiah. What was his assignment? What was he told he would be allowed to do?

Read the following passages and explain what happened to Jeremiah. How would you respond if those around you treated you the same way because you were obeying God?

Je 18:18

Je 20:1-2

Je 26:7-16

Je 36

Je 37

Je 38

Je 40

Jeremiah was willing to pay the price to obey God. What God asks of us is not always the same as what he asks of others. What did God ask of each of the following people? Was there a promise or a purpose for what God asked?

Abraham – Ge 12:

Hosea – Ho 1:2

Noah – Ge 6:13-18

Ezekiel – Ez 3:1-5, 4:1-5:6

Nehemiah – Ne 2:1-8

Peter – Mt 4:18-20

Matthew – Mt 9:9

David – 2 Sa 24:18-25

Jesus advises us to carefully consider the cost.

**Read Lk 14:28-33**

Write down three guidelines to help you in determining the cost of following God's call. The following scriptures may be of help in doing this. Mt 13:44; Lk 14:26, 18:22-23; Ph 3:7-8; 1 Jn 2:15-16

**Read Mk 8:34**

What does the word cross symbolize in this passage? Before answering consider carefully the meaning of the cross in the life of Jesus.

What is the price of carrying your cross?

**Read 2 Ti 4:10**

Consider what might prevent you from doing what God has called you to do.

Will you pay the price and give it up to follow God's call? How and why?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS ?

## LESSON 18

### **SAMUEL**

While we have touched on this question in a number of ways it will be good to concentrate specifically on this issue.

The interesting reality of life is that our focus is something that is constantly changing. Consider the cycle of life?

Baby – the focus is on eating, sleeping, and crying. Yes, crying because at this point it is the most effective way of communicating. Good parents know that there are different types of crying and each one focuses on different needs.

Child – the focus is on learning to speak and establishing a personality. Truthfully most of this is done unconsciously.

Adolescent – the focus is on establishing control, developing needed skills for the future, and relationships with others.

Adults – the focus is on learning to live independently. A key aspect of this is finding a job.

Marriage – the focus is on finding a partner and establishing a home and family.

Obviously, there are more stages but this is enough to illustrate the point.

The question is, where does God fit in all of these and more importantly, how does the call of God change one's focus? Part of this is learning to identify the fact that it is God speaking so that one can make clear and proper changes in their focus.

### **Read 1 Sa 3**

Why did Samuel go to Eli?

How did Samuel respond to shifting his focus to God? (vs 19)

What does this phrase mean “he let none of his words fall to the ground?” (vs 19)

How did the Israelites respond to this change in focus?

Why do we need people in our lives who can help us develop a clear focus?

How do the people around us affect our focus and as a result our willingness to speak the words God has given us?

Samuel’s parents dedicated him to God’s service. What impact that have on Samuel’s focus?

**Read 1 Ki 19:19-21**

What impact did Elijah’s words have on the life of Elisha?

Why did Elisha respond the way he did?

How did the focus of Peter, Andrew, James and John change after they met Jesus? What were they willing to do? (Mt 4:18-21, 26:33-35)

**Read Ac 4:36-37, 5:1-11.**

Compare the actions of the three people in these texts.

What is the focus of each one and how did it affect the results of their actions?

**Read Ac 21:8-14**

Paul had decided to go to Jerusalem. Why was Paul so focused?

**Read Ph 3.**

In this passage Paul lays out some guidelines to help us keep our focus on God. Explain the following phrases and how they can help you keep your focus on God and His call.

“whatever I thought was to my profit I now consider loss”

“To know Christ and the power of his resurrection”

“Forgetting what was behind”

“Press on toward the goal to win the prize”

“Their mind is on earthly things”

“Our citizenship is in heaven”

**Read 1 Jn 2:15-17, 2 Ti 4:10, and Lk 16:13**

Evaluate what your focus is and what needs to change so that your eyes are focused on God.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OVERCOME ?

## LESSON 19

### **MEPHIBOSHETH**

No one is completely ready for God's call. Some are more prepared than others. Some have major concerns, issues, even physical limitations to deal with. At times the people around us will only see the barriers. They will look at our past behavior and habits. They will evaluate our current level of maturity and involvement. They will decide what they think we can do and decide that we will not succeed.

Each person will do the same thing. You will evaluate yourself based on education, age, experience and physical limitations. A common barrier to overcome is our concept of resources. Many have decided they could not serve because they didn't have enough money to cover the expense of needed training; training in pastoral ministry, training in medical skills, training in linguistics, etc.

The greatest barrier to overcome is a lack of belief that what God has called us to do is possible. This is called doubt and is a key element in every area that we need to overcome. If we doubt it is possible, then it can become impossible.

### **Read 2 Sa 9 – Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan**

What happened to him as a young child? How did that affect his life? What was his opinion of his value?

When David returned from exile what had changed in the Mephibosheth's manner? (2 Sa 19:24-30)

### **Read Ex 3-4.**

How many excuses did Moses use to avoid obeying God? Which excuse made God angry? Why?

Reflect on the life of Moses. Do you ever hear of Moses having problems communicating? What changed?

**Read Ju 6**

What issues did Gideon have with God calling him?

What did the Lord do to help Gideon overcome his poor self-esteem?

**Read Je 1:1-10**

What were Jeremiah's barriers to serving God? How did God respond?

How does your age limit what you can do?

**Read Amos 1:1**

What excuse could Amos have used as a barrier to being a prophet of God?

How does your status affect your ability to serve God?

**Read Ac 9:9-25**

Two people in this story had barriers to overcome. Who were they? How long did it take Saul before he overcame the barrier of fear?

What is the same or different about both of the men in this story?

**Read Lk 8:34-39**

What barriers did the demon possessed man of Gadarene have to overcome?

How would his past affect the process?

**Read Jn 20:24-29**

What was Thomas' barrier? What did he need to learn?

How important is our faith to overcoming our barriers?

Think about the following people and their past. What can you learn from them about overcoming barriers?

Matthew	– tax collector
Simon the Zealot	– enemy of Rome
Mary Magdalene	– possessed by demons
Hosea	– married to a prostitute
Paul	– murderer
Onesimus	– thief

David – committed adultery

Mark – failed and ran away

God often chooses people with serious issues to overcome. Can God help you overcome your barriers?

List a couple of those barriers and explain how God can help you.

Why should you overcome these barriers?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH OPPOSITION, OR AN ENEMY ?

## LESSON 20

### SLAVE GIRL

Not everyone will support you in obeying God's call. The source of your opposition is sometimes obvious and at other times can be a surprise. We all know that Satan wants us to fail. At the same time there are people who we expect should be supportive but they are not, and for unknown reasons, unknown to us at the moment, oppose those whom God is calling.

Satan can be both direct and obvious, or subtle, in his opposition. Peter says he is like a roaring lion out to devour and destroy. This tactic works when our enemy is our own fear. But most of the time his action is subtle. He uses our own desires and thoughts against us if he can. If not, he will confuse the issue as much as possible. He will use those around us to distract us and delay our response. He will use guilt to make us feel unworthy and see ourselves as failures. He is a powerful enemy

There is also opposition from the people around us. Again, both obvious and subtle. Those who don't believe in God will oppose everything we say, do, and believe. This is the obvious, and we often expect this. What we don't expect is how severe it can be. On the subtle side our family, friends, and members of the church can become an enemy to those who are seeking to serve God. They use many excuses, such as, you are not ready, the timing for this is wrong, we don't have the funds, we don't have this or that. We can't do this or that.

So how do you deal with your enemies, both the obvious and the subtle.

### Read 2 Ki 5:1-19

Why was this slave girl willing to help her enemy?

What happens when we help an enemy?

How did the king of Israel respond? How was his response different from that of Elisha?

How is forgiveness a part of the process of dealing with an enemy?

**Read Jo 2:1-18**

There are two enemies in this story. Why did they choose to trust each other?

What happened as a result of their attitude towards each other?

**Read He 11:31. Why is Rahab included in the hall of fame of faith?**

Daniel dealt with a number of situations where he had to help his enemies understand what God wanted. Read Da 2:13-28, 46-47, 4:19-28, 5:1-30, 6:1-28.

What were the different situations?

Why was Daniel willing to help his enemies?

What happened in each situation? What can you learn from Daniel's life about dealing with your enemies?

Read 1 Sa 24:1-22. This is the record of one of Saul's several attempts to kill David. How did David respond? Why did he respond this way?

When you face an enemy or opposition how do you know if it is truly directed against you or is against what God has planned?

There are two kinds of enemies. Those we create by our attitudes and those that oppose us because they see the truth about themselves in our lives and want to destroy us because they don't like what they see.

Does this change how you should respond to each of these individuals?

**Read Pr 25:20-22**

How are you to treat your enemies?

What do you think the burning coals represent?

A number of commentaries have the following explanation for this phrase, The image here is a neighbor whose cooking fire has gone out. But, through the kindness of another, he receives more hot coals to restart his fire. These are put into in a pan which is carried on the head. Our treatment of our enemy becomes visible to others. Kindness creates the possibility of change and repentance.

**Now read Ro 12:20; Mt 5:44-48; 1 Pe 3:9-12**

What instructions are we given related to our attitude towards our enemies?

**Read 1 Co 16:9**

Why did Paul choose to stay in Ephesus even though there was opposition?

What directions does Paul give in dealing with opposition in Ph 1:27-30

In 2 Ti 2:24-26 Paul explains what we should do when there is opposition and the result we should be seeking. Explain what this means to you.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHO IS IN CONTROL ? WILL YOU SUBMIT TO OTHERS ?

## LESSON 21

### ESTHER

Submission to others is a difficult concept. Even though we spend a large part of our life learning to submit we tend to resist the idea. Parents start the process of raising children with the concept that they (the parents) are in control. But as the years pass there is less and less control and more and more struggle over this issue. It is often the source of conflict and varies from minor issues to major problems; sometimes problems so serious that children will find a way to leave the home of their parents to escape their control.

Even as the children get married and establish their own home past issues of parental control can linger if it was not handled properly before they left. The nature of this conflict and the issue of control may vary from culture to culture but it is there. On a bigger scale, people of a community struggle with submitting to the control of leaders. Countries have conflict over the control and influence of the government in their lives.

It is also an issue in the church. Paul encourages us to submit to one another out of reverence to Christ (Ep 5:21). Hearing and accepting a call from God means learning to submit to God and to those He has appointed as leaders and guides. To understand this better we will look at the lives of Esther and Ruth who learned the importance of submission.

### **Read the book of Esther**

Esther chose to submit herself to the direction of others. Here are the names of a few people she submitted to. Explain how she submitted herself to them and what the results were.

Selection Committee

Mordecai (more than one occasion)

1.

2.

3.

Eunuch

King

What were the risks of not submitting?

What was the result of her decision to submit?

**Read the book of Ruth**

Who did she submit to and why?

1.

2.

What was the result of her decision to submit?

Did Ruth always follow the advice of Naomi? How did she know when to submit and when not to?

How do you know who you should let have control of your life and so submit to their authority and direction?

**Read 1 Co 16:15-16.**

Why did Paul suggest they should submit to people the like household of Stephanas?

**Read He 13:17.**

What guidelines are given in this passage about submission?

**Read 1 Pe 5:1-5.**

This passage helps us understand how to know who is worthy of our submission and the benefits of submission. Explain each one below

Who is worthy?

The benefits?

**Read Ezekiel 3:17-21**

Explain what this passage says about the responsibility of those who are placed over us.

Why is it important for us to submit to those God has placed over us?

Do you have all the answers? Who has the answers and direction you need? How does your willingness to submit relate to your answers to these two questions?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT DISTRACTS YOU ?

## LESSON 22

### JOSEPH

Distractions are a part of life. A driver deals with it every time he gets in a vehicle. There are signs along the road, people walking, other vehicles, and more. Knowing how to deal with them may mean the difference between arriving safely or having an accident.

Some distractions are intentional - signs that provide directions and warnings or signs that provide needed information. Some distractions cause us to divide our attention between what is happening and what we are doing. Such as a traffic accident or road construction.

What I find interesting is that the impact of one distraction can multiply and affect so many other people. For example, traffic slows down because people are distracted but often I never see what caused the problem. It has already been resolved and removed by the time I reach the site, but the impact is such that it has caused serious delays and frustrations.

Distractions are like that. We don't always see what is happening but we still have to deal with the impact of distractions in our lives. A call from God can create any number of distractions in your life. They cause you to shift your focus from what you should be doing to something that may have little value. They can also be something that cause confusion in your life and distract others from taking you serious and listening to what you may have to say.

### **Read Ge 37**

What was the distraction that made it difficult for Jacob and Joseph's brothers to listen to Joseph and his dreams?

Did Joseph understand why they didn't want to listen to him?

### **Read Ge 39.**

What distraction did Joseph have to deal with in the house of Potiphar?

How did Joseph deal with it?

Was he successful? If not, what happened and why?

Why was Joseph successful in gaining the approval of the jail keeper?

**Read Ge 25:27-34**

Why was Esau willing to give up his birthright? What was the distraction?

How did Jacob and Rachel distract, (fool) Isaac into blessing Jacob? (Ge 27)

What did Esau lose in the process?

Did Jacob really need the birthright and the blessing or were they just a distraction?

**Read Ge 28:10-22.**

How did this event change Jacob's focus? (Or remove the distractions of birthright and blessing.)

**Read Ac 5:1-11**

What distracted Ananias and Saphira from doing what was right?

**Read Mt 19:16-21**

What distracted the man in this story from doing what was right?

**Read Ps 119:105**

What can keep you on the path God has chosen for you?

Find other scriptures that help you understand this truth. List three and explain the value of what they teach.

1.

2.

3.

Paul calls these distractions 'stumbling blocks' (2 Co 6:3)

Why would he call them stumbling blocks?

What are the things that could make you stumble? Then explain how you can identify them and prepare yourself for overcoming them.

Are you a distraction to others?

What are you doing to prevent or help people keep their eyes on God?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# HOW DO EMOTIONS AFFECT YOUR CALL ?

## LESSON 23

### **RHODA**

This is not an easy topic to deal with. We are emotional beings. We were not designed to be robots or emotionless. At the same time we are not to allow our emotions to control us. We are not to let anger and hatred determine how we respond to our enemies. We are not to act in blind love.

The Bible is filled with comments about emotions, God is described as having emotions. He loves, He is sad, He is happy and joyful, He is angry, and on the list goes. We have all of these emotions as well since we are created in the image of God.

The problem is that often our decisions and actions are based more on emotion than on reality. Just look at the world around you. Why do people take drugs, drink, go to discos, and any number of activities? They are either seeking to create an emotion or trying to avoid dealing with an emotion.

The warning that is often given is don't make decisions and changes when you are under the influence of strong emotions. Don't let anger, sadness, or even joy be the reason for your decisions. The time to choose is when the emotion has past; but at the same time without denying or forgetting the emotion you experienced.

Think about it this way. One wonderful kiss with all its emotion is not enough to build a marriage. One moment of anger should not be the basis for hurting another person. In the same way, it is important to understand our emotions and how to deal with them as we explore and understand God's call.

Rhoda is an example of emotion that impaired a person's thinking.

**Read Ac 12:7-17**

Both Peter and Rhoda were dealing with emotions. How did each of them handle their emotions?

Why didn't the people listen to Rhoda?

How did Peter handle the emotions of the group?

**Read Ac 4:21-32.**

What kind of emotions do you think the group was experiencing in this passage?

What did they do as a result of this? What part did their emotions have in their decisions?

**Read 1 Ki 19:1-18.**

What emotions was Elijah dealing with in this passage?

How did they affect him?

What was God's response to Elijah?

**Read 2 Sa 6:12-23**

The story tells the emotional response of two different people. Describe their response, why they responded that way, and how their response could affect others?

1.

2.

**Read 2 Co 8:2-3; He 12:2.**

How can emotion help us do what we need to do to follow God's direction in our life?

By now it should be clear that emotions can be tricky. They can help us or they can limit us. They help us by providing the energy and direction necessary to do what we need to do. They limit us because we can be trapped by them or depend on them instead of God. Study the following emotions and describe how they can help you or limit you.

Joy

Sadness

Anger

Jealousy

Fear

Love

Optimism (faith)

The key is: who is in control, you or your emotions?

Read 1 Th 4:4; Ro 6:19, 12:1.

What should be the goal in every expression of emotion?

**Read Ph 4:8**

Write three guidelines that will help you evaluate your emotions and whether they are helpful or will limit your ability to understand how to do what God is calling you to do?

1.

2

3.

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE ?

## LESSON 24

### MARY AND MARTHA

We have covered a variety of topics, all of them involving choices. But there is one choice that will be critical in what happens next in your life. So many people make this choice without even realizing what they have chosen. It is the choice of substituting activity for mission; the choice of how you will carry out the mission God has given you.

Remember there are two levels of “call” that we are dealing with. The first is God’s call to everyone to get involved in the harvest. No one is excluded, all are called. This is based on the fact that Jesus was not just talking to the disciples/apostles when he told them to go into all the world to proclaim the gospel, to call people to commitment (baptize), to make the disciples, and teach them all the teachings of Christ. Remember that in the upper room there were 120 people (men, women, and probably children). At Jesus ascension there were over 500 present (again men, women, and of course children). All of them received the call of Mt 28:18-20.

Then there is the specific “call” that God gives to each person; calls like those to the apostles, deacons, Paul, Timothy, and many other men and women mentioned throughout the New Testament.

The issue with the specific “call” is that many assume that all spiritual activity is the same. And while all activity is good, there are some types of activity that can be used to avoid the call of God to go to the world. People do things at church, they cook in the kitchen, sweep the floors, lead worship, etc. While those are worthwhile activities, sometimes people become so focused on the activity they do that they forget to touch the people around them. They forget to carry out the mission of God. They use their activity as the reason they don’t have to go to the lost.

The choice we need to be aware of is to not substitute one for the other. The choice is being sure what we do indeed fulfills God’s call to missions at both levels.

**Read Lk 10:38-42**

Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha. How did each of the women respond to His presence?

Why was Mary's choice considered better than that of Martha?

Was Martha doing something that was wrong or unnecessary?

Is it possible to be busy in the church and lose sight of God's call? Explain your answer.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their work as fisherman. Is it wrong to be a fisherman, carpenter, taxi driver, or teacher? Explain.

Jesus sent the Gadarene (who had been possessed by demons) home instead of letting him come with the group. Why did he do that?

**Read Lk 19:5-10**

What did Zacchaeus do?

Did Jesus tell Zacchaeus he had to stop collecting taxes? What do you think Zacchaeus did in relation to his job?

**Read 1 Co 3:1-5.**

What prevents people from truly understanding and doing what God has called them to do?

Reflect again on the choices of Mary and Martha. Could Martha have prepared a meal without sacrificing the chance to be taught by Jesus?

What is the better thing Jesus is talking about in Lk 10:38-42? Explain

Read Mt 25:14-29 and Lk 19:12-27. Everyone is given talents (abilities and resources) and everyone has a call from God. Based on the parable what does God expect you to do?

Will God still expect you to go to school, go to work, cook food, wash your laundry?

What is the choice you need to make in relation to all of the activity so that you will use whatever talent God has given you or be able to follow the call you have received from God?

**Read Ps 119:30-38.**

Write at least 4 guidelines that will help you make sure you wisely use what God has given you. These will help you obey God's call.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Too often people mistake service for mission. Service is important. But not if it is used as an excuse to not be involved in the mission of God and obey His call.

What do you need to do to be sure you are being taught by God and able to both serve and fulfill God's call?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**

# SO WHAT KIND OF SOIL ARE YOU ?

## LESSON 25

### SOIL

By now I hope that you realize that you have a lot of influence over the nature of the soil in which God has planted His word. You have a lot of influence over whether you will be one that is prepared. You have a lot of influence over whether God selects.

So many are called. All of the church is called. So many receive the call but so few are willing to be prepared. Being called is not enough, Being willing is not enough. We need to be prepared. The harvest needs workers; skilled workers. That means people willing to be taught the skills needed to carry out the harvest.

### **Reread Mt 13:1-23**

What new insights have you gained about your life from this passage?

### **Read Pr 24:30-34**

What happens when you are not diligent in caring for the soil (your life)?

Why does this happen?

Are better prepared now to obey God's call?

Why?

God is always looking for good soil in which to plant His seed. He wants it to produce.

What does God want to produce in and through your life?

Again what kind of soil are you?

What do you need to do to continue growing and producing?

**Read John 15:8.**

Why should you produce much fruit?

**Read Ph 1:9-11**

Rewrite this prayer, insert your name as the one being prayed for.

**Read Ph 1 13-14.**

What should be the result of the fruit that is being produced because of God's call in your life?

Finally, what kind of soil do you want to be? Do you want to be called and chosen?

**CLOSING COMMENTS >**