

How To Receive Guidance From God

Part 3 - Can You Hear Me Now

Habakkuk 2:1-2

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Last week we talked about how God speaks to us in different ways. He speaks to us through the Bible, through gifted teachers, through godly friends and family. He speaks to us through thoughts and impressions, through our pain, and through silence. This week we're going to look more deeply into the fourth way God speaks to us, through thoughts and ideas. We call these thoughts and ideas "inspirations" or "impressions". This is often how God gives us guidance and answers our questions.

In the Bible there is a little tiny book written by a prophet named Habakkuk. In it we find six steps to receiving guidance from God. It's good to look at these little books from time to time. It would be embarrassing to get to heaven and run into Mr. Habakkuk and have him ask, "How did you like my book?" and you answer, "I didn't know you wrote one." It's just a little book, only three chapters. In chapter one Habakkuk asks six questions of God. He's seeking guidance from God. In chapter two Habakkuk tells us how he prepared himself to receive God's answers. He did six things to prepare himself to receive God's guidance. Before we go on to talk about these six steps, I want you to think about an area in your life where you could really use some guidance. Try to get one of those situations in your mind. Is there something you need to be deciding, something really important - something you're really concerned about? Keep that concern in mind as we look at these six steps to receiving guidance from God.

In chapter Habakkuk says, ***"I will climb into my watchtower now and I will wait to see what the Lord will say and how He will answer my questions. Then the Lord said to me, 'Write my answer in large clear letters so that a runner can read it and tell everyone. But these things that I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.'"*** (Habakkuk 2:1-2)

What do we learn from Habakkuk? What does he teach us about how to receive guidance from God? Let's look at the steps he took.

THE FIRST STEP TO RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM GOD IS TO WANT TO HEAR FROM GOD. You've got to really want to hear from God. You've got to desire God's will for your life. You've got to be willing to listen. It all starts with you wanting to hear from God. Habakkuk says, ***"I will climb up into my watchtower."*** (Habakkuk 2:1a) In other words, Habakkuk is making a conscious decision to seek guidance from God. It's a choice. He makes a decision to consult God for answers. The point is: you're not going to hear from God unless you want to. It's just that simple. God speaks to those who want to hear from Him. It all starts with your desire to hear from God.

Think of David in the Bible. He's a classic example of someone who really wants God's guidance. That's why God calls him ***"a man after my own heart."*** David writes, ***"I want to hear what God, the Lord, says."*** (Psalm 85:8) But David doesn't just want to hear it; he also wants to do it. He wants to do whatever God tells him. He writes, ***"My God, I want to do what you want"*** (Psalm 40:8).

The first step in receiving guidance from God is to want to hear what God has to say with a willingness to obey what he tells you. God does not speak to people who are playing games. God does not speak to people who say, **"God, tell me what you want me to do and I'll consider it among my many options."** It doesn't work that way. We have to want God to speak to us and be willing to do what He tells us. David says, ***"What I want most of all and at all times is to honor your laws"*** (Psalm 119:20). We have to want God's guidance so that we can honor Him by obeying Him. God only speaks to people who say, **"God, you tell me what to do and I'll do it."** It's an attitude of saying "yes" before you even know what God is going to tell you to do. Having that attitude is the first step in receiving guidance from God.

In Deuteronomy 4:29 we're given a promise, ***"If you search for God with all your heart and soul, you will find Him."*** That's the first step to hearing God speak to you. You must want to hear Him speak to you so you can obey what He tells you.

THE SECOND STEP IS TO WITHDRAW TO A QUIET PLACE. You need to get alone with God. Habakkuk says, ***"I will climb up into my watchtower."*** (Habakkuk 2:1a) That's a Hebrew expression for **"I'm going to go off by myself to be alone before the Lord."** **"I'm going to withdraw to a quiet place to listen for God to speak to me."** The point is: you can't hear God speaking if you're surrounded by noise. You've got to find a quiet place where you can be alone. Sometimes it's hard to find a quiet place even in your own home, especially if you have young children. In 1688 Samuel and Susanna Wesley began their life together as husband and wife. Together they had eighteen children. Susanna earned the title of "the mother of Methodism" because two of her children changed the course of human history with their lives. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist church and Charles Wesley wrote hundreds of Christian hymns. Both of them attributed their deep passion for God to their mother. She would sit in her rocking chair, often in the afternoon, and pull her long apron up over her head. That's how she would withdraw. All the children knew they were not to disturb her when the apron was over her head. That was her way of climbing into her watchtower to wait on the Lord for guidance.

Do you have a watchtower in your life? A place where you can withdraw to wait on the Lord? This is so important. Think about it. Even Jesus needed to withdraw to a quiet place to talk to the heavenly Father. In Luke 5:16 we read, ***"Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*** Notice it says ***"often"***. He was God and yet He needed to withdraw to a quiet place to pray. Do we think we are somehow better than Jesus— that we don't need to spend time away from all the distractions to listen for the Lord to speak to us? Hardly.

Do you ever stop and think about the amount of noise in your life? You get in your car and you turn on the radio or listen to a CD or your iPod. You go walking and you take along your iPod to listen to. You go in a store and there's music playing. You call for an appointment to a doctor's office and you get put on hold and made to listen to music. You go to the hospital for surgery and you can't get any rest because of all the noise. At work there is constant noise. At school there is constant noise. As soon as you get home, you turn on the TV and it blares until

the last person to go to bed turns it off. There's so much noise in our lives. And it only seems to be getting worse for the next generation. I see people constantly plugged into video games or cell phones or dvd players or computers or iPads or TV. No one is taking time to withdraw to a quiet place to wait on the Lord for guidance.

Jesus gives us very specific advice about this. He says, *"Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace"* (Matthew 6:6).

You know what makes us willing to do this? There are two words that make us want to get alone with God. Those two words are: *"God cares."* God cares about what you're going through. If you don't know this, you won't want to spend time with God? You need to know *God cares* about everything in your life. Jesus says, *"Don't worry about what you will eat or drink or wear. Your heavenly Father knows that you need these things."* (Matthew 6:6) The truth is God is far more willing to talk to us than we are to listen for Him to speak.

I don't know who's responsible for the billboards along the road that are signed, GOD, but some of them are really cool. There's one that reads, *"We need to talk."* signed God. Another one says, *"Loved the wedding, now invite me to the marriage,"* signed God. Another one with some bite to it says, *"Thou shall not', just what didn't you understand about that?"* signed God. Another one says, *"That love your neighbor thing? I meant it!"* signed God. How about the one, *"Have you read my number one best seller? There will be a test."* Or, *"The last time things were this messed up, I sent a flood."* My favorite is the one that reads, *"I love you. I love you. I love you."* signed God.

God really does love you and He really does care about the details of your life and He really can make a difference in your life. Until you know this you're not going to want to withdraw to a quiet place to talk to God. Once you really believe this, you'll want to run to a quiet place to talk to God, because you know He really cares about you.

THE THIRD STEP IN RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM GOD IS TO WAIT ON THE LORD. Habakkuk says, *"I will wait to see what the Lord will say to me and how He will answer my question."* (Habakkuk 2:1b) In the NIV translation it says, *"I will station myself before the Lord..."* What this means is he's going to stay put and be still before God and wait for God to answer him. Psalm 46:10 tells us, *"Be still and know that I am God."* Why is this so important? -Because hurry is the death of prayer. The reason why we don't hear God speaking is because we're too much in a hurry. You have to wait for God to speak. There is nothing Satan would like more than to distract you from waiting on God. Everything seems to happen in your life to keep you from waiting on God. Someone calls. Someone walks in. Something happens to demand your attention. You remember things you need to do. When I'm praying, waiting on God, and something pops into my head that I need to remember to do, I write it down on a note pad and then I go back to my quiet time with the Lord. If I write it

down to remind myself later, I can put it out of my mind and go back to waiting on the Lord to speak to me.

There are three adverbs that describe how we are to wait on God for guidance. **First**, we are to wait quietly before the Lord. Psalm 62:5 says, *"I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him."* We have to slow down and clear our minds of all the things that distract us and wait quietly before the Lord. **Second**, we are to wait patiently for God to answer. Psalm 37:7 says, *"Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him to act."* Once your body is still and your mind is quieted down you're going to be much more sensitive to hearing the voice of God. **Inner calm creates an intercom to God.**

When we are waiting quietly and patiently, there is just one more thing to do and that is to wait expectantly. Expect God to speak to you. This is the faith factor. Psalm 105:5 says, *"I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for He has promised."*

THE FOURTH STEP IN RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM GOD IS TO WATCH FOR AN ANSWER. Habakkuk says, *"I will ...wait to see what the Lord will say to me..."* (Habakkuk 2:1b). Why doesn't he say, *"I will wait to hear what the Lord will say to me"?* God doesn't often speak audibly. He speaks to us in mental pictures and visions. He speaks to us in ideas and impressions. The Bible is full of examples of God giving people visions while they are praying. If that scares you, just call it a mental picture or an idea. He gives you an idea and you see God's answer. He gives you a glimpse of what He wants for you. God gave Abraham a mental picture of his future. He gave a mental picture to Joseph, Jacob, David, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and on and on. That's just in the Old Testament. In the New Testament He gave visions to Peter and to Paul and to Mary.

God often uses mental pictures to clarify a problem in your life. The Psalmist says, *"When I tried to figure it out, all I got was a splitting headache until I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I saw the whole picture."* Here's David. He's got this problem and he's getting a headache trying to figure it out. It's really stressing him out. So he goes into the sanctuary. He goes into the temple of the Lord. He focuses on God and listens for God to speak and guess what. God does. Then he sees the whole picture. God speaks to him in a mental picture. God can speak to us in a mental picture as well, when we **want** Him to, when we **withdraw** to a quiet place, when we **wait** on Him, and when we **watch** for His answer.

We often don't get a specific answer from God, because we haven't asked a specific question. We need to have enough faith to **ASK GOD A SPECIFIC QUESTION**. James 1:5-6 says, *"If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask Him, and He will gladly tell you, for He is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask Him... But when you ask Him, be sure that you really expect Him to tell you..."*

We need to have the faith to ask God specific questions and then we need to **LOOK INTO GOD'S WORD** to discover the answers. The Psalmist says, *"Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in Your Word."* (Psalm 119:18)

THE FIFTH STEP IN RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM GOD IS TO WRITE DOWN THE IDEAS YOU RECEIVE. Habakkuk says, *"Then the Lord said to me, 'Write down my answer...'"* You ask God something. He gives you the answer. Write it down. This is called a prayer journal. Many great Christians for centuries have kept prayer journals. It's a habit that will enliven your prayer life. It can be of great value to others as well. Just think: if David never wrote down his prayers we wouldn't have the book of Psalms.

THE SIXTH STEP TO RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM GOD IS TO WORSHIP GOD WHEN HE ANSWERS YOU. Give Him praise and thank Him for answering you. Habakkuk says, *"O Lord, now I have heard your report, and I worship you in awe"* (Hab. 3:2). Never forget to thank God and praise Him for answering your prayers and giving you guidance.

These are the six steps: **WANT, WITHDRAW, WAIT, WATCH, WRITE, AND WORSHIP.** These six steps will prepare you to receive God's guidance.