

REBUILT

TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

OVERWHELMED

BY DECISIONS

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REBUILT

TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

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We're a global magazine with versions published in the USA, Southeast Asia, Amsterdam, and the Philippines.

Rebuilt Magazine is written, laid out, and printed by young adult who love Jesus and want to write about God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking while also encouraging you to pursue a strong relationship with Jesus.

CONTRIBUTING LOCATIONS:



India



Philippines



Netherlands



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A close-up of a fountain pen nib, angled towards the bottom left.

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A LOOK AT Friendship

WHEN YOU'RE SINGLE

The Friendship That Shapes All Others

Christina Fox, guest contributor at desiringGod.org points out that “the friendships we have with other believers are rooted in our friendship with Christ. In fact, our friendship with Jesus creates and shapes our friendships with others.”¹ When we become part of His family, we are united with others – our brothers and sisters in Christ. “We love because He first loved us.”²

The “Perfect” Friend

You will not find the “perfect” friend (except for Jesus). Friends will let you down. You might even experience “friends” who aren’t your friends after all because they walk away from you and God.

I discovered what true friendship is after becoming a Christian, and to be honest, it was like a slap in the face. This was the first time I had anyone ask me why I was doing something and ask me how it was going later on. I encourage you to take a hard look at who your friends are and the influence (both good and bad) they have on your life. To have friends you need to put forth the effort and share your life with people. Make an effort to really get to know them. It will take time, and yes, in three months don’t be surprised if you only have coffee twice. But trust me, don’t get discouraged; keep seeking true, biblical friends!

SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR NOT-YET-MARRIED LIFE ³

Read the full article online at desiringGod.org

- 1 Avoid trading marital distractions for other distractions. Learn when to put away the phone, tablet, and social media!
- 2 Say yes to the spontaneous. Say yes to an unexpected phone conversation or coffee.
- 3 Practice selflessness while you are still alone – consider helping someone else.
- 4 Do radical, time-consuming things for God. You are free to commit to things that require more time.
- 5 Spend time with married people. Be a student, watch carefully, and ask questions.
- 6 Spend time with not married people that are facing similar challenges as yourself.
- 7 Maybe you’ll meet your fiancé on the front lines? Instead of making it your mission to get married, focus on the mission that God has for you today.
- 8 While you wait, hope in Jesus more than marriage. Instead of thinking you’ll get to serving God once you’re married, make the most of this not-yet-married life.

"PRAYER: EXPERIENCING AWE AND INTIMACY WITH GOD"

WHY THIS BOOK SHOULD BE ON YOUR 2019 READING LIST

When I began this book, I knew deep down inside of me that I needed to read it. In fact, I purchased it a number of months ago, but never had the courage to actually open it. I knew it would be hard. Prayer is something that Christians know we should do and it should come naturally to us, right? But the truth is, for most of us who claim to follow Christ, prayer is a very difficult thing to do and to do well. To admit that I—someone who has grown up in the church and is a leader within it—often views prayer as a duty, is a scary and humbling place to be. Can you relate? Well, so can Tim Keller.

Within the first two chapters, Tim Keller reveals his own struggle and journey with prayer. He says, "I can think of nothing great that is also easy. Prayer must be, then, one of the hardest things in the world. To admit that prayer is very hard, however, can be encouraging. If you struggle greatly in this, you are not alone" (p. 25). Though he is brutally honest about the difficulty, he does not neglect the believer's responsibility of fighting through that struggle. Concluding the second chapter, he says, "Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle—yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer, or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer" (p. 32).

After laying the foundation for the necessity and greatness of prayer, he goes on to explore what prayer actually is. In true Keller style, he digs deep into the history and global phenomenon of prayer throughout various cultures and religions. With such a variety of forms of prayer—from western to eastern and prophetic to mystical—he concludes that, "Prayer is a personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God... seeking to respond and connect to that being and reality, even if it is no more than calling out into the air for help. That is, I believe, the common denominator of all human prayer" (p. 45). The essence of prayer is

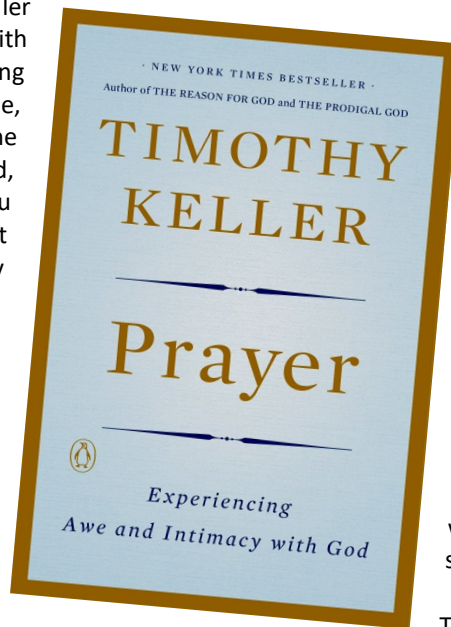
continuing a conversation that God has started with us through His Word—the Bible.


So how do we actually pray? The latter half of the book works to answer this question. Keller includes a thorough exploration of writings from a few of the greatest teachers in the early Christian church—St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. I won't try to summarize it all. I'll simply tell you this—we have much to learn from the prayer practices of Protestant theologians of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries! Finally, in the last chapter of the book, he outlines a framework for daily prayer: evocation, meditation, Word

prayer, free prayer, and contemplation. Though it is not the only way to pray, I found this framework to be helpful in adding structure to my prayer life.

Overall, I found this book deeply challenging, incredibly enlightening, and graciously encouraging. There were times that I felt somewhat hopeless and thought, "Who then can pray? I will never be able to do this!" However, there is no secret to prayer. There is no magical key or experience or "aha!" moment. "Prayer is striving. This means sticking with prayer through the ups and downs of feelings. 'Do not say, 'I cannot pray. I am not in the spirit,'" writes P.T. Forsyth. 'Pray till you are in the spirit'" (p. 122).

The truth is, prayer is hard. However, even if your prayers are messy, God the Father will not reject your coming to Him. It will be a struggle and it might take time, but the effort will pay off. Towards the end of the book, Keller encourages the reader, "In any case—pray no matter what. Praying is rowing, and sometimes it is like rowing in the dark—you won't feel that you are making any progress at all. Yet you are, and when the winds rise again, and they surely will, you will sail again before them" (p. 260). Keep rowing, Christian.



An aerial photograph of a beach. In the foreground, a large cross, an equals sign, and a heart are drawn in the sand. A small blue object is visible near the heart. The ocean waves are visible in the background.

JESUS!

YOUR ONLY

SAVIOR!

What could be man's greatest problem? Global warming? Deadly diseases? Unemployment? Degeneration of natural resources? One of these will certainly top the headlines of mainstream news channels. But from God's point of view, none of these will ever come close. For man's greatest problem is with God Himself. Because man's ultimate destruction comes to those who reject the gracious gift of good news that God is offering mankind through His Son Jesus Christ.

His birth was the defining moment of not just human history, but every man's eternity. No human being born in time, space and history can in anyway be compared to this One Man. For He is greater than all men put together, for He is not just a man, but God in flesh.

The Old Testament presents more than 300 prophecies about the coming Jewish King, who is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. The place of his birth, the manner of his birth, the place he would grow up in, his name, the date of

his death, the manner of his death and many more intricate details of his life were prophesied hundreds of years before he was born. This is not just another person. He is the One Person who will change everything about every single person. Here are just nine aspects of who Jesus Christ is. This will define your life here and in eternity too.

HIS BIRTH

The birth of Jesus Christ was the first prophecy mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3:15. When man first sinned, he lost his relationship with God and incurred God's eternal judgment and became a slave to sin and Satan. God Himself promised the coming of His Son, who would redeem man from God's judgment and slavery to sin and Satan. The promise has incredible details and unbelievable elements.

"I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN YOUR OFFSPRING AND HER OFFSPRING; HE SHALL BRUISE YOUR HEAD, AND YOU SHALL BRUISE HIS HEEL." - GENESIS 3:15

The person to be born will be from the "seed of the woman" and not of the man, indicating the savior of mankind will be sent by God who will be born of a woman without the intervention of the man. There's another prophecy made in the book of Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 7:14 about the virgin birth of the Savior of the world. This was made 700 years before Jesus Christ was born.

The person to be born will be a man. This is an incredible prophecy made at the beginning of human history. Thousands of years had to pass by before this would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The odds of this one person who will be born to a virgin are unimaginable, and yet he also had to be male. But God in and through His Son by the work of His Spirit accomplished this. This is the only virgin birth in human history. What's so unique about this miracle apart from being supernatural and humanly impossible? The uniqueness of the birth of Jesus through a virgin has unparalleled implications, for that sets Jesus aside from every other human being. He doesn't share the inherent sinful, fallen nature that every other person does.

Listen to the answer of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:34-35, *"And Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'"*

HIS LIFE

Even just skimming through the pages of the first four books of the New Testament (the Gospels) will astound you to see the person Jesus Christ was. None ever spoke like Him or taught like Him. His life was an inseparable combination of absolute divinity and perfect humanity. Jesus' challenge to His opponents then and even today is the same: "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46). The answer to this question remains and will remain a thousand times – "none"! His birth was a sinless birth, and so was His life. Those who hated Him only mocked him since they couldn't believe that God could come down in flesh. They accused him of being born out of sexual immorality (John 8:41), but could never challenge his impeccability. Sinners dared to seek His company, while the self-righteous abhorred him for they couldn't stomach the holiness of a man who can never be influenced by His surroundings.

HIS TEACHINGS

It is a dangerous deception to call Jesus Christ *just* a great moral teacher. For there are many men who have taught wonderful moral lessons. But Jesus Christ is not a moral teacher, for no moral teacher can call Himself God, but Jesus did. He never minced words, He never gave into any pressure, but preached and taught that He was God incarnate. His wisdom baffled his opponents, His rebuke terrified the demons, His words were eternal life to those who believed in His Name. Yet he spoke not because He wanted to leave an impact, but because He was God incarnate.

"THOMAS SAID TO HIM, 'LORD, WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING. HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?'⁶ JESUS SAID TO HIM, 'I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT

THROUGH ME.⁷ IF YOU HAD KNOWN ME, YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN MY FATHER ALSO. FROM NOW ON YOU DO KNOW HIM AND HAVE SEEN HIM.” - JOHN 14:5-6

By saying, “*I am the Way, and the truth, and the life,*” Jesus is making two things very clear. Firstly, He is God and secondly no one else is God. No one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. The infinite difference between any other man and Jesus is that He claimed to be God in an unambiguous way. Hence if He is God and proven, then every single thing He said and did is of infinite importance.

HIS MINISTRY

The most baffling thing about Jesus Christ is the kind of ministry He did. No one single person in the entire human history has done the kind of things He has done. By His mere word he healed the blind (Mark 10:46-52), the lame, the sick, the deaf and the mute (Mark 7:31-37). By just a command He rebuked nature and calmed the storm (Matthew 8:23-27) and called dead people back to life (John 11). Demons cringed before Him in fear and acknowledged His power over them to send them to hell (Matthew 9:28). He touched a leper and healed him (Mark 1:40-45). He did only what God can do. His power over everything demonstrated his unique position – He is God in flesh.

HIS DEATH

His entire life was a preparation and progression toward the ultimate display of his glory in and through his death. Why would a man who had absolute control over nature, death, diseases and demons die? Could He not have died? The answer lies in 1 Peter 3:18.

“For Christ also died for our sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” - 1 Peter 3:18

He died for our sake. Jesus being the Son of God did what we would never be able to do. He died in our place to save us from the ultimate penalty for our sins, which is eternal death. When He died on the cross, He was separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit and hence bore the eternal punishment. This He did so that we can be forgiven of our sins and be reconciled to God. Only Jesus can set us free from our eternal punishment and make us the children of God.

HIS RESURRECTION

If Jesus just died after all that he said and did, that would’ve been the end of it all. He would’ve been remembered in history as one of the biggest fraudsters. Because if there was one thing that He predicted the most, in all of his teachings, it

was his voluntary death and resurrection. No one believed Him when he said that. The disciples being Jews, who knew the Old Testament prophecies concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah, didn’t believe Him. However from the third day since He was crucified, Jesus resurrected bodily. This and this alone stands as the biggest and the greatest proofs of his divinity. For it should have been very easy for His opponents to prove Him to be a charlatan since it was impossible for the disciples to steal the body of Jesus and get away with it. The severely mutilated and dead body of Jesus Christ, rolled up in linen with spices weighing about 75 pounds, tucked away in a tomb closed off by a huge rock that was sealed under the governor’s command and guarded by the Roman guards was an impossible task for the cowardly, fear-filled disciples. It was a fact, an indisputable, history riveting fact. Jesus Christ defeated death and rose back to life. I have seen a handful of books on dead people coming back to life and telling stories about what they saw, but they have not been resurrected like Jesus Christ was. All of them eventually die again, but Jesus died and rose back to life and is alive forevermore.

HIS ASCENSION

After His resurrection Jesus appeared over a period of 40 days with many sightings (Acts 1:1-3) to over 500 people at one time along with His disciples on numerous occasions (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). He then ascended to heaven after that 40 -day period. The same disciples who shut themselves behind closed doors for fear of Jews after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ witnessed to this fact boldly in every nook and corner of Jerusalem and from there to Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world from then on. Since they not only saw the resurrected Savior of mankind, but with their very eyes gazed at Him ascending into heaven as a cloud took Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9-11). They were filled with boldness, courage and joy as they began to proclaim this good news for all mankind as they were filled with the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

HIS RETURN

For every prophecy of Christ’s first coming, there are eight of His second coming. The hundreds of prophecies regarding His first coming were fulfilled. His second coming is for certain. Two thousand years ago He said He was coming back soon, so why the delay? The answer is found in 2 Peter 3:8-9.

“BUT DO NOT OVERLOOK THIS ONE FACT, BELOVED, THAT WITH THE LORD ONE DAY IS AS A THOUSAND YEARS, AND A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY. ⁹THE LORD IS NOT SLOW TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE AS SOME COUNT



SLOWNESS, BUT IS PATIENT TOWARD YOU, NOT WISHING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, BUT THAT ALL SHOULD REACH REPENTANCE.”

- 1 PETER 3:8-9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise of returning, but He is patient toward us, since He doesn't want any to perish and desires us to repent of our sins and receive the free gift of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins. His return is much nearer than we ever thought. It could be anytime now. Are you ready for His return? For the destiny of those who reject the Gospel is unimaginably terrifying:

“He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” - 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

“And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” - Revelation 20:15

HIS INVITATION

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out,” said the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the month of March of 2011, I turned to Christ repenting of all my sins and asked Him to save me. From being a porn addict, an incessant thief, and a habitual liar, Jesus forgave my sins and gave me the assurance of the gift of eternal life and through His Spirit transformed me unrecognizably. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Whether it was the first century disciples or me or you He can and He will forgive your sins and give you the free gift of eternal life.

If you have not received the greatest gift God wants to offer you, that is the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ and being rescued from the eternal judgment of the Holy God coming on all those who reject the Gospel of His Son, then don't delay. Pause and seek Him. Repent of your sins and put your faith in the only person who can be your Savior.

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” said the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Power of **WEAKNESS**

TRUSTING JESUS WITH *EVEN THAT*

“E

mbrace your strengths!”

“Overcome your weaknesses!” These are common mantras, and they’ve infiltrated everything. When you’re

in a job interview, for example, you’re supposed to list your weaknesses by turning them into hidden strengths: *“Yeah, I’m not really a person who is good at talking to groups of people, but it just means I’m excellent at listening and paying attention to details!”* It’s not very often that we are told to accept them, or better yet, to exploit them. But this counter-cultural idea is what God wants. To Him, our weaknesses serve a specific purpose and are not to be covered up or ignored. Otherwise, we’ll end up wasting His plan for them.

God gave us weaknesses partly to keep us from becoming prideful and conceited because it means we have to rely on Him instead of upon ourselves. “God opposes the proud, but favors the humble” (James 4:6, NLT). He also gave us weaknesses purely so He can demonstrate His strength. Rather than resenting Him for the weaknesses we have, it is imperative that we recognize that they’re meant to be used for His purpose, not our own. After all, you can’t experience the strength of God until you are willing to be weak. We have much to learn about that from the Apostle Paul:

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

“GOD WANTS US TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR WEAKNESSES WITH HUMILITY.”

And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:8-10, NKJV)

God doesn’t expect us to just glibly accept our weaknesses. After all, that’s not what the Apostle Paul did. He struggled through it, with God. But when He understood that God had a purpose for them, he accepted it as His will. Understanding that your weaknesses are part of His unique design for you is incredibly freeing. And while He can and may take some aspects related to your weakness away, He may also choose to not take anything away at all as He did with Paul. In the end, there are reasons that God made you the way you are that you might not be able to understand at the moment, or ever.

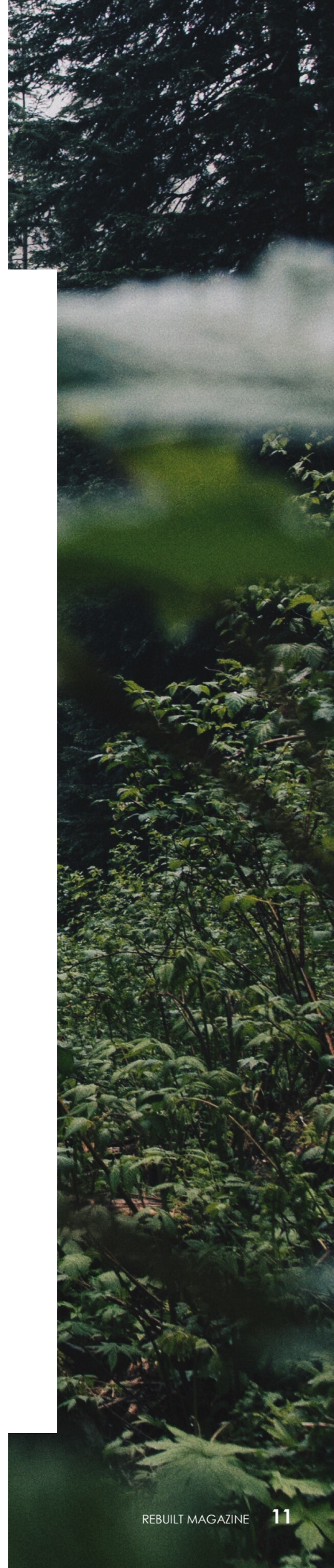
God’s perspective is far different and more complete than our own (Isaiah 55:8-9), and He never makes a mistake. That helps to explain why He uses people who trust Him with their weaknesses rather than those who think they can take on everything by themselves i.e. their motto being *grin and bear it*. That’s because by using the weak and lowly things, He is able to showcase His power and wonder in a way that confounds the status quo of the world. Take the example of Nick Vujicic¹ who was born in Australia with no arms and no legs. He

struggled with his physical limitations greatly while growing up, even to the point of being suicidal, but today he’s a global traveler spreading the hope of Jesus Christ and the power that comes from Him, not himself. It’s encouraging to look at the life of a guy who, for all intents and purposes, shouldn’t be doing what he’s doing. He is a living, breathing example of what it means to live life for the glory of God.

Instead of dwelling on what we can’t do, we are to do what God specifically designed us for, which will always include things we’d rather not do. Despite a constant “thorn in his side,” Paul demonstrated acceptance of this limitation when he moved forward in the ministry he was given. Even though he was told no by God when he asked for it to be removed, Paul remained faithful to his mission and relied on Jesus to meet him with the strength he needed. Paul’s weakness was a constant reminder that he needed to depend on God for everything, and that’s the point. Jesus calls us to recognize His power and take hold of what He’s asking us to do because without Him, we “can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The world tells us that only the strong survive, and value is placed upon those who are self-reliant. We are taught to look to strengths as a source, and not to disclose our weaknesses to others. But God wants us to acknowledge our weaknesses with humility because He always comes through in ways we can’t imagine or even understand right away. So rather than trying to hide your weaknesses behind your strengths, aim to know and walk with the Creator who made you, knows you, and has an amazing plan for what you consider a weakness. Here’s the thing: it’s actually the catalyst to showing the world His power.

¹ lifewithoutlimbs.org/





OVERWHELMED

BY DECISIONS

GOD'S SPECIFIC PLAN AND
OUR ROLE LIVING IT

What should I eat for breakfast? How am I going to spend my Friday night? Where should I live? Should I go to church? Which church? Who should I marry? Should I even get married? Am I in the right major? Which job should I take? If you feel like your head is more full of "what-ifs" and "now-what's" than it is full of clarity, you're not alone. Columbia Business School professor Sheena Iyengar did a survey of 2,000 Americans and learned that the average number of choices made throughout a typical day was about 70.¹ She also conducted an experiment using jam displays in a grocery store that demonstrated that we're easily overwhelmed when presented with too many choices. When people saw six varieties of jam, they stopped less often to investigate, but also bought a jar six times more often than when there was a display of 24 varieties of jam.¹ Talk about a real "jam" in our decision-making process!

HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS

When facing a decision, people often do one of two things. Some make decisions with little thought at all. In haste, we can end up making rash decisions we come to regret later. Making quick decisions also doesn't leave time to consider how our decisions affect the people around us. Quickly making decisions seems like a nice idea in the short term because it makes us feel confident and in control, but ignoring the consequences of our actions generally leads to **nothing** good. Your parents may have warned you about this, and we'd venture to say they were probably right on this one.

On the other end of the spectrum are people who feel that decision-making can be paralyzing. Because it feels so overwhelming, there's a tendency to turn on the auto-pilot, go about their days without thinking too deeply, and hope for the best. Even when the urgency of a decision is recognized, they can be afraid to make the wrong choice and just freeze up. If they're not careful, they can spend weeks, months, and even years waiting for a clear answer.

The problem is, when we refuse to make committed decisions in our lives, nothing gets done. Months go by, and one day, a nagging discontentment has

¹Sheena Iyengar at TEDSalon NY2011, "How to make choosing easier" ted.com/talks/sheena_iyengar_choosing_what_to_choose/

caught up with us. We may end up feeling bitter towards the way things are because our lives aren't the way we hoped they'd be. Sometimes life doesn't go the way we thought it would because of circumstances out of our control. Sometimes though, life isn't what we hoped because of our own negligence. When we were given an option to act, we chose not to. The good news? In the middle of our decision paralysis, God is holding out the sweet promise of Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV), which says, "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

A GOOD GOD

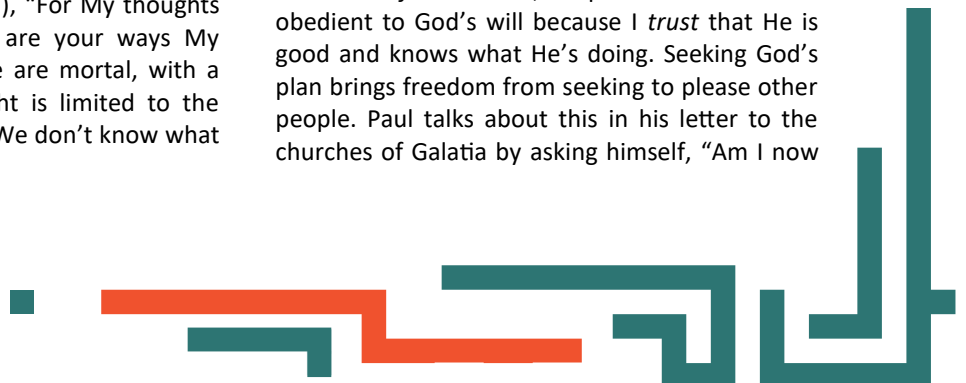
I remember being a high school senior and talking with my parents one night about which college I should go to. I had the choice narrowed down to two when my dad suggested I pick the university closer to home. It seemed like a good enough deciding factor, and a few months later, there I was as a first-year college student. While I am happy with my choice of university, I was not searching to know God during this time in my life, and because of that, I made decisions based solely on logic, what I wanted, and whatever was convenient for me. Until we realize our need for God's direction in our lives, we will make decisions based on whatever feels right at the moment. The Old Testament tells of a time, not unlike today, where "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25, NKJV). They left God out of the picture altogether, and did what they wanted. Keep in mind that these were people who *knew* God, yet they chose to do what *they* deemed right instead of following what He determined was the way to go.

Part of making wise decisions is accepting that, in many cases, we *don't* know what's best for us. God says in Isaiah 55:8 (NKJV), "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." It's no secret that we are mortal, with a start and end date. Our sight is limited to the moment we have right now. We don't know what

the next 60 seconds will hold. When you think about it, following God because He knows the future is the best thing we can do.

How awesome it is to follow a God that knows exactly what you should be doing every moment of every day! That gives true purpose. Living out the plans God talks about in Jeremiah gives us the deepest sense of belonging we can possibly imagine. If you've ever experienced it, there's nothing quite like knowing you are exactly where you are supposed to be. The summer after my sophomore year of college, I knew God was asking me to stay in my college town for the summer so I could be more involved in my local church community there. My parents weren't expecting this, but I shared what I felt God wanted for my summer. Deciding to stay was one of the tougher decisions I had made up until then because I would have rather been comfortable at home. Plus, it's what my parents wanted, but both of these factors were in direct conflict with what God was asking me to do. Looking back now, I see how making that decision taught me about the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit for peace and looking to the Bible and my local church community for guidance. When we are in God's will, we can rest because we are where God wants us to be, doing what He wants us to do. We're no longer toiling over what God's will is. Instead, we're actually experiencing what it means to take a risk and trust God with the outcome.

Six years later, I am still in that college town living a life full of rich friendships and experiencing the love and power of God. The uncomfortable moments of tough decisions I went through to get here are all worth it now. The discomfort of going against what other people expect of me, or even how I *feel* about it, are powerless when I am obedient to God's will because I *trust* that He is good and knows what He's doing. Seeking God's plan brings freedom from seeking to please other people. Paul talks about this in his letter to the churches of Galatia by asking himself, "Am I now



seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10, ESV).

MAKING WISE DECISIONS

As Christians, we can find some consolation in our decision-making when we remember they are opportunities to trust God. Many of us incorrectly assume God is asking us to guess at His will as if we are supposed to determine the future. This isn't the case. In his book, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*, Kevin DeYoung puts it this way: “God is not a magic 8-ball we shake up and peer into whenever we have a decision to make. He is a good God who gives us brains, shows us the way of obedience, and invites us to take risks for Him.” God, in His faithfulness, has given us the tools we need to make decisions wisely as we navigate through our lives.

The Bible

As our Creator, the Bible says God is eternal which means He is outside of time and can see the full plan ahead. While it is not our job to see the big picture, God does want us to take steps forward to act on the commands He has already given us in His Word. In Malachi 3:6 (NKJV), God says, “For I am the Lord, I do not change.” That means that what the Word of God says applies to our lives today, and His commands have not wavered. God has laid out commands for all Christians to obey. For instance, we're to love one another (John 13:34), bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). Even if we're not faced with any big life decisions at the moment, we can read what God has already asked us to do and start there.

Prayer

In the book of Philippians, God says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7, NKJV). We begin to make wise decisions by bringing the options we see to God in prayer. We can be confident He wants to hear about our decisions and lead us as we take a step forward.

Community

God commands His people to be a part of a local body of believers. Having other people in your life who know you well and are also hearing from God is essential to your decision-making. The local church is a multi-generational family where there are others who have gone through similar life situations. They may have practical or spiritual guidance for you as you make your decisions.

“GOD IS NOT A MAGIC 8-BALL WE SHAKE UP AND PEER INTO WHENEVER WE HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE. HE IS A GOOD GOD WHO GIVES US BRAINS, SHOWS US THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE, AND INVITES

FAITHFUL IN THE SMALL THINGS

God says in His Word in Luke 16:10 (NLT), “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities.” This verse doesn't mean you'll be presented with jaw-dropping opportunities because you're doing well with what you've been given right now. What God is saying here is that the way we follow through on what we have right in front of us determines how we will respond with what we are given in the future. When we are in close relationship with God and are obedient to Him in the “little things,” we are training our ears to better listen to God's voice when faced with bigger life decisions.

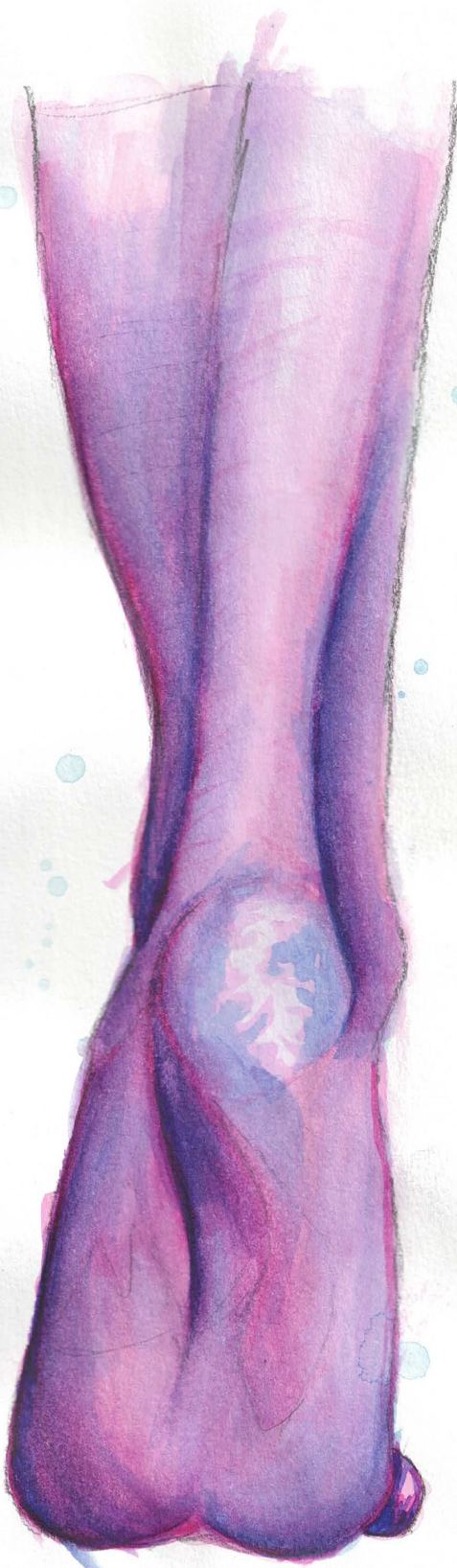
The pressure of the world makes you feel like you need to do a million different things. The truth is, you can't say yes to everything *and* live the life God has planned for you. But we don't have to fear missing out on anything either because there's freedom in living the specific life God wants *you* to live. To combat your tendency to try and scoop up everything life has to offer, spend some time evaluating what your priorities are and how you've been spending your time. How are you doing with what you've been given right now? We honor God by being faithful and consistent in our day-to-day lives.

When faced with the next big life decision, follow the peace you've gained from being faithful to God in the little things and by being in close relationship with Him. Pray and take a step forward in faith because, without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Remember that God is not hiding His will behind His back to keep it from you. His Word tells us, “God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33, NKJV), and that “God has given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Peter 1:3, NLT).


Your
laws are
wonderful
no wonder
I obey
them! The
teaching of
your word
gives light
so even the
simple can
understand



I pant
with
expectation
longing
for your
command
come and
show me
your mercy
as you do for
all who love
your name



Guide my steps by your word so I will
not be overcome by evil - Psalm 119:129-133



FIGHT TO REMEMBER

GIVING UP IS NOT AN OPTION

Imagine that you are walking through the woods close to dusk on a winding, wooded trail, when up ahead you notice a stray dog. You proceed with caution, but you step on a twig and the dog starts sprinting towards you. In seconds, the dog is upon you. It's relentless, but if you quit now, you won't be alive in five minutes. Fighting is the best chance you have. This is what spiritual warfare is like. Your mind and heart are at constant odds with sinful thoughts, and as Ephesians 6:12 puts it, "against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Satan)." You are in a daily battle; will you fight or flee? This is a struggle that mankind has been faced with since, well, *forever*.

For example, Job was a prosperous and godly man who

had a bunch of livestock according to the Book of Job in the Bible. This is significant because livestock and land back then were comparable to basically being a millionaire; that's how good Job had it at the time. Then Satan entered the picture and suggested to God that Job was not as faithful as he seemed, so God allowed Satan to take everything from Job, except his life. His house was destroyed, he endured a terrible sickness, and all of his children and livestock were killed. Job was left with absolutely nothing, but here's where the story takes a turn away from the cliché. Job did not just say, "It's okay, God, I trust your plan." He wrestled with a ton of fear and doubt about whether God still loved him. He held on, however, and fought to turn back toward God, not against Him.

When I forget that life isn't great all the time, and I end up feeling knocked down and lost, I tend to point my finger at God. It's funny, but I never seem to point my finger at God when things are going great. How come I get to go to college and have friends who love me? Why, God? Yeah, it doesn't work like that. Instead, if you're like me, you selfishly say, "I did that," when in reality, God was behind it all.

When you're struggling with difficult circumstances in your life, *remember* that God said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5, ESV). One of the

me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, ESV).

GIVE THANKS

The Bible tells us to "give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds" (Psalm 9:1, ESV). Thanking God for forgiving you of your sins lifts such a huge weight off your shoulders. True rest is surrendering to Jesus, so cry out to Him and thank Him because He created you and sustains you.

"REMEMBERING HOW GOD HAS BEEN WITH YOU HELPS YOU TO TRUST THAT HE IS STILL THERE, EVEN WHEN IT DOESN'T *FEEL* THAT

greatest promises in the whole Bible says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, ESV). Throughout the Bible, God is so patient and gracious to His people. He knows that we forget what He has done for us, but He gives us what we need so we can fight against that: Himself.

THINK

Think back to the last time you remember God directing your steps and guiding you. In the book of Psalms, the psalmist says, "I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds" (Psalm 77:12, ESV). Remembering how God has been with you helps you to trust that He is still there, even when it doesn't *feel* that way or *seem* that way.

REPENT

Remembering that God is with you is important, but keep in mind that this is also a fight. You need to actively turn away from your sinful deeds, thoughts, and desires, and turn to God. Run to Him! Remember that Jesus died for your past, present, and future sins, and that He welcomes you with open arms: "Come to

TELL

Living your life in such a way where others get to know Him because they know you is a joy. But even here, Satan is fighting against you to silence this. But the thing is, if you are truly a new creature, nothing will be able to shut you up because you can't forget what God has done for you.

God is so good to us. It's true that we can forget that and lose focus when we experience hardships, but don't stay knocked down. It's a lie to keep believing that God ever promised our lives would be perfect or go according to our plans. What God did promise us was that nothing "...in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39, ESV). So, keep fighting against your thoughts, desires, and feelings, and pursue God. There may be days where you lose the battle, but God is right there to pick you back up, if you let Him. "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40, ESV)!

One girl's TRIP STORY

A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE IS THE SOLUTION



MANY times I tried, but I always grew too tired. A monster deep inside me was knocking, kicking, and jumping to get my attention, always hindering me from seeing the world. My life was misled, misunderstood, uncertain, and alone in the dark, so I always held onto the papers and pens to express myself. I used to think that every effort of writing could be my last letter to make. I was ready to give up because of the uncertainties and unanswered questions life was offering me.

I was totally weak. I could paint a piece of artwork, but not literally because the story was twisted. My paintbrush was a knife. And the canvas was my wrist. I was cheerful, happy, and joyful but dead and distracted inside. Fat but hungry for acceptance. Weird but full of dreams. A comforter who didn't listen to my own advice I gave others. A perfect mold but broken inside. I have this childhood that was nothing but misery and doubting everyone, especially myself. I experienced bullying from my classmates when all I wanted was acceptance. I was a girl that could direct my thoughts and feelings to think about death or even not waking up tomorrow.

The most tragic times were the days over one week mid-February 2016 when I had a high fever. That same week my mother left our home because of another man. I felt like I was physically drowning because of my fever, and so I could do nothing to try and stop my mother from leaving.

Then, my brother came to me to share his experiences to find Christ, but it didn't mean anything yet. After that, I went to graduate from

my Junior High School and I had to make the decision about which school to enroll in for my upcoming senior years. I decided I needed to go to Leyte (Visayas), which was miles and miles from the place I grew up in for 16 years in Bukidnon (Mindanao).

Those two years of my senior years made me the person I never expected. I received Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour in my first year there in Leyte. A choice that will continue to determine the way I go in life. All I can say is that God is finding anyone in this world to share His words. I know how hard life was. It moves against all our wills because of its cruelty. Now, I tend to see the good despite how bad life seems. I try to blend the good to see the colors of life and God gave me more reasons to see the brightest moon and stars despite the dark. This life is a journey that we must take part in so He can grow us as an individual with Him. Even I was not pleased by my brother when he spoke to me about Christ, like an instrument who came to me in disguise. Life is about the Father's love and it is all starting to help me realize and understand why I am here. The fog that still sometimes hinders me makes me realize I can now go on because Jesus is waiting for me on the other side. Even though I stayed lost many times, He didn't give up on me. All I have wanted is for my life to be free, but now I know that a Spirit-filled life is the solution.

- Kesiya



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English @ 8:00-9:30
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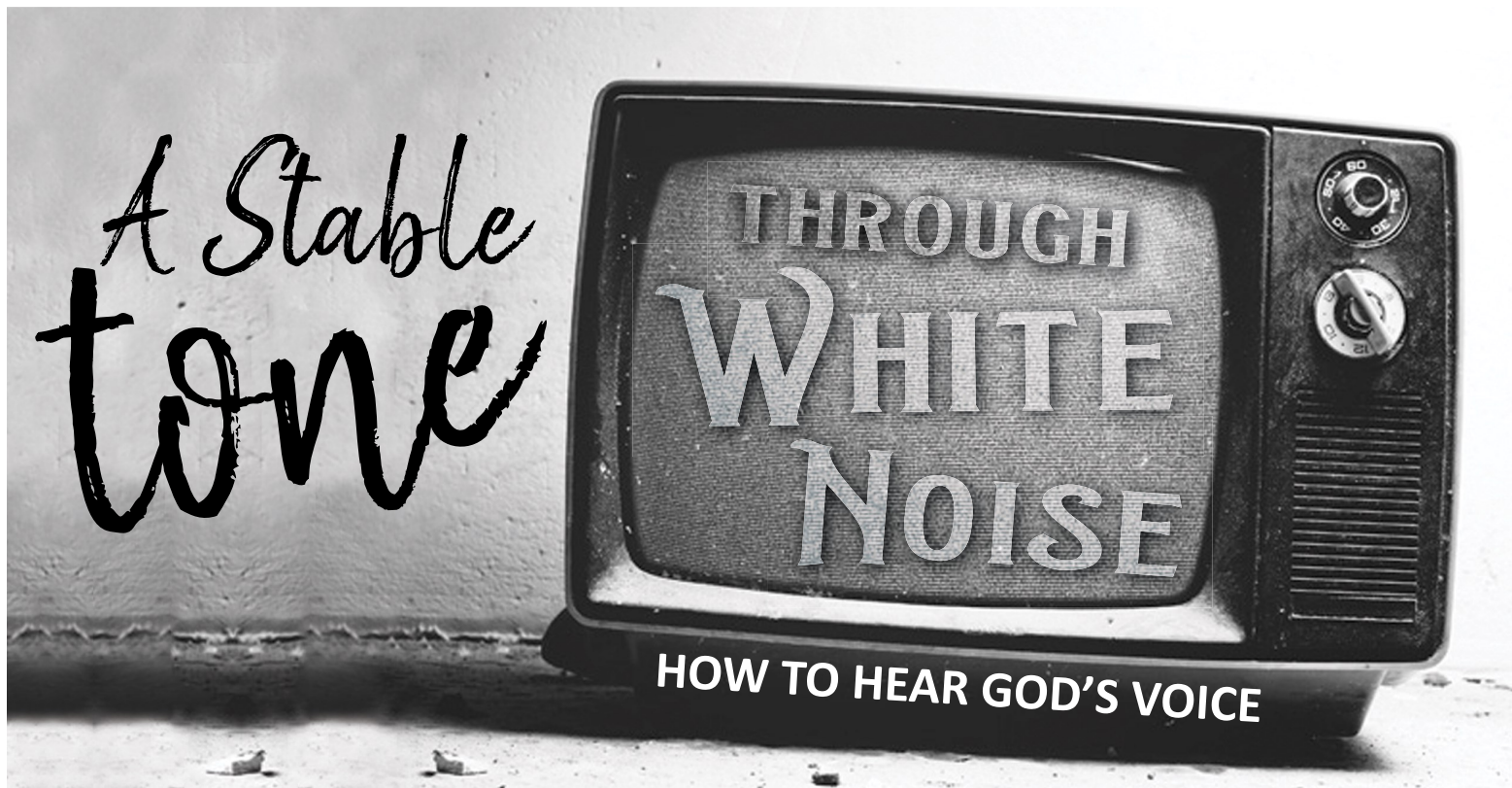
Worship Timings

Wednesday Bible Study
@ 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Friday Fasting Prayer
@ 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Founder Pastor: Rev. Dr. Arjuna Rao Chiguluri



City Branches: Scindhia, Kurmannapalem, Gajuwaka



We are constantly surrounded by voices. The voice of reason. Our conscience. Parents, roommates, professors, co-workers, and bosses. We even listen to our own gut! But what if there was a voice that we should be listening to, could be listening to, or even want to listen to? What if that voice could console you, rebuke you, and even direct you? The truth of the matter is this: God speaks, and we should listen. So how do you even begin to hear from God? How do you hear God's voice?

READ THE BIBLE

God has spoken to us, is actively speaking, and will continue to speak to us through the Bible. The Bible, or Word, is living and active. God really speaks through the inspired scriptures; all you must do is read. Matt Brown, a guest contributor for desiringGod.org wrote, "Complaining about God being silent when your Bible is closed is like complaining about not getting texts when your phone is turned off."¹ If you're not willing to even open the Bible and give it a chance, then you are eliminating the opportunity for one of the major means in which you can hear from God. Let God's Word dwell in us so deeply and richly that it teaches and corrects us to where the outpouring of our hearts sing praise to God, thanking Him (Colossians 3:16, ESV). What we hear and what we listen to every day is the material that will make up our faith. "So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17, ESV). Boldly trust that you can hear from God through scripture.

PRAY

The God of the universe, the one true God, wants to have a

relationship with you. Have you ever had a conversation where it's all one-sided? It's weird, right? And awkward. Don't you think that God wants to hear from you as well? We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17, ESV). But how do you pray? Give God the authority He deserves and talk to Him about your daily happenings. Tell God what's going on in your thought life. Tell Him what you struggle with. Let Him know that you thoroughly enjoyed that piece of chocolate cake or even the hike you went on yesterday. Ask Him for help in understanding. Boldly ask Him to speak in your life daily, so that you may hear from Him in every situation that life brings.

THROUGH WORKINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

You can hear God through the works of the Holy Spirit. At the end of Jesus' life, He mentions that He must go for a Helper to come. That Helper can guide us to hear from God. He does so primarily with the Bible. Have you ever read a passage in scripture that didn't make sense at all and then later come back to it, having your eyes opened to what it could mean? The Holy Spirit helped you. The Holy Spirit can also help you hear from God through prayer. When we do not know what to pray for, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26, ESV). The Holy Spirit also uses the church body for us to hear God's voice. Whether it be through the sermon, seeking out counsel, or having the Holy Spirit use someone to speak into your life about matters you are facing, the Holy Spirit is at work aiding in

**"WHAT WE HEAR AND WHAT WE LISTEN
TO EVERY DAY IS THE MATERIAL THAT
WILL MAKE UP OUR FAITH."**


hearing God's voice.

CHURCH COMMUNITY

How will we know that it is really God that we are hearing from? I heard God telling me to go into this major, get married, and/or buy a car. Am I right? Having a strong biblical church community to go to can help answer if you have really heard the voice of God.

THROUGH SUPERNATURAL MEANS

You can hear God's voice through visions (Genesis 15:1, ESV and Acts 11:5-9, ESV), dreams (Genesis 37:5 and Matthew 2:13), nature (Exodus 3), and even a donkey (Numbers 22:28-30, ESV)! If God wants you to hear what He has to say, He will find a way. However, don't bank on these types of events happening to you all the time. They come from personal circumstances. God primarily uses the Bible for you to hear His voice.

These steps are great to begin with, but we ultimately need to consider the one person who can help us hear God's voice: Jesus. We should think about the person and work of Jesus Christ and embrace Him. Jesus has been there since the beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1, ESV). Consider putting your trust and faith in what Jesus has said in scripture as true and valid: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24, ESV). Consider the fact that Jesus became a man, was tempted in every way we are, but never sinned, and chose to die for us in order that we might be able to come back to God one day. Now, if there is a person who can help you hear from God, wouldn't you want to get to know them too? "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15, ESV). 

PURPOSE *for the* PAIN

FICTION

"HOPE CAN
GET YOU
THROUGH
ANYTHING."

Pushing through every nerve ending in my body, the intensity of the pain threatened my sanity. Every breath was a battle. Each second drew on endlessly. The screams of someone much too close to me rang horrifically through my bones. I remember wishing desperately that they would be quiet for just a moment, before I realized that the wailing shrieks were my own.

Laying on my stomach in the dust, I thought of trying to run, but his firm hand kept me as still as I could bear. With each cut, he worked into the flesh of my back deeper and deeper. I needed him to stop. I begged him to. The pain alone was going to kill me and death was beginning to seem like a delicious relief.

Suddenly, for a moment, he did stop. I held my breath. The feeling dulled. My eyes darted each way looking for the quickest escape from him. Every muscle in my body tensed as I planned to make a run for it.

But then he spoke gently to me. I remembered what he was doing. His hand wasn't holding me down, but steadying me. I had laid down before him willingly. I was desperate for his help. My breath released. I relaxed. He began again.

As soon as he started, I forgot the relief. Pain and hopelessness were my only companions. Warm liquid trickled off my back and pooled around me. I wondered how there could possibly be any blood left in me. I tried to focus on his hand, but I could only feel the knife.

After what seemed like hours, I decided I was going to fight him off. I flung my own hand onto his and dug into his flesh, inflicting as much pain as I possibly could. I shouted horrible things at him. I wanted to be left alone.

Another hand grabbed mine and stopped me. It was attached to a face that I knew. It was the face of a friend. Her eyes pierced into me and I instantly felt guilt for my attack against him. She turned to grab something behind her and I could see a jagged scar cut into her own flesh. I remembered the pain had a purpose. She turned back to me and wrung out a rag full of cool water onto my face. It dripped down into my mouth and I instantly felt refreshed.

I was filled to the brim with gratitude for her. Then I realized that he had directed my friend to help me. I was filled to the brim with gratitude for him. I laid back down and bared myself to him again. I still wanted to run, but I wanted to trust what he was doing for me more.

The pain never stopped, but I wasn't focused on it anymore. I knew my friend couldn't stop him, and I knew that I didn't really want him to stop either. I wanted him to keep working. I wanted him to save me.

She stayed with me and held my hand. Whenever I started to scream he would direct her to dip the rag in the water and refresh me. Every time she turned I saw her scar. He kept cutting, but I had hope. Hope can get you through anything.

Then I woke up. I wasn't on my belly in the dust. There was no blood. There was no pain. My family was smiling around me in the hospital. The doctor leaned in triumphantly. He had cut the tumor out. It had been much, much worse than anyone had suspected, but the surgery was successful. I was going to live.



GOOD

BETTER

BEST

SURRENDERING OUR GOOD DECISIONS FOR GOD'S BEST

When I graduated college five years ago, I never imagined I'd be helping to run a handicraft business in a foreign country. I just knew that I wanted to serve Jesus and help others in some capacity. It was a string of many small decisions that led to big life changes for me.

Making those small decisions wasn't necessarily an easy task though. While choosing between a good thing and a bad thing can be distressing, the right choice is obvious. However, choosing between two (or more) good things can be even more of a challenge. Just because something is a "good" option doesn't mean you should say yes to it. How do you decide which good thing to choose?

Oftentimes we are presented with multiple good opportunities at once. But you can't take hold of every opportunity that comes your way. There are many times in a person's life when he or she must make the choice between a good decision and a better decision.

Maybe you've faced the dilemma between choosing to stay home and finish your homework or to go hang out with your friends. Both are good things...but which one is better? Sometimes making a wise decision means saying "no" to something worthwhile.

CONSEQUENTIAL VS. INCONSEQUENTIAL

I shared a very close relationship with my grandfather as a teenager. He was intentional about discipling me and teaching me spiritual things. He was revered in my family and in my church as being exceedingly wise. One thing he used to share with his grandchildren was how to distinguish between consequential and inconsequential decisions.

Which choices have long-term consequences and will impact your life in the long run? Which things will have a lasting impact on the Kingdom of God?

I have a reputation among my friends and family as being a rather indecisive person. When it comes to making decisions regarding what to do that day, what to eat, which items to buy, etc., I am less than helpful. But those are all examples of inconsequential decisions.

Some decisions are not worth laboring over, while others definitely require much prayer and deliberation. This is an important reminder for me since I usually tend to make consequential decisions spontaneously and impulsively and tend to carefully and arduously mull over inconsequential decisions.

WHETHER IT'S A BIG DECISION, SUCH AS DECIDING ON A CAREER OR A SPOUSE, OR A MINOR DECISION, LIKE CHOOSING HOW TO SPEND YOUR WEEKEND OR YOUR PAYCHECK, WE ALL HAVE TO MAKE CONSTANT CHOICES THAT REFLECT OUR VALUES AND PRIORITIES.

THE BEST DECISIONS

When I was in the eighth grade, I had a meeting with a guidance counselor at my school. Her job was to help me look into future careers and determine which classes I should take in order to best prepare me for whichever line of work I was interested in. As she looked over my grades and test scores, she saw that I excelled in math and science. She advised me to become a doctor.

Obviously, becoming a doctor is a wonderful option. Doctors do noble, life-changing work and make a great living for themselves. Why would I say no to such a good option? Because I knew that God had a different path in mind for me. I told my guidance counselor that instead of becoming a doctor, I was determined to go into ministry and serve Jesus.

Good options are plentiful. But the best option is always to listen to God.

Whether it's a big decision, such as deciding on a career or a spouse, or a minor decision, like choosing how to spend your weekend or your paycheck, we all have to make constant choices that reflect our values and priorities.

HIS WILL BE DONE

In order to make decisions and lead lives that reflect our devotion to God and our commitment to His Will, we must first commit ourselves to prayer. Listening to God and discerning His voice as you read Scripture and spend intentional time in prayer is what will make all the difference in your life and decision-making.

God's Word tells us to "submit [ourselves], then, to God" and to lean on God's understanding rather than our own (James 4:7, Proverbs 3:5). It is only by relying on His wisdom and direction that we can make not just good decisions, but the best decisions.

"If men make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace" (Matthew Henry; Proverbs 16:9).



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