

## Hearing God's Voice – Lesson Six

### Circumstances: A Time For God to Speak

#### I. God Interprets Our Circumstances

Do you believe that life is just a series of random experiences? Or is life more than that? God created the universe. He is a God of order. He does not do things randomly but rather with purpose. God may use a situation or event in your life to reveal something about Himself or His will.

Circumstances can take many forms. The key is not the occurrence itself but rather the presence of the Holy Spirit as he communicates to us. It does not mean we should be looking for some hidden meaning behind every event in our lives but we should be sensitive to what God might be saying to us throughout the course of a day.

For the purpose of this study we will define “circumstance” as a special type of occurrence that is set apart because God chooses to speak through it. God uses circumstances to speak to us about Himself and His will.

Each of us face circumstances each day but unless we are aware that God may be speaking to us we might miss it. If we are paying attention though, that same situation may hold enormous value for us.

#### A. Zaccheus in a Tree

Luke 19: 1-10 In this story Zaccheus was trying to see Jesus but because he was short there were obstacles in his way. So he climbed the tree so he wouldn't miss out. To the people on the street Zaccheus was just another example of a despicable man who was embarrassing himself. Jesus didn't see it that way. He noticed Zaccheus and allowed the circumstance to be used as a way of bringing redemption to the man. He shocked the religious elite when He left the multitude and went to have lunch with this outcast. Jesus recognized the event as the work of His Father.

## B. A Lame Man

John 5:1-9 We see that Jesus was on His way to a religious feast. When he came by the pool we see that there was a large crowd all desperately waiting to be healed. This man had been lame for thirty-eight years. Jesus noticed him, went directly to him and healed him.

Did Jesus heal anyone else at that time? Was Jesus on a mission to heal this man? So what happened? Jesus recognized His heavenly Father at work and did what He felt the Father was telling Him to do.

As we read on through this chapter we see that because Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath the Jews persecuted Him and wanted to kill Him. But Jesus did not set the agenda for his own life . John 5:19-20. In the midst of an ordinary circumstance, Jesus had seen the Father at work in someone's life.

## C. Miraculous Signs

The first recorded miracle that Jesus performed was turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. John 2:11 Jesus displayed His glory so that His disciples would believe in Him. While others at the wedding noticed the good tasting wine, Jesus wanted His disciples to see he was the supernatural Son of God.

John 20:30-31 These miracles were done not only that the disciples might believe but that we too as we read the Word might believe.

Everything that Jesus did had significance to those who would recognize it. While some recognized the significance of Jesus' actions, others hearts were hardened. Luke 16:31

## D. Raising Lazarus

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. To many it was a wonderful miracle and as a result they believed in Jesus. However, to others it motivated them to betray Jesus. John 11:47-49 How do people witness the same event and yet have totally different reactions. It is a matter of "spiritual perception". If we are not sensitive to hear what God is saying, even the most dramatic circumstances can have no meaning for us.

## II. God Guides Through Open and Closed Door

### A. Open Doors

It is not uncommon to say or to hear others say, “God opened a door for me.” God does open door of opportunity to us. We have to be careful though that we do not base all of our decisions on whether or not a door is open. Just because you are offered a job with higher pay does not necessarily mean it is a job you are supposed to take. We have to be careful not to wrongly place our emphasis on the open door rather than on God. Sometimes we can erroneously assume that any good opportunity is an open door from God. It is easier to look for an open door than it is to develop a relationship with God.

Exodus 2:11-15 – When Moses saw a Hebrew being oppressed by an Egyptian he wrongly went through the open door and as a result it cost him forty years of wandering in the wilderness. We have to be careful to not get ahead of God’s timing.

1 Samuel 13:8-9 King Saul seized an opportunity to offer an unauthorized sacrifice to God, and it cost him his kingdom.

1 Samuel 24, 26 At the same time, David had the opportunity to murder King Saul twice. He would have removed his greatest enemy and opened the door to his rightful place as king. David wisely recognized the opportunity was not from God and therefore did not walk through that door.

An open door alone is not necessarily an invitation to enter. It is important to check to see if God opened it otherwise the results can be terrible.

### B. Closed Doors

Just as an open door is not necessarily an invitation from God to enter, a closed door is not necessarily a sign that God is against something.

Revelation 3:7-8

There are several examples in the Bible of doors that were dead-bolted shut.

The children of Israel found the doors of Jericho shut tightly before them, but God brought the doors (and the walls) down with devastating power. (Joshua 6:20)

Peter found the doors of his prison cell sealed tightly, but the angel of the Lord brought him through those doors with no effort. (Acts: 12:6-11)

There is no door that Christ cannot open if he chooses to lead you through it. If He closes a door though, no amount of effort can open it.

Sometimes you can have what you believe is clear direction from the Lord to do a particular thing but it seems that someone or something is opposing you. The truth is no one can prevent you from obeying God's will. The world may tell you a door is closed but until God says it is true there is hope.

The apostle Paul was an ambitious missionary. On his second missionary journey he set out to evangelize Asia. Every time he tried to enter that area, God closed the door. Acts 16:6-10 The key for Paul was going to the places that God wanted him to go. It was most important to him that he determined God's will for his life rather than doing what he wanted or what made the most sense to him. "In Paul's case God closed one door and redirected him through another."

We may not always understand why God directs us in the way that he does. Rather than making a list of pros and cons why we think we should make a particular decision and then going with whichever side is longer to make that decision, we should pray and hear God's voice for that decision. The main thing is to make decisions that most align with God's will for you.

### III. God is Above Our Circumstances

#### A. Joseph's Delays

Sometimes our circumstances can be confusing. But God can give you the right interpretations for your circumstances.

Joseph had a vision that he would be a great ruler. The things that happened to him seemed to oppose that vision. His brothers sold him into slavery and he was falsely accused in Potiphar's house and ended up in jail. He could have concluded that the vision was not from God but instead of becoming bitter he sought God's perspective on the events and remained confident that God had a plan. In the end he understood every circumstance from the perspective of God's will for his life.

## B. Paul's Sufferings

Paul's circumstances in life could have also confused him.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Instead of coming to the wrong conclusions God spoke to him and helped him understand why he was allowing Paul to experience these things.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 He allowed God to interpret his circumstances for him.

## IV. Focus on Christ

Blackaby said "We should not allow our circumstances to inform us about God. We ought always to allow God to inform us about our circumstances." When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances it is best if we first turn our focus to Christ so that we can hear what He has to say.

We should not come to conclusions about God in the middle of a difficult situation. If we know His love and believe that He is in control we will be better able to trust Him in the midst of difficulty. In the middle of trying times, we learn about what is in our hearts. It is also at this time that we learn more about God's grace.

To truly understand the truth of a situation we need to hear from God.

It was late in the evening when the disciples saw a large crowd gathering around Jesus. In Luke 9:12 the disciples urged Jesus to "send the multitude away, that they may go into surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place." It seemed the logical thing to do. Give everyone time to find shelter for the night. Rather than the common sense approach Jesus had other ideas, he commanded them, "You give them something to eat." Luke 9:13 If this command had come from anyone besides Jesus it would have seemed absurd. The disciples saw things in a logical sense, but Jesus saw the opportunity to perform a miracle that would cause thousands to glorify God. In light of what Jesus told them to do, the disciples then saw the truth of their circumstances. Jesus fed the five thousand and then the disciples went out in a boat to get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When the storm came and they saw Jesus approaching on the water they assumed He was a ghost and were afraid. However, once they heard a word from Jesus saying, "Have courage! It is I.

Don't be afraid." Mark 6:45-51, everything changed. A word from Jesus put everything in perspective.

Once we hear the truth of our situations from God we too will look at things differently.

V. Conclusion

- A. Settle in your mind that God loves you. His love never changes.
- B. Do not try to understand God based on your circumstances. Ask God to help you see things from His perspective.
- C. Wait on the Holy Spirit. He will take what God says and help you understand. Be patient. God's timing is best.
- D. Adjust your life to God and to what you see Him doing in your circumstances.
- E. If you have no clear instruction, wait and then do the last thing God told you to do. Just continue until God speaks.

Questions:

1. Has there been a time in your life when God taught you something through a difficult situation?
2. How do you decide which doors of opportunity to enter? Have you ever entered doors you should not have or assumed a door was closed before you sought clear direction from God?
3. Have you allowed your circumstances to affect your view of God? Or, have you trusted God with your circumstances?
4. Do you try to hear God's voice in the midst of your circumstances?