

The First Step in Getting a Word from God

Faith Life

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All right, welcome tonight as we continue our study of the faith life. We are talking about how to get a word from God. We have outlines available. If you've not gotten yours, you can make your way to the front and get one because we want you to be able to follow along. We have just for a moment of review, have said that it is all important that you know the will of God in your particular situation because faith is to act like a thing is so because God said it is so even when it doesn't appear to be so, in order for it to become so. But faith always starts with God. It doesn't start with us. It starts with him. Your salvation faith didn't start with you, it started with God. Faith is a gift that God gives us, that he grants us. And so faith in living the Christian life, faith in seeing God move into your human situation originates with God and it starts when God speaks to you and gives you a word about what he intends to do in your situation. You remember Jesus in the Lord's Prayer said, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So we've got to look into heaven to see what God's will is for our situation on earth so we'll know how to act and we'll know how to believe, and that's what we're talking about. Faith is that channel that brings the power of God out of heaven into your human situation.

You remember the lady who was hemorrhaging had been hemorrhaging for some time, had been to doctor after doctor, after doctor and the scripture says she'd spend all her money and still she was not healed. And yet she touched the hem of Christ's garment and she was healed. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" And you remember his disciples said, "But people crowding all over You. What do You mean who touched You?" I mean, they were just wall to wall people. Jesus said, "No, somebody touched Me." Now her touch was different from all the other people that touched him. Her faith alone released the power of God in her life. Other people touched him but the power of God was not released in their life. It wasn't like touching an electric current where everybody gets zapped no matter who they are. It was faith that released the power of God in her situation and healed her. And so it is all important that we find out what God's doing. Jesus himself said he did nothing except what he saw the Father doing, John 5. He said, "I can do nothing on My own. I don't even say anything unless I've heard the Father say it." So Jesus was showing you and me how imperative it is that we look into heaven and see what God is doing. In fact, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word, every Rhema that comes from the mouth of God."

We are to live our life on what God tells us his will is for our situation and so we're asking the question, since it is so important that you hear from God that you know what God's will for your situation is, how do you get that word from God? And remember, I told you that there are two Greek words that are translated into the English as "word." Both are translated "word," though they're two different words in the Greek. One is Logos. We're familiar with that word. We've heard that a lot. And that basically speaks of the Bible is the Logos of God. All right, it is the word of God, the Logos of God. "In the beginning the Logos," John. But the other word that's translated "word" is the word "Rhema," and I have said to you that I believe that Rhema is that particular word God speaks to you in your time of need. Now the Logos becomes a Rhema when God speaks the Logos into your particular situation, okay? In other words, God will take a verse or section of a verse and he will speak to you in your situation, it just comes off the page, hits you, strikes you, you just know you have heard from God. And that verse, that Logos at that point becomes a Rhema for you, okay?

Now I mentioned to you as well that God can give you a Rhema apart from the Scripture. He might speak a word to you in your situation, and it might not be a verse, it might not be a phrase in Scripture. And Miss Sue, of course, was sharing with me last week that God spoke to her about her daughter being healed and it wasn't through a Bible verse. She was just...were you riding down the road did you tell me? She was in the bed, but it's just like God spoke it just like he was right there with you, wasn't it? And she knew God had spoken, and her daughter was in a situation where the doctors were saying there was no healing, right? The doctors had given up, right? But God said he was going to heal her. So she started telling folks that. They didn't believe it because they hadn't gotten the word, so they didn't have the faith she had, but her daughter is still with us today, praise God, even has written a Bible study on Matthew 24 that our group's studying on Thursday morning. So well, maybe we can let her share a word about that sometime and she'll walk through what God did for her. But I trust God has spoken to each of us. In fact, when we got saved, we got a word. You know, God used the word to show us we were lost, we needed him, and he imparted to us the faith to call on him to be our Savior, right? Matthew shared with me the word God gave him. He said, "Get up and walk," right? Just like he told that guy paralyzed, "Get up and walk." God spoke to him. He knew it was the Lord and he started walking.

All right, okay, that brings us, I told you last week I was going to share with you a Rhema that God gave me concerning my call to a church. The second church I pastored was over in Atlanta, and the two books that God seems to use more than any others to speak to me are the book of Revelation and the book of Isaiah. But I was pastoring a church in Phoenix City, Alabama. I had been there four years and this church approached me from Atlanta and came to hear me preach and wanted me to basically come and be their pastor. Well, I prayed about it and Terry and I sought the Lord about it and just did not believe it was what God wanted us to do. So we said thank you, but we don't believe this is what God wants. They called another man to be their pastor. He was there about two years and he had a heart attack and died. Well, they came back a second time. Now I've been there six years and they said we still believe that you're the one God has for us. So I felt like I owed it to them and to myself to seek the Lord about this and seek to find out what God's

will is. Now, as I have said before there are certain things that you know it's God's will, right? It's God's will for you to walk in sanctification and holiness, not in immorality. You don't even have to ask God if you should commit immorality. The Scripture is clear about that as it is about a lot of other things, and we're not talking about those areas, but when it comes to do I stay at this church or do I go to this church, is it time for me to pass to this church, you know, you can't just, it's not that clear. You can't just come up with a clear, God didn't just say in his word clear stay or go, so you've got to seek him. That's when those kinds of situations when you say, "Lord, what is Your will? What do You want me to do? I just want to be obedient to You."

And I was seeking the Lord, had been seeking him for some time, several weeks, and I was just in my normal Bible study reading in the third chapter of the book of Revelation and I came to the letter of Christ to the church at Philadelphia. And as I was reading, And the angel of the church in Philadelphia, to the angel church in Philadelphia, write, He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut and who shuts and no one opens." Now God just spoke to me in that verse and said to me, "I'm going to lead you through the open door." So immediately when he said that he began to bring to my mind the situations that I'd experienced since I've been at this church for six years. I'd been at this church for six years. I'd only had three search committees ever come and hear me preach and proceed by wanting me to talk further with them. Of those three, two of them were the same church. So God said to me through that, "Look, I've only had three committees since you've been here six years ever come hear you and approach you about coming, and two of those are the same. Now I'm saying something through that." And so I sensed at that point he was indicating that he wanted me to go to that church, but I wanted to be sure. I wanted to ask him to confirm it. Well, as I continued to read verse 8, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut." So when I read that he was saying to me, "I've opened a door. I've put the door before you which no one can shut."

Now I forgot to tell you something that happened prior to him giving me that word. The committee came down and we talked, and this was probably about February. And I said to them, "Okay, I want you to be absolutely sure that I am the man God wants to be your pastor." I said, "I want you to be so sure that you'll be willing to stand up before your church and say we're willing to bet our lives on the fact that he's a man." And I said, "And I want you to go look at some more people and you come back if you have come to that point." I wasn't making it easy on them, was I?

So that was probably February. Well, again, about April they came back and said, "Yes, we're at that point." All right, then I went to the Scriptures and that's when God said, "I'm going to lead you through the open door." Now they had every opportunity to close that door. I made it hard on them. But God kept it open. And then he says to me that he has opened the door that no man can shut. I didn't know exactly what that meant. I just knew he was telling me, "Okay, I've opened that door and nobody can shut it."

So I told them, I said, "Okay, I'm willing to come up and what I want to do is I want to preach a series of sermons at this church. I want to come up on Sunday and I want to

preach all the way through to Wednesday and I want people to hear me, I want them to hear me good. I want them to know me, know what they're getting." I said, "I want to get a chance to meet them." You know, usually you just go and preach one sermon and then they vote on you. How can they get to know you in one sermon? So I said, "I want them to hear me all the way from Sunday morning through Wednesday." I was giving them every opportunity, but God had told me we were going to go.

So knowing that and believing that, I actually bought a fan to go in the pastorium when we got up there. Now here's the thing you've got to watch out for: when God's given you a word and you know what God's will is, other people don't have it can look at you and think you're being presumptuous. You know, for me to go to this church and they hadn't even heard me preach and I have a fan in the car that I wanted them to put up in the pastorium would look like I was being mighty pretentious, right? This guy's coming up here and... but I knew God has spoken so you're going to have to be careful though because people misunderstand it.

All right, so I went up preached, met with the deacons, met with the Sunday school classes, the whole nine yards, four days. So we go back and the search committee says, "Okay, we're going to present you before the church a couple of weeks." Well, about a week before I get a call on a Saturday and the search committee chairman says, "Well, we got something going, we've got an issue going on." And I said, "Oh, what is it?" They said, "Well, we have this guy on staff, he's our education man. Well, he wants to be the pastor. He thinks it's God's will for him to be the pastor. In fact, the last man we brought in before we begin talking to you again, he pretty much stirred up the church against this guy. So we did not vote to call him. Well, he has sent a letter to all the church members and they've gotten the letter today in which he accuses the search committee of doing him wrong and lying to him, and all this sort of stuff, and he's convinced that God wants him to be the pastor." Well, do you know what my response to that was? "Don't worry about it. God has opened a door that no man can shut. This guy can't shut that door. Let him try. He can't do it." So I said, "Don't worry about it." I had God's peace, right?

All right, then it came the day they were going to vote on me and they got word to me before that that this education man had one of the young deacons on his side and that he was going to get up and bring a motion before they voted to call me or not, he was going to get up and bring a motion that they put off the vote on me for at least a week until they could consider him being the pastor. I said, "Don't worry about it. God has opened a door that no man can shut. He can't shut it."

So it comes to that morning, the church called in conference to vote. Sure enough, he gets up, he makes the motion but it's voted down. Only a few of the elderly ones that didn't know what was going on voted for him. The other folks that knew what was going on didn't, so his motion didn't carry. Then they voted and voted me in and they said he got up at that point and he walked out the church and they had doors like this at the front, and he walked out and he turned around and shook his Bible like that when he walked out the door. He would not even, it took him two weeks to clear his office out and I gave four weeks' notice before I came. He was so slow about getting out of there. He kept thinking

somehow he was going to be the pastor. But I had that word and I just rested in God's word. He had opened a door no one could shut.

All right, let's talk now about how do we get a word from God? How do you get that Rhema from God? First, we've got to have a holy desperation and most of the time we don't ever get the word because we don't get desperate, you see. We spend most of our time trying to get out of being desperate, right? We try to run away from situations where we're desperate and God is saying, "Look, you've got to get desperate or you're not going to hear Me. You've got to really want to hear Me." He says, "You will seek Me and find Me," in Jeremiah, "when you seek Me with half your heart?" No, "whole heart." And truth is unless we're really desperate, we only halfheartedly seek him.

So God first brings us into a point of desperation where we're saying, "God, I don't know what to do in this situation, but I want to do what You want me to do. I want to follow Your will." And so we've got to come to the point that we want God's will more than anything and we're willing to pay the price to worship. Remember, I defined worship as hearing from God. There's a price to be paid for true worship and the truth is, most of the time we're not willing to pay that price. We've got to pull ourselves away from all the attractions of this world. We've got to get away from television sets. We've got to get away from the iPods. We've got to get away from the music. We've got to get away from all these distractions and get alone with God and truth is we don't really want to do that until we get so desperate that we say, "God, I've got to hear from You. I don't care what it takes. I'm going to go and get with You and I'm not coming out until You have spoken to me." But very few times are we really willing to pay that price of total surrender, putting everything on the altar to God. Everything. "God, I'm here. I'm Yours totally absolutely. I'm going in my prayer closet and I'm not coming out until I hear from You. It may take one hour. It may take two hours. It may take five hours. It may take all day. I don't care, but God I am not going to leave until I have heard from You." And that kind of desperation moves God and you'll hear from God.

So you've got to have a problem first. So don't run from your problems, embrace them. A problem is a platform for a miracle, right? Obstacles are only opportunities for God to work. You look through the Scripture and you'll never see God do a miracle when there was not a problem, when there was not a need for it. He divided the Red Sea because they were going to die if he didn't. He provided manna in the wilderness because they were going to starve to death if he didn't. He provided water out of the rock because they were going to die of thirst if he had not. Right, he didn't provide the manna while they were in Egypt and they had the onions and the leeches and all. No, there had to be a need.

[unintelligible]

There we go. All right, fried leech. You haven't had eaten. You think frog legs are good, you get fried leech. All right, here we go. Okay, next you must get in the position so God will speak to you. You get desperate but then you need to get in the position so that you can hear God. We have so much going on our lives so most of the time our ears, spiritual ears are stopped up. And sometimes again, it's through adversity.

Look over in Psalm 66. In Psalm 66 again with verse 8, "Bless our God, O peoples, And sound His praise abroad, Who keeps us in life And does not allow our feet to slip. For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined." And that's in the furnace, that's in the fire. "You did bring us into the net; You did lay an oppressive burden upon our loins. You did make men ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water." Now God was putting it on them. This was some hard situation. "Yet You did bring us out into a place of abundance." God uses adversity to refine us to get us in the position that we can hear him.

The position is one of purity and heart. You remember from our study of the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." All right, pure in heart. Remember we said purity is unmixed. Pure gold is gold that is not mixed with any alloy. It's pure gold. A pure heart is a heart that is totally, completely, absolutely given to God. We don't hear from God because our heart is so filled with dross, right? So many other things have divided our hearts, it's not a pure heart.

And then it is an obedient heart that hears from God. Jesus said over in John 14:21, "He who has My commandments," John 14:21, "and keeps them," that's obedience, isn't it? Isn't that obedience? So he who is obedient, it is he "who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father." So obedience shows love. You love him, he loves you. You're loved by the Father and, "I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." Do you see that word disclosed? Reveal. Show. It is the obedient heart that Jesus says, "I'll disclose what My will is. I will show you. I'll give you a word if your heart is one of obedience to Me."

And then we need to have a repentant heart. A repentant heart. Over in Luke 3, over in Luke 3 beginning in verse 3. "And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," this is John the Baptist, "as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every ravine will be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough roads becomes smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"" That's repentance, when that which is lacking, the ravine, is filled up. When that which is exalted is humble. Every mountain shall be brought low. That which is crooked, that which is sinful is made straight. That's repentance. And that which is rough, that which is abrasive, that which is agitating becomes smooth. When repentance comes, what's the result? Then all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

So it's a pure heart, an obedient heart and a repentant heart that will get a word from God. You'll get yourself in the position that you can hear God, and then to be filled with the Holy Spirit. George Mueller, who I've told you about, he ran an orphanage by faith in England back in the 1800s. God provided in miraculous ways. If you ever want to have your faith built up, read "Answered Prayers," George Mueller's answered prayers, find it on Amazon, I'm pretty sure. But he said the hardest, most difficult thing in hearing from God is getting yourself in neutral. He said once you've gotten yourself in neutral, that's

90% of the problem right there. You see, you've got to get to the point that your will is put aside and it's not your will but God's will that you really want and really desire because when we're not in neutral we're trying to find that verse and make that verse speak to us that's going to be what we want. And so there takes some time to just wait before God and ask God just to neutralize your desires so that you can truly say with the Lord Jesus, "Not My will but Your will be done."

When you seek him. Now with the word, with the RHEMA comes the faith. Remember over in Romans 10:17. I've quoted it I think each week. But it says, so then for the Scripture says, Luke 10:17, I was reading in 9, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Rhema of Christ." So when God gives you that word, he speaks to you and gives you his will for your human situation, he imparts the faith with that word. And if you've ever had it happen to you, you know what I'm talking about. And it's hard to explain it but that's what happens because faith comes from hearing the word, the Rhema of Christ. Once you know what to believe, then God enables you to believe. He imparts that faith.

Let me give you an example. Look over in the book of Hebrews 11. Here we have Abraham. You remember God came to Abraham and said, "Abraham, I want you to offer Isaac, the son, your only son whom you love, as a sacrifice, a burnt offering." And that meant Abraham was going to have to bind Isaac on the altar, take a knife, slit his throat, bleed to death and then set him on fire on that altar. Now you and I can only begin to try to imagine what it would really be like to have to kill our child. So this was a real situation for Abraham. He was a man of flesh and blood like we are. He did not have the 10 Commandments, they would not be given for several hundred years yet which said, "Thou shalt not murder." Now you think God comes to you today, Mark, and says, "I want you to go out and. Kill Samuel." You know that's not the Lord speaking because he's not going to lead you contrary to his word, and his word says, "Thou shall not murder." But Abraham didn't have the 10 Commandments, right? So he wanted to obey God. God was putting him to that test. Now do you think he was desperate? Do you think he had met the qualification of being in a desperate situation? Yeah, I think so. Do you think that not only was he desperate, do you think he wanted to get a word from God? Yeah, I think so, don't you?

All right, over in Hebrews 11 beginning in verse 17, it talks about Abraham. "By faith," now that tells us right there he had to get a word from God because where does faith come from? Hearing the word, the Rhema. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son." Now does that remind you of another phrase you've heard before, only begotten Son"? Yeah, and it's not an accident that the Scripture, the Holy Spirit says it that way. He wants you to know that Isaac was a foreshadow of Christ and Abraham's love for Isaac was tremendous.

"It was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'" Now why did he add that part? Because he'd told him, "You see, through Isaac I'm going to multiply your descendants as the stars of the sky, as the sands of the seashore. It is your seed that will bless the nations." And Paul tells us he was speaking of Christ who was a descendant of

Isaac. Now that's important because God told him that Isaac, through Isaac were his descendants going to be beyond number and yet now he's getting ready to kill Isaac. It doesn't take a genius to figure out if Isaac's dead, I can't have any grandchildren through him, right? So here we seem to have a problem. God said one thing and then he tells him to do another.

Verse 19, "He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type." Do you know what that tells me? That tells me that Abraham believed. He'd gotten with God. He'd gotten desperate. God gave him a word and he believed that if necessary that God was going to raise Isaac from the dead after he killed him and burnt him to a crisp, that God would raise him from the ashes because God was going to fulfill his word that through Isaac shall his descendants be. That's some faith, isn't it?

All right, now let's look over in Genesis 22 and now you'll understand why Abraham could say this, in Genesis 22 the story where it unfolds in Holy Scripture. Genesis 22. When they had traveled with his young men, traveled to Mount Moriah. Verse 4, "On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance." That is, Mount Moriah where he was to sacrifice Isaac. "Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship and return to you.'" Right there, "We're going to go worship," which meant killing Isaac, setting him on fire and burning him to a crisp, "But we're going to come back. God's going to raise him from the dead. He needs to." Abraham didn't try to figure out how God was going to do it, did he? He just believed God would do it.

Now I want to give you one more insight that I think shows us something. Look over in John's gospel, chapter 8. Remember, Jesus was talking to the Jews and they were upset thinking that, you know, "How can You say that, you know, You've been around so long. I mean, you know, our father Abraham." Anyway, let's pick up the story here. Verse 51, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.' The Jews said to Him, 'Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, "If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death." Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?' Jesus answered, 'If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, "He is our God"; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.'" Now listen to this, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.'" Now I know I'm reading into this a little bit, but I don't think it's a big jump, do you? That what Abraham saw from the time God gave him the command to sacrifice Isaac to the time he told those two servant guys, "We are going to go up and we are going to return," is he saw the day of Jesus. He saw Jesus and he knew if Jesus was going to be on the scene that Isaac had to live. And that's why when he saw Jesus, he rejoiced because he said, "Isaac's got to live. God may raise him from the dead, but he's going to live because Jesus is coming from Isaac." So he did some evermore rejoicing when he saw Jesus.

So with the word comes the faith. Over in Luke 1 we see it again. Luke 1. This is when the angel came to Mary and told her that she was going to give birth to the Lord Jesus as a virgin. Now we know how wild that must have been for her but we'll pick up the flow. Verse 30 of Luke 1, "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.'" Now look what Mary says. Now let's go back. You see it says, "For nothing"? Do you know what that is literally in the Greek? Not any Rhema. Hear that now. Not any Rhema will be impossible with God. Did you hear that? When God speaks, he gives you that word, you move out in faith and it will not be impossible no matter how impossible it looks.

"And Mary said, 'Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your,'" do you think it's Logos or Rhema? Rhema. Rhema. No Rhema is impossible with God, the angel told her and she said, "I'm His servant. Be it done unto me according to His Rhema," because no Rhema is impossible with God. You see, when she heard the word, God imparted the faith. "Be it done unto me according to the Rhema of the Lord." And the angel departed from her.

So when you get the word, God gives you the faith with it. Again, I'll just say what I said last week: don't be surprised if you share your word with other people that they don't have the faith to believe it because he hasn't given them that word, he's given it to you. So don't get offended, don't get upset if they say, "Well, I just don't see that. You know, I don't think that verse means that. You know, I just can't, I just don't see how you can, you know, I just can't believe it." That's all right. That's all right. It's your word and God imparted the faith to you.

All right, let's pray.

Father, we do thank You that Your word instructs us and teaches us about what it means to walk by faith, to move and see You move out of heaven into our human situation to accomplish not our will but Your will and to use us as Your instruments to do that, not to our glory but to Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.