

Experiencing God Frequently Asked Questions

By Gregory Koukl

Respecting the Revelation

What About a Word From God?

Some think getting a word from God is a substitute for careful Bible study. But it's bad advice to pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the right interpretation of a text.

Paul said "All *scripture* is god-breathed," (2 Tim 3:16), *graphe* in Greek. The *writings* are inspired and authoritative, not the *interpretation* we think the Holy Spirit is giving us. This is why the words should be our focus, not our feelings.

If you think God is telling you something through Scripture that is not connected to the meaning of the words *in their context*, it can't be of God because God chose to communicate ***through language***, not around it.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, but that means He illuminates what's already there. All teachers work from a body of information, clarifying it and passing it on. The Holy Spirit does not give new information not in the inspired words. The curriculum, so to speak, is then standardized for all Christians. Every person has equal access to the meaning. There are no private messages in Scripture.

God took pains to give us an objective revelation in the words of the Bible to protect us from subjectivism. When Christians opt for an anointed "reading between the lines" instead of sound exegesis, it actually shows disrespect for God's objective revelation.

What Does the Phrase "Wait on the Lord" Mean?

"Waiting on the Lord" does not mean we delay all action unless and until we've "heard from God." Instead, it refers to an attitude of trust and reliance on God during trying and difficult times (see Psalm 27:14). It can also refer to resting during the waiting period when God sovereignly delays answering our need.

What about the Old Testament: Wasn't God Was Always Giving Special Direction There?

Yes, we do see what appears to be a lot of special intervention early on. The question is this: How are we to apply those passages today? Here are a couple of observations.

First, even in the lives of the patriarchs, this kind of guidance is exceptional. We see scattered occurrences separated by years of apparent silence. It does not seem this is their normal way of making decisions.

Second, as time goes on and the Scripture is given, we see less and less special intervention. Instead, the written Word gives instruction governing decisions. When those instructions are not enough, God intervenes in a clear, supernatural way to give specialized direction, just as in the New Testament examples.

Third, kings make most of their decisions based on the Law. This was one of the reasons the Law was given, to help people make decisions and enable kings to govern in an orderly fashion. Most of the exceptional cases of guidance are for decisions regarding battle plans, though even then it is not always the case.

Fourth, in 1 Samuel 10:7 Saul gets the Holy Spirit. Samuel then tells him to do what the occasion requires and God would be with him. The same is true for Solomon, who even though he has God's ear still asks for wisdom in order to lead the people (2 Chron. 1:10).

Finally, it's true that the Jews need a pillar of fire etc. to assure them of God's presence. They also use Urim and Thummim or cast lots to make decisions. Are these appropriate methods for decision-making in the New Testament economy? I don't think so. That's why we don't see examples of these things in the church age (the casting of lots in Acts was before Pentecost and questionable even then), and they are never mentioned in the Epistles.

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