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October 2013

DO YOU REALLY TRUST GOD?

Dear Friends,

Like many Christians, I have always wanted God to speak to me and give me direction for my life and ministry. It would be so wonderful to have Jesus appear in my room, sit down with me and provide step-by-step details of God's will. However, I know we are to walk by faith, not by sight; therefore, it is in my best interest that I learn to hear His voice through fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

But what about when we do receive a word from the Lord with His instructions for our lives? Are we ready and willing to see it through to completion? I truly believe most Christians would emphatically answer, "Yes!" However, are you sure that is what you would do? The Lord recently dealt with me about this very issue and I'm going to pass along some things He brought to my attention.

In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Another way to think of this is that Christians are not to allow circumstances to govern their thoughts and decisions. Instead, their thoughts and decisions are to be based exclusively on what God has said in scripture and the instructions He has given them.

Then, in Mark chapter four, Jesus explains the parable of the sower:

¹⁴The sower soweth the word. ¹⁵And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

¹⁶And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; ¹⁷And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

¹⁸And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

¹⁹And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

²⁰And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

For years I accepted the popularly held belief that this explanation was referring exclusively to the individual Believer being the sower, and that sowing the word meant reading the Bible. But the Holy Spirit expanded my understanding: If you pray and ask God for direction, then He speaks and gives you that direction, has He not just become the sower sowing the word into your life?

I had never thought of it that way, but it's true. Every single time God speaks to us, He is the sower sowing His words of direction and instruction. I understand that His instructions are not coming from the Bible; but they are coming from the same source. Thus, since Almighty God is speaking to me, should I not make a decision to live by the words that have proceeded forth from His mouth? Additionally, is it not wise on my part to esteem His words more highly than the circumstances around me? The apostles faced such a challenge, recorded in Mark chapter four:

³⁵ And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. ³⁶ And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

³⁷ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. ³⁸ And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

³⁹ And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Verse 35 says, "And the same day." What day? The same day that Jesus had taught the parable of the sower. In that parable He explained that people who hear the word of God and receive it (accept, receive and embrace with special favor) will bring forth the fruit of the word. This means people who esteem the word of God to a place of special favor in their lives, then live by that word, will see the promises contained in that word begin to manifest. This goes right along with what God said in Isaiah 55:11,

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

In Mark 4:35-41 Jesus told the apostles the time of ministry that day had come to an end. The people were being told to go home. The obvious question in the apostles' minds would have been, "What do we do next?" When Jesus told them in verse 35, "Let us pass over unto the other side," they knew what to do. In other words, they had received a word from the Lord concerning their next step of obedience in His will for their lives.

They obeyed His instructions and got into a boat with Jesus. Setting sail, they did not anticipate the devastating storm that was headed in their direction. Remember, Peter, James and John were experienced fishermen and well acquainted with the weather conditions related to sailing. If there had been any concern whatsoever on their part, they would have voiced those concerns to Jesus.

When they were part way across the sea, a violent storm arose. It was so bad that water was filling the ship and the apostles were terrified, thinking they were going to die. On the other hand, Jesus was sound asleep in the rear of the ship; the fierce storm had no effect on Him whatsoever. Interpreting His peaceful sleep as indifference to their situation, the apostles woke Jesus and accused Him of not caring about their plight.

Jesus arose, evaluated what was happening, then rebuked the wind and waves. The storm ceased and the sea waters were calm. Instead of rejoicing that their problem had ended, the apostles "feared exceedingly" at the authority Jesus had just exercised over nature. Let's take a closer look at this whole story.

In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus makes it very clear that He only did and said what the Father told Him to do and say. This means that when Jesus told the apostles they all needed to pass over to the other side of the sea, He was repeating the instruction He had received from God.

Having received this word from the Lord, the apostles stepped out in obedience. However, they made an incorrect assumption that could be summarized like this: We have received an instruction from Jesus. He needs us to go with Him to the other side of the sea. We will get a ship and take Him with us, thus obeying the Lord's instructions. In being totally obedient to His word, we will not encounter any form of opposition; everything will be "smooth sailing."

The problem with this logic is that Jesus had just finished explaining that Satan comes immediately to steal the word which is sown. Two methods used to steal the word are afflictions and cares of this world. All was fine when the apostles set sail. But it wasn't long before they were afflicted by a terrible storm, and the care (worry) of possibly dying in the storm filled their minds.

The word that they had received from the Lord was, "Let us pass over to the other side." The fruit of that word was arriving on the other side. Though they had heard the word, they did not fully receive the word. Then, when the storm arose, there was nothing - I mean, absolutely *nothing* - in the natural to confirm that obedience to the Lord's instructions would have favorable results.

This is *precisely* what happens in the lives of so many Christians. They receive an instruction from God about what He wants them to do. In their mind, they rationalize that as they obey all will be fine and there will be no difficult challenges. Then, when Satan throws roadblocks in their way to stop them, they wonder why God failed them, why He let them down or why He isn't helping them.

Look again at Mark 4:35-41. Jesus never told the apostles they would *not* encounter a storm; He told them they were to pass over to the other side. When God gives you a word of instruction concerning His will for your life, do not blindly assume you will not encounter any opposition. In fact, it would be best if you assume you *will* encounter challenges along the way. Then, pray and ask God to help you prepare for whatever problems might arise. Some would say it is a "negative confession" to anticipate problems before they happen. But this is not at all a negative confession. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of what Jesus has already warned about in Mark 4:14-20: Satan comes to steal the word that was sown.

When we live by the words God speaks, we can depend on them. He has already promised that His word will not return void. Whatever He has said will happen. The key is that we must stand in agreement with His word, obeying without question, or we will not bear the fruit of His word. Though it can sometimes be difficult, do not let stormy

circumstances get your eyes off the unfailing word of God. He will always be there for you, just as Jesus was there for the apostles.

Jesus has made you more than a conqueror...live daily in your victory!

In His Grace,

Jim

PS - If you would like a CD of the sermon which was the foundation for this letter, please request "Do You Really Trust God" on the next page.

A PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED

Syria has been in the forefront of the news for the last few months. Many people are very concerned about what is happening in that nation and the subsequent reaction of other nations. In addition to this, I have observed some rather interesting comments put forth by Christians about what is taking place in that country. In early 2012, the Holy Spirit gave me a prophecy that concerned Syria. I published that prophecy in my April 2012 letter and am reprinting here:

My word contains many prophecies about things to come. If you will look at the world, you will see that even now Syria is on the brink of total collapse and absolute disaster. I foretold this through both Jeremiah and Isaiah. I described events that would take place in Damascus, and you are seeing those events take place in the nation of Syria. I said it will fall. Mark my words, great change is coming to that nation. It signals that you are closer to the end than ever before.

As Jesus said, let not your heart be troubled. Wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters and calamities are just going to increase. Praise God, the end is near and Jesus is coming back!

CLARIFICATION

Last month I shared a powerful story of how God is moving in the Disciples of Mercy ministry in Kenya. One of the many things I have learned is that how we express ourselves in the United States is not always how people express themselves in other nations. So, to avoid any misunderstanding, I will clarify a few points from that story.

- I wrote, "Twenty-five years ago, a young lady, Jennie, and her two children were led of God to move to Kisumu. Arriving there, they found a very backward, third-world area bound by lack and hardship. Their living quarters consisted of a mud hut with virtually no furniture. What food they could get was cooked over an open fire..." Some might read that and think they lived in a mud hut for years. Their first building at the mission did, indeed, consist of a mud hut. But they were able to eventually move into town and live in a house, though it had no furniture. When they were finally able to move into the mission block, they still faced the challenge of cooking over an open fire.

- I mentioned that DOM owns 37 acres. However, the actual acreage as we would measure it in the U.S. is 10 acres. The mistake on my part came as a result of a misunderstanding of terminology and measurement conversion.
- I shared that DOM has a cafeteria. In some countries, the word "cafeteria" implies a store or what we in the U.S. would call a restaurant. The cafeteria at DOM is neither; it is a lunchroom where the children can sit and eat their meals.
- The actual number of *paid* staff is 110.
- Kajulu is the proper, official name for the area where DOM is located.

*****NEW CONFERENCE MP3 CD NOW AVAILABLE!*****

A couple of weeks ago, Gary Carpenter and I ministered in the Power and Truth Conference held at Freedom Family Church in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, where Alain Legault is the pastor. An MP3 CD of that conference is now available. All of the sermons and offering exhortations are included, along with two sermons I preached in St. Thomas, Ontario two days prior to the conference.

There is also one very special track of note on this MP3 CD. On Saturday night, the church's praise team began the service as usual. But part way into the praise and worship the Holy Spirit began moving in a most unique fashion, leading the worship on a distinctly different path that lasted nearly 18 minutes. About five minutes into this new direction of worship, I suddenly realized it was specifically connected to the sermon the Lord had instructed me to preach. The entire 18 minutes was recorded on an iPod as it was taking place and is included - uncut and unedited - on the MP3 and is the track you will hear just before the sermon.

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_____ Please send me the MP3 CD of the 2013 Power and Truth Conference.

_____ Please send me a CD of the sermon "Do You Really Trust God?"

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My love gift for this month is: \$ _____
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