

**HEARING GOD FOR
YOURSELF**

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Foreword

We live in man's busiest time since the world began. The demand on our time gets more pressing with each passing day, and there are a million decisions to be taken before night falls. Private and public life vie for attention. The worlds of family, career, church, interpersonal relations, politics, academics, travel opportunities, and a host of other choices force themselves upon us and bang upon our door by the hour. There is hardly any time to think.

Yet *not every option is equally good*. Some alternatives appear appealing to the child of God, but are actually the way of death, Prov. 14:12.

More than that, every believer is constantly bombarded by life's major decisions like, "Whom shall I marry?" "What work does God want me to do?" "Where shall I live?" Nor is that all. Minor decisions like, "What dress shall I wear today?" "Which kind of shoes shall I buy?" "Should I take this bus or hold out

for the next one?" compete for our attention.

Additionally, there are professional decisions. The pastor is confronted weekly by what sermon to preach; and the spouse is asking, "How do I save my marriage?" The university student wants to know which subjects to major in, and the salesgirl which client to tackle with her wares. The business person must give a decision on which company to merge with; the bank manager on whether to approve this particular loan.

To know what to do to please God most is always a burning issue for the child of God.

Every Christian worthy of the name therefore hungers and thirsts to hear from heaven. We desperately need God's wisdom and insight every second. But how can we contact God for ourselves? Must we rely only on the pastor and other 'spiritual' brethren, or is God always speaking to us individually as well? Are we sure we are taking the right decisions in life?

Despite these burning needs, however, today's Christian arena is cluttered with half-baked Christians: babes in Christ, carnal Christians, and nominal church-goers who are at various degrees of relating to their Lord and Master. Some have never even known that God speaks today! Others are aware, but have no

way of discerning it. A few more depend on others, false and genuine alike, to tell them what God's will is; and the rest just do what they like. Another set do not think they have enough time in today's busy world to wait till they hear from God before they move, and a final set simply lack the know-how to hear from heaven even though they desperately wish they could.

"My people perish for lack of knowledge," says the prophet Hosea (Hos. 4:7). Quack pastors, prophets, spiritualists, occultists, necromancers, diviners, stargazers, and New Agers take advantage of all the above categories of worshippers without apology.

This book provides an answer to the dilemmas: Does God want to speak to me? When does He speak? What guarantees do I have that I'll not be confused or even misled? How do I go about hearing God? Why should I hear God for myself, anyway? How can I be sure that I am right in what I have discerned?

These and other such questions are answered in a down-to-earth manner in this book. We wish you a wonderful journey in your quest to get closer to God, to seek to know Him better, and also to get to know His will in the things which concern you. May you be blessed.

Why We Wrote This Book

This book is the result of our journey together as husband and wife, as we have served the Lord in our various capacities after over forty years of ministry.

We wrote this book for the following reasons:

- To communicate our personal research and struggles, even with many mistakes and lessons;
- To share the results of our many counseling sessions for young and old Christians seeking God's will;
- The current Christian scene with believers crying after prophets who always speak only 'good' into their lives;
- The recurring difficulty of knowing which spirit is speaking and what value to place on our dreams, visions and revelations, etc;
- The African preoccupation with spiritism and the drift of the Western world back into the occult and Eastern religions;
- The sheer importance of seeking and hearing God personally.

We desire to demystify this phenomenon and make the skill available to every child of God.

What This Book Will Do For You

It will help you to appreciate the importance of the subject and gain an assurance of God's promises for guidance today.

This will come as we learn from the experiences of a host of Bible characters, build foundations for testing all the revelations you receive whether from yourself or from others, improve your ability to hear God and consult Him personally, and understand the current scene of Christian and non-Christian attempts to consult the supernatural.

May God reward your search to hear Him for yourself.

JFK & Georgina Mensah

Accra.

The Meaning of Hearing God for Yourself

What does it really mean to hear God? The terminology for God's communication with man can be so confusing that this chapter is devoted to clarifying the issues. But let us begin by asserting certain assumptions we have made.

Basic Assumptions of This Book

The first basic assumption in this book is that **God speaks**. He guides, warns, leads, and directs. The Bible does not waste time to prove either the existence of God or the ability of God to communicate; it is assumed. As to His existence, Ps. 14:1 says, "The fool says in his heart that there is no God." Heb. 11:6 contends that, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he who comes to God must believe that He

exists and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

Similarly, God’s communication with man is also assumed. Heb. 1:1,2 argues:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

When Jeremiah cries in Jer. 22:29, “O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the LORD!”, he is not primarily speaking to trees and stones, but to humankind. God made man in his own image and after His likeness, Gen. 1:26,27. Therefore if man is able to communicate with his environment, how much more should the Creator communicate regularly with His creation?

The second basic assumption in this book is that **you are a born-again child of God**. The Bible has numerous examples of God speaking directly and personally to people who were Gentiles and total unbelievers, like Hagar who was running away from Sarah; Abimelech, king of the Philistines; the Egyptian Pharaoh of Joseph’s time; a Midianite soldier in Gideon’s day; the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; Herod; Pilate’s wife; and a host of others.

Yet this book is not basically for such people. The understanding with which we have written is that our readers will be those who are children of God through believing on the name of Christ Jesus, Jn. 1:12. The target audience is individuals who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ and have repented of their sins and past evil life; those who recognize and believe in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for their sins and are prepared to change their lives under the grace of God. This book is for those who have experienced the genuine and lasting transformation into new creatures in union with Christ, 2 Cor. 5:17.

Our counsel to you is that if you are not sure that your sins are forgiven in Christ, that the Spirit of God witnesses to your spirit that you are a child of God, and that you certainly have eternal life, you should follow the steps outlined at the end of the book. The experiences of the new birth, water baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the transformation of character that accompanies salvation in Christ are taken for granted in the pages that follow.

The third basic assumption in this book is that **you have a sincere hunger and thirst to know God more and live to please Him day by day**. We believe you have picked this book out of a genuine drive to hear God for yourself as you draw closer to Him. If this

is not your case, you will not get much out of this material. 1 Cor. 2:12-16 says,

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

We can now define what we mean by "hearing God" in this book.

An Explanation of Terms

God communicates with his children. Many Christians from different church backgrounds use different phrases or words like "hearing God", "being led by the Spirit", "being ministered to by God", "God spoke to me", "divine guidance", "prompted by the Spirit", "a witness of the Spirit in my heart", "finding God's will for specific issues", or "the leadership of the Holy Spirit".

Don't be confused. These are all used by various Bible-believing Christians to convey God's communication with them at one time or the other. In this book, we will be using some of these terms interchangeably to refer to the experience.

Myths and False Notions About Receiving Messages from God

It must be understood from the start that not every claim that God is speaking is true. The following false notions about messages from God must be examined very carefully, and the correct attitudes are the cornerstone of all communication with God that we explain in this book.

Lie Number 1: God's word to us today is equally authoritative as the Bible.

This is false. It must be clear that when we say God is speaking to us personally and individually today, we cannot equate the divine authority of what we hear to biblical authority, 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

This is especially important when what we claim to have received from God conflicts with what the Scripture is clearly teaching. Jesus Christ is the highest revelation God can ever give to man, Jn. 1:18. The moral laws of our eternal and holy God can never be sacrificed on the altar of our subjective whims

and caprices. A command like 'Thou shall not steal' remains true for all generations, because our triune God does not change (Heb. 13:8; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 9:14).

Moreover, Scripture has been sealed with the authoritative stamp of God, the King of kings. Severe warnings are given to anyone or any spirit which would seek to add or subtract from the 66 books that we have received as Scripture (Gal. 1:8, 9; Rev. 22:18, 19). Thus, it is very dangerous to ever believe that any "revelation" is equally authoritative as the Bible. A young man once told me that he believed the sermons and writing of one pastor were the same as the Bible, and should even be included in the Bible. Another young man confided that for his daily quiet time, he sometimes leaves the Bible so that he can read "other spiritual books".

Did any man of God die for you? These are attitudes that lead straight to hell. No matter how doctrinally impeccable you believe a preacher or minister to be, his/her words can never be placed on the same level as the Bible. Therefore, inasmuch as we discuss hearing God for yourself, you must convince your soul that nothing you will ever hear, no encounter or revelation you will ever receive, is on the same level as the Bible. Scripture always comes first.

Lie Number 2: God does not speak outside the Bible.

On the other hand, we cannot insist that God only speaks through the Bible and no other way. This assertion leads to Christians who believe that the God we serve is restricted to the literal words He has written. They mock the prophetic ministry, and sniff whenever anyone says, "I heard the Lord say..."

But the living God of communication, whose Spirit lives in us and whose temples we are, continues to speak today long after the scriptures have been canonized. "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Heb. 3:7) presupposes that God is still speaking today. He speaks in a variety of different ways (Job 33:14), and we must be sensitive enough to hear Him.

Lie Number 3: God only speaks when He likes; nobody must attempt to initiate conversation.

The third fallacy is that God's sovereignty means that no one can ever start a discussion with God. Such Christians believe that He will only speak as and when He likes, no matter how much we pray or worry Him.

However, the New Testament points out in numerous places that God is our Father (1 Jn. 3:1;

Rom. 8:15-16, Gal. 4:5-7). Which father would refuse access, communication, and consultation from his heir who is genuinely seeking help?

Moreover, it is God who invites us to come to Him if we lack wisdom and help, Jas. 1:5; Heb. 4:16. He beckons that we should come and reason together with Him (Isa. 1:18). He gave a parable to show that if we are persistent enough, even a 'stubborn' God must respond to us and do what we have asked of Him (Lk. 11:5-8). If God were to only speak when He feels like it, then we could never be sure of what reception to expect when we approach His throne for help, and prayer would always be a gamble. Yet, we are presented with a blank check in this matter (Heb. 4:16; Matt. 7:7).

Therefore, although God is sovereign, He is our father. He responds when we call on Him (Ps. 34:4). Refusing to interact with Him unless He initiates the conversation is to miss out on all the opportunities for deep intimacy with Him.

Lie Number 4: God only speaks when we ask Him a question, then He stays put.

Some other believers don't have a problem that God will answer when we ask Him. But they believe that if we don't ask God a direct question, He will not speak to us. But we see in the Bible that God

spoke to Cain unsought. After Adam and Eve sinned, their brilliant idea was to run and hide from God, but God approached and asked where they were (Gen. 3:9). God spoke to warn King Abimelech about Sarah uninvited. God's revelation to Noah about the flood was of His own initiative. Many communications to people both in the Old and New Testaments were completely initiated by God, without the request of the people involved. Again, there are many occasions in which God speaks to warn us or reveal the tactics of our adversary to us even when we are completely unaware of what is happening.

Therefore, we know that God is not limited to only speak to us when we speak to Him. He is free to call out to us when we are not even aware or looking in His direction.

Lie Number 5: God speaks always, everywhere, to everybody.

Despite all that we have seen so far, it is false to think that God is just like a radio, speaking everywhere to everybody all the time. There are occasions when God makes Himself intentionally silent for a purpose. His sovereignty and free will allow Him to choose who to speak to, about what, and when. Saul found himself in distress when God refused to respond to him (1 Sam. 28:6).

Thus, God is not bound to answer every question we ask Him, or to speak whenever we “invoke” Him. Unlike many of those in the occult who can conjure spirits by chanting certain things or offering certain sacrifices, God is not chained to appear whenever human beings wave their hands. He chooses who to reveal Himself to, when, and how. He is not pricked when foolish (according to the Bible) people stand in the road on a sunny day and say, “God, if You really exist, strike me with lightning!”

What Divine Guidance and Hearing from God Is Not

It is important from the onset to know what divine guidance is certainly *not*, so that we can clearly define what it is.

The guidance of God’s Spirit must be separated from self-will, feelings, presumption, majority decision, mere factual considerations, “prosperity”, random sampling, casting lots, throwing the Bible, and spirit guides. Let us look in detail at these.

1. Self-will and what seems right in your own eyes

We must acknowledge that every human being has an independent, individual will. Even the smallest infant can show his/her displeasure in no uncertain terms. We are not robots, Rev. 3:20. This free will

makes man a free moral agent within the limits of God's boundaries. Jesus said in Jn. 6:38:

*For I have come down from heaven, not to do
My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

We often mistake our own stubborn wills for God's will. When we resolve strongly to do something, we reason that it must be God motivating us. "For God is in us to do and to will according to His own pleasure" (Phil. 2:13), we say. This often influences us when we are making decisions.

But we must understand that human will has been corrupted by the fall. Both Gen. 6:5,6 and Jer. 17:9 argue that man's heart is continually deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Many times, we are influenced by a bevy of tradition, personal ambitions, and the thinking patterns of the world around us. Jesus informs us in Lk. 16:15 that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.

The power of the human will cannot be underestimated. Is. 53:6 points out that "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have taken each one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Even where the desire to do God's will is present, we lack power to make it happen. Listen to Paul in Rom. 7:14-21:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

There is conclusive biblical evidence therefore, that the human will does not always will the will of God. Rom. 8:6,7 puts it rather bluntly,

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

We desperately need to be rescued from our own misguided will by God's better judgment.

2. Your Feelings & Emotions

Our feelings are even more unreliable than our will in determining God's will. Most times, our emotions are a biased response to a person or situation. Our

affections refuse to even reason through things before taking a stand on whether to like or hate a person or thing. Prejudice comes to the forefront. Past hurts and present circumstances are often the yardstick for our attitudes. Passion for a cause becomes the spectacles through which we weigh ideas, people, books, and even nations.

Look at Sarah and Abraham in their quest for a child. In Gen. 16, Sarah gives her maid Hagar to Abraham for a wife so she can have children by her. Was it God's will? Certainly not! For, just after the maid conceived, her behavior towards her mistress made Sarah to change her position. Listen to the Genesis 16:1-5 exchange:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace;

and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

Abraham's emotions did no better when Sarah asked him to drive away Ishmael and Hagar. He had listened to Sarah in going for Hagar. He had handed her over to Sarah for harsh treatment when she was pregnant; but now he was not going to listen to her. No way. But then God came in.

*Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed." **Genesis 21:10-13***

We make the greatest of mistakes when we think that our feelings reveal what God is feeling. Most times He is not part of those strong emotions, passions, and affections that stir themselves up in our chests.

Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his venison, but God said, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Mal.

1:3). We see even more evidence of this in the many divorces around. A woman or man you seem to love so deeply that you cannot live without soon becomes someone you hate so thoroughly you cannot live with for another day. What happened? Were those emotions you called 'love' in themselves, genuine? Were they from God? Was that an indication of guidance from God?

You know the answer.

3. Presumption

Presumption is the attitude or conduct based upon guesswork, expectation, and assumption without any clear proof. The presumptuous child of God works with probability, theory, and supposition, with no biblical basis. Even where the Bible is considered, it is used out of context. He clutches at a spider's web as if it were concrete and steel.

Some Christians hope to press God into a tight corner so that He would be forced to act against His will. They reason that since they are His children, God will be under pressure to defend His name.

But the scriptures point out that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be coerced, forced, or presumed upon. Here are a few instances from the scriptures to prove the point.

When Israel in the wilderness decided in unbelief to reject the Promised Land and return to Egypt, God swore that they would wander for forty years and die in the desert. Then they decided to change their minds and go to fight the Canaanites. Moses told them that God was not among them, but they were presumptuous and went. Listen to the outcome:

*Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!" And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah. **Numbers 14:39-45***

Another clear case of presumption in the Bible is in the time of Eli when Israel was being defeated in battle against the Philistines. Four thousand of their

soldiers had been killed. Without consulting the Lord, they went for the ark of God under the care of Eli's despicable sons, Hophni and Phinehas. When the ark arrived, Israel's shouts of joy shook the earth, because they were sure that they would now win the war. But instead of putting fear into their enemies, God rather encouraged the Philistine army to fight more valiantly. 30,000 Israelites were killed including Hophni and Phinehas, and the ark of God was taken captive.

Time will fail us to cite the instances of Uzzah and his presumptuous touching of the ark of God (2 Sam. 6:6-11), and King Uzziah who thought he could sacrifice in the temple (2 Chron. 26:16-21). Therefore, our own presumptions about God and what He will or will not do are not the same as hearing from God.

4. Mere Factual & Scientific Considerations

Well-researched facts and a proper assessment of a situation by human wisdom alone do not mean that the guidance of God has been sought. There are many instances when God leads us in directions different from our assessment or reasonable judgment. (This is not to say that factual and scientific considerations are things Christians should not take into account in making judgment or decisions).

Why would God ask Moses to take a venomous serpent by the tail? That would be suicide! How can

five loaves and two fishes be used to feed five thousand men, without counting women and children? Where is the sense in marching round the walls of Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day? When an iron axe head falls into a river, who would think of throwing a piece of wood onto the water where it has fallen in order to retrieve it? Can a battle against Amalekite soldiers be controlled by the raising of hands on a mountain?

These and many more instances from the scriptures demonstrate that hard facts and figures do not necessarily convey God's will in a situation.

The twelve spies who went to the Promised Land were all very realistic. What they saw and heard convinced them that they were not able to conquer Canaan. But Joshua and Caleb based their conviction on God's promises rather than what they were seeing, and won the day.

When Jesus entered the house of Jairus, the man's daughter had already died, and the crowd who were wailing knew the facts. But God led Jesus to go and raise the girl up from death. Similarly, it is obvious that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, the wisest thing to do was to go and heal him early before things got out of hand. Yet the guidance of God was that he should wait until Lazarus was dead and had been

buried four days.

These are just a few of the instances in the scriptures that prove that the leadership of God's Spirit is not always according to the facts and wisdom of man.

5. Popular Opinion, Mere Human Counsel, and Majority Votes

For us today, "the voice of the people is the voice of God," and what the majority decides carries the greatest sway. But the scriptures show that God does not necessarily guide us by the decision of the majority. A few pertinent examples in this regard would prove our point.

The majority decision to build the tower of Babel did not meet with God's favour. He quickly descended and confused their languages in order to put an end to their folly, Gen. 11:1-9.

The majority decision of Israel to ask for a king was not God's will for them at that time. He told Samuel that it meant they were rejecting Him as their king, but He granted their desire anyway (1 Sam. 8 & 12).

Lessons from Noah's flood and Sodom & Gomorrah tell us that the majority can be seriously misled. 1 Jn. 5:19-21 declare that the whole world is in the power of the devil. We are warned in Exod. 23:2 not to follow a multitude to do evil.

Seeking God's guidance therefore involves more than simply conducting a poll of what everybody is saying based on previous experience and best practices.

6. 'Spirit Guides', Guidance from Spirits or Angels, and the Occult

The spiritual world is real and is full of billions of spirit beings, some good, some bad. The fact that you are truly being guided by a 'spirit' does not mean that that spirit is God's Spirit. Listen to the Apostle John:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. **1 John 4:1-3***

Many who claim to be using God's Spirit to receive supernatural guidance may well be agents of Satan sent out to deceive the elect. Do not fall prey to them. Here are a few pertinent quotes from the scriptures showing that the devil would lose his diploma if he does not enter the guidance business:

*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' - which you have not known - 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. **Deut. 13:1-5***

The fact that the prediction or divination comes to pass is no guarantee that the messenger is of God. Paul warns us in 2 Cor. 11:13-15 --

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

The pathetic case of the man of God from Judah who was deceived by an old prophet should always be before our eyes. There are many going about claiming various things in the name of the Lord. They may well be lying, and we should not be so gullible that we are found fools.

He said to him, "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (He was lying to him.) So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water. 1 Kings 13:18, 19

The advice of Prov. 14:15 is well worth noting:

The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.

The word 'occult' is from the Latin *occulere*, meaning 'to be hidden'. Occult practices like magic, divination, spiritism, witchcraft, necromancy, charms, palmistry, astrology, etc. which claim to use secret knowledge (involving everything from throwing the Bible to consulting 'spiritists' and spirit guides, etc.) are not only misleading, but can lead into serious influences from demons and spiritual problems.

7. Success and Prosperity

Another deceptive index many use for God's guidance and approval is success and prosperity. We all work ourselves to believe that once we are growing, prospering, and seeing fruit and result, then God is happy with us. But if you remember the following parable from the Lord Jesus, you will do yourself a lot of service.

*And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." **Luke 12:15-21***

When God says He has no pleasure in the death of sinners, it means that the wicked need not die early before God shows His disapproval of their lifestyle. When the wicked prosper, it confuses the righteous,

but heaven is not confused (Ps. 73).

Many times we regard suffering as coming directly from the devil and we interpret problems, difficulties, and challenges to mean that God cannot be the one guiding us. That is certainly a wrong interpretation of God's leading. In Acts 16:6-10, we see a clear example of God's Spirit guiding Paul to Macedonia and Philippi, but the beating and imprisonment in that city was severe. Paul himself declares to the Ephesian elders on his way to Jerusalem:

*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. **Acts 20:22-24***

Let us not use achievement, victory, triumph, and success as evidence of God's guidance and leadership. Now that we have examined false indices of God's guidance, it is time to examine what divine guidance is.

The Meaning of Divine Guidance

Divine guidance is *any act or means or process of personally allowing God and His agents to direct, lead, steer, and pilot the course of your life by supervising events to His particular end.*

- When you allow God to **guide** you, it is because you believe that He has intimate knowledge of the way and its dangers and difficulties, Ps. 48:14;
- When you allow God to **lead** you, it is because you believe that He can keep ahead of you to show you the way and influence you to follow Him, Is. 55:8,9; Ps. 31:3;
- When you allow God to **steer** you, it is because you believe that He has a plan for your life and has the ability to keep you on course every moment and effectively maneuver until you achieve His best goal for your life, Eph. 2:10;
- When you allow God to **pilot** you, it is because you know that you are a stranger in this world and only God has the special skill to take you through life's difficulties, 1 Pet. 2:11;
- When you allow God to **supervise** you, it is because you believe that He is the best person to critically watch your activities and course of

life in order to direct you before you appear at His judgment, 1 Sam. 2:3; Ps. 32:8,9.

- When you fully allow God to **direct** you, it means you allow Him to show or point out the way for your life; to regulate your day-to-day activities and influence every choice you make. It means you allow Him to carry out the organizing, energizing, and supervising of your life. With your permission, He dominates and determines the whole course of your life. You obey Him at every step.

The Scriptures declare that God is not only the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler, and Judge of the Universe. He is actively involved in the personal lives of everyone on the earth. He communicates. Thus, the Bible tells us that God even spoke to unrighteous people like Adam and Eve after their fall, Cain before and after he murdered his brother, Balaam the soothsayer, etc. Cornelius the Roman Centurion had divine encounters before becoming born-again.

When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and personal savior, God's interest in our lives becomes even more pronounced. Eph. 2:10 states that:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Phil. 2:12,13 is even more emphatic:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. **Rom. 8:14-17***

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" **Heb. 13:5,6***

Several characters in the Bible illustrate the truth that since the beginning, God has been concerned with our lives, and desires to fellowship so intimately with us that He leads us in everything that we do.

For instance, God visited Adam and Eve in the

garden for fellowship. Since we are told that God brought every animal He created to Adam to name (Gen. 2:19, 20), you can imagine the drama and interaction as Adam named over 8,000 species of wild animals, birds, and reptiles. Man is God's deputy over His creation. We are co-workers with God, Gen. 1:26-28; 2 Cor. 6:2.

Again, God spoke to Cain unbidden when He realized that Cain was disappointed by the results of his sacrifice:

*So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." **Gen. 4:6,7***

Yet again, Enoch walked with God for 300 years before he was translated. He surely must have been having such pleasant conversation with God that God didn't want to interrupt the discussion with death. Enoch was carried away to His presence forever (Gen. 5:22-24).

Then again, God spoke to Noah and gave him specific directions of the exact measurements for the ark he was to build. Later, God declared that Abraham was His friend, and He spoke with him on numerous occasions. God spoke to Moses face-to-face as a man

speaks to His friend (Ex. 33:11). The dimensions of the ark of the covenant and the altars of sacrifice were handed over to Moses from heaven.

In the New Testament, Jesus declared to his disciples that He no longer called them servants but rather friends, because they were his friends in the highest sense of the word (Jn. 15:15). The Holy Spirit has come from God to live in us and be with us forever (Jn. 14:16,17); to teach us all things, help us in our prayer, and guide us into all truth. He has come to lead us and conform us to the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).

None of the roles above involving the Godhead can be played without active and intimate communication between God and man. Therefore, God desires to relate to us, talk with us, enjoy our company, rebuke us, and be part of our successes and victories, and pains, defeats, failures, and challenges.

When we talk about hearing and listening to God, we mean that God is always speaking into the life of the Christian to teach new truths and rebuke wrong attitudes and actions. He is out to correct erroneous notions and motives, train and improve our approaches and performance, and encourage us in our discouraging circumstances, defeats, and failures. The Almighty delights in exhorting us to persistence

and determination in worthy causes.

He warns us of subtle dangers and presumptuous tendencies, comforts us when we are hurt, and heals our broken hearts. God's Spirit wishes to convict us of sin, explain our frustrations, reveal the future, and give insights and illumination on spiritual truths. He challenges us to higher achievement, tests the quality of our work, and stretches us to our full potential, to become all that He created us to be and to do for His glory.

God has created us in His image, and in Christ we have all the faculties necessary to hear, understand, appreciate, and properly respond to divine communication. The choice is ours. Therefore, to listen to God is to be open to what God is saying to you so that you can respond to please Him.

APPENDIX

Steps to Salvation

The most important decision you can ever be confronted with in this life is the salvation of your soul. This urgent matter can be settled in a few minutes if you will read the following steps attentively and respond to God's call with all your heart.

Step One

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. In Jn. 3:16, the Bible states this fact.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 NKJV

Step Two

We are prevented from experiencing the fullness of God's love and plan because all of us are basically sinful by nature, by inheritance, by choice, by habit

and by practice.

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 3:22-23 NKJV

Step Three

The righteous and just God must punish sin. Therefore every sinner is cut off from fellowship and intimacy with God and under God's eternal punishment. This is what the Bible calls spiritual death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 6:23 NKJV

Step Four

The loving Father God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Jesus was born and tempted like us in every way, but he was without sin. On the cross, he paid the full price in our stead.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Rom 5:8***

Step Five

Now the choice is yours. You must recognize and

admit that you are a sinner. Then you must be sorry for your sins and be prepared to turn away from them. Next, you must personally accept and invite Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior.

*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **Rom 10:9-10***

If you are ready right now to turn over the lordship of your life to Jesus so that he will be your new managing director, you can simply pray this prayer sincerely from your heart.

Dear Lord Jesus, I realize I am a sinner and I have been running my own life. But thank you for coming to die for my sins on the cross. From today, I confess my sins to you and accept you as my Lord and personal Savior. Lord Jesus, come into my heart today. Wash my sins with your blood and make me a new person. Give me power over sin and Satan. Give me power to live a holy life for you alone. Thank you for hearing me in Jesus' name. Amen.

About The Authors

JFK MENSAH is an ordained pastor, head of church, missionary, Bible teacher and speaker, who has served both in Ghana and outside it. He is founder of Christlike Disciplemakers Movement, an interdenominational equipping ministry dedicated to Christlikeness, discipling and raising the 5-fold ministries in the Church to help complete the task of World Evangelism.

JFK is currently most passionate about his work with the Christlike Disciplemakers Movement, an interdenominational initiative for making Christlike disciples worldwide who use their calling and gifting for finishing the task of the Great Commission and preparing the body of Christ for His Second Coming in their various churches, fellowships and families. He is also the Rector of the Movement's accredited Bible College which offers Certificate and Diploma courses in Missions and Discipleship. More information about CDM can be found at www.cdmworld.org.

JFK Mensah and his wife, Georgina -- a 'professional pastor's wife' -- have been involved in a vibrant joint-ministry for over thirty-five years of married life. They are blessed with five children, three sons-in-law and five grandchildren.

Together with his family, JFK responded to God's call to serve in Mauritania as a missionary for four years, where disciples are still carrying on the work today to God's glory.

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