



## **How do I know what God wants me to do?**

This is a question I've fielded at least three times in the past month. In fact, it's one of questions that would show up near the top in the Frequently Asked Questions category. Chances are you've asked it yourself. It's actually a timely question, because the *50 Days Ablaze* study that we begin this month will help with the answer. But first some background information....

Quite often we find ourselves in situations where we have a choice to make (and doesn't it seem there are usually way too many options to choose from?). One thing I've learned is that the best choice is always the one God wants for you. If you choose something other than God's plan, you will always run into trouble. It makes sense: God is the only One with infinite wisdom. He's the only One who always knows how things will work best. In fact, He's the One who designed everything, so it just makes sense that "God's plan" is always going to be the best course of action. Anything else just isn't going to work best, because it wasn't designed to work that way.

In our society it seems we have been trained to believe that everything should be quick and easy - and that whatever is not "quick and easy" isn't worth our time or effort. Having this attitude means that when we come to realize we need God's guidance, we'd like Him to show us what to do... right now! So one thing we typically do is ask for a sign. This isn't bad in itself, but the problem comes when we then expect God to give a huge, unmistakable sign within, say, the next 5 minutes! Something like a finger writing a message on the wall (check out Daniel chapter 5) or a burning bush that talks (see Exodus 3). Unfortunately "quick and easy" does not normally equate with "best," so God rarely works that way. (And even when He does give us a "sign" it's usually not the one we are looking for, so we miss it anyway.)

In our Senior High Bible Study this week we talked about making decisions and the need to follow God's leading in those decisions. When I asked the question, "How do you know where God is leading?" someone said, "I suppose it's the classic 'Confirmation Class Answer' isn't it?" (That Classic Confirmation Class Answer is the answer that seems to work best for many questions they get asked in Confirmation: "Prayer, Bible Reading, and Worship.")

Praying, reading your Bible and worshiping regularly would indeed be the best answer to the question "How do I know what God wants for me?" It's not that there's something "magical" about praying or reading your Bible or coming to worship that automatically gives you insight. It's not like you can pray once, then go dust off your Bible, open it up and read the page that happens to come up and then head to church the next Sunday and all of a sudden know what God wants for you. That would be "quick and easy." But that kind of thing also treats God more like some kind of glorified vending machine - you punch the right buttons and He gives you what you are looking for. God doesn't work that way. He's not a Holy Vending Machine you only come to when you need something. He created us to have a close, daily, trusting Father-child relationship. Someone you spend time with all the time.

So what is it about praying, reading God's Word and making a priority of worship that enables you to better know God's will for your life? It's quite simple really: In each of those actions you are spending time with God. And there is just no "quick and easy" substitute for spending time with someone if you really want to get to know what they are like - and what they like.

The more time you spend with God, the more you will know Him. The more you know Him, the more you know what He wants... for you. Plus, the more you spend time talking with Him in prayer, listening to Him in His Word and receiving His gifts in worship, the more you will find that when God does give you a sign, you actually recognize it.

I've never met anyone who said they didn't think it was a good idea to get to know God better. I'm guessing if you've read this far, you probably think it would be good for you to get to know God better too. Here's where participating in *50 Days Ablaze* comes in. It's 50 days designed to help us make a concerted effort to get to know God better by spending time with Him in prayer and Bible reading/study and worship. An added bonus is that we will all be doing it together. Reading the same devotions, praying for the same things, studying the same passages, and having what we learn reinforced as we worship together. It's a great way to start the New Year. Read more about *50 Days Ablaze* in the introductory letter and sample devotion that follows. Then make your commitment to spend time getting to know God better these next 50 days.

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

p.s. The *Ablaze* part comes from Luke 24:32 where the two disciples from Emmaus commented after spending time walking and talking with Jesus the day He rose from the grave, "*Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?*"

**Send your questions to <mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net>**