

Volume 2, Day 1: Loving Into Greater Living

Trying to perform perfectly before God is a bit like learning to play the piano. If you're not going to play the piano until you can sit down and play Beethoven's Symphony to absolute perfection, you'll never play the piano. Same thing's true about learning to follow God. If you have to get it right, if every note has to be in tune, if you've got to play on the right tempo, on the right beat, you'll be exhausted. God doesn't invite us into a relationship by acting as in our performance of a role in a play.

God invites us into personal relationship because He wants us to know Him intimately. He realizes that for Him to connect with humanity will include both joy and misery, tranquility and struggle and many other opposite emotions. So start with something simple. What can you trust God with? Then listen for the smallest voices and gentlest emotional nudges He puts into your heart and soul.

Be aware of this. There are going to be things that make Him seem more gracious to you and make you more gracious to other people. I know that many claim that listening to God is only by reading God's Word. That cannot be so since over 99 percent of all human beings have never seen a single written word from scripture. So listen up. He's talking to you right now.

People are worried about God telling them to shoot their neighbor or cheat their business partner. If you hear that, it's not Him. God is love not hatred. God leads us into a gracious way of living with Him and with each other. It might be more about apologies to other people, not confrontations with them. It's inviting them into a greater life, not convincing them that they suck. And when you can learn to live in that space, you become more loving and engaging in the world of your influence.

Volume 2, Day 2: Giving Credit to Whom It Is Due

It's not about perfection. You've got to lose your need to be perfect. You must abandon the need to get everything right every day or otherwise you can't follow Him. Once you've done this, you are ready to go on a different journey or at least a better route to take you to your destination.

This new way requires that you be ready to listen carefully to His small voice. You must be ready to instantly follow Him when He gives you His guidance. You must pay attention to see what unfolds as the day goes on. If you can only trust Him to the degree that you are able to do everything right or perfectly, then basically you're still trusting in your own performance. And that will never be good enough.

So how do you know if you're listening to His voice and not your own? Well, I think it's this way. As you are listening to Him, is the Fruit of the Spirit becoming more evident to others in your life? Are you offering more grace, more tenderness and more humility? When I surrender the moment to the Holy Spirit within me, then and only then, is His Fruit seen. The Fruit of the Spirit is not my spirit's fruit.

Have you ever noticed that the way God speaks to us is **not** with blinding clarity? It is not so obvious that we should declare, "Thus says the Lord," or "God told me to." Many of the people I've met who use that kind of language about listening to God really are **not**. It might be better to say things like, "I have a sense that God might want this," or "I'm thinking God is leading me to do this." Some people are actually 'using God's name in vain' to add authority to their own opinions. Unless you are completely certain that it is His directive, don't claim that it is. However, it is better to be misunderstood and judged than to not give God specific credit when it belongs to Him.

Volume 2, Day 3: How to Become Confident in Him

Some Christians may never get to the point of such confidence in knowing God's voice as to proclaim that, "The Lord told me." But to be sure, you must start where you are and journey on from here. Consider each nudging in your spirit as God's Holy Spirit communicating to you with audible expression. This will take you into a different reality than you have formerly known of living and loving Him. This is by way of the route known as 'intimacy.'

Jesus said, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." That's how you know you're following Him. It's when you're more at rest in the Father's care and His affection for you. It increases your desire to share it with those around you.

No one will ever be particularly interested in sharing your anxiety, worry or fear. But many will want to experience the "peace that surpasses understanding," when it is observed in action. When you are overwhelmed by the stress of the trials in your life, you have no energy left to help bear another's problem. But when you are so trusting God that you let Jesus carry your load, you have freedom and desire to help others.

When Jesus told His disciples that they would be identified as His disciples by their unconditional love for them, He was speaking to the issue of trust. Your love for others will be unhindered by your own problems when and only when you have unloaded them onto Jesus' shoulders. This is when the love of God is fully alive in your heart. And God's love is the compelling force that draws all men to Himself. To fully love God is to fully trust God in all things.