

Discipleship: Knowing God's Voice Well: the Bible Part 1

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I. Introduction

How well do you know the Bible? Could you help someone overcome a serious problem if they came to you for help? If you've been going to church and studying the Bible for years, shouldn't you be able to help others overcome their problems? Do you know how to overcome yours, i.e., do you know how to meditate on and apply God's Word to your life? Has anyone shown you how to do this?

II. Discipleship: Knowing God's Voice Well: the Bible

Disciples of Jesus need to know the Bible well, we've been studying the key aspect of being a disciple of Jesus: hearing God's voice and obeying it (What did God say and what am I going to do about it?). If the Bible is God's voice (Deuteronomy 5:22; 15:5; 2 Timothy 3:16) and if hearing the Father's voice is the key to ALL of life's ups and downs, then Jesus' disciples need to know the Bible well. God speaks through various means, e.g., through dreams, others, events, circumstances, thoughts, your conscience, etc. However, the Bible is the arbiter of all other means, i.e., if what you hear by any other means contradicts what God said in His Word, then it's wrong. The Bible is the only infallible source for God's voice.

How well do you know the Bible? How long have you been studying the Bible, 1, 5, 10, 20, 30, 50 years...longer? And how well do you know God's Word? And I don't mean, "Can you get an 'A' on a Bible quiz?" or "Do you read it every night?" I'm not asking how often you read or study it, or even how much theology you've memorized. Here's the question: do you know where to turn in the Bible for God's advice on any given real-life problem? Then, do you know how that advice applies to your problem? And finally, do you know *how* to apply that advice to your problem? That is, have you meditated on God's Word and thereby discovered what it means and how it applies to your life? God wants us to truly **know** His Word because through His Word we will truly get to **know** Him, i.e., how He thinks and what He thinks about everything and thereby what His voice sounds like in the midst of our problems. You might say, "But aren't we supposed to study the Bible?" Yes, but not like a subject. He wants us to hear His voice not *study about* His voice. He wants us to see the Bible as a personal conversation with us, instead of a long, boring lecture *about* Him and a bunch of people whose names we can't pronounce.

Why we forget and don't truly know God's Word, if you've been seriously studying God's Word for 1, 5, 10 or more years and I asked you to help someone struggling with a serious problem, could you help them? Should you be able to help them? If you couldn't help them, why not? You might say, "Well, I don't study the Bible to teach it or to counsel others, that's your job not mine." Actually, it's everyone's job to know God's Word deeply enough to live it and to show others how to live it (Matthew 28:19-20). If someone studied Spanish for four years in college and got an "A" in the class, would you find it odd that two years later they couldn't speak Spanish? This is what happens to a lot of us: we study God's Word, but one month later, we don't recall what we studied, much less what it means and how it can help us or others. Why does this happen?

We don't meditate on God's Word and then live it, if we studied a professional sport for 6 months straight, five days a week, eight hours a day in a classroom, but never actually went outside to play the sport, how well would we do in that sport? And how much of what we studied would we remember? Would you remember what you studied the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, even the 6th month? Do you remember what I taught last week? Christianity is a full-contact sport. The Bible is about your life and how to live it; if all you ever do is study the book, but never actually apply what it says, you're going to forget what you studied, like those four years of Spanish. God's Word will only be useful if you digest it and apply it (Hebrews 5:11-14). If you don't, then it won't help you with your problems much less the problems of others. You won't know where to turn to help them with things like anxiety, depression, homosexuality, etc.

No one's shown you how to meditate on God's Word and then live it, another problem is that no one's shown you how to meditate on God's Word and live it. God calls all of us to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) starting with those of us who preach it. Thus, we're supposed to be discipling you not simply preaching sermons. A sermon is a lecture, which is not how you help someone overcome their problems. Jesus said that in order to help someone deal with life, you have to show them how to live His Word, not just teach them His Word.

Suicide and Eternal Salvation, after last Sunday's service, several people asked me if a Christian will go to hell for committing suicide or if a Christian will have to answer for this sin at Christ's judgment seat. Those who asked have been Christians for years, some decades. Yet, they couldn't answer this very basic question. And they weren't the only ones wondering about suicide and hell. Last Monday, Jarrid Wilson, associate pastor at megachurch Harvest Christian Fellowship (Greg Laurie's church) committed suicide, leaving behind a wife and two sons. He'd been struggling with depression and was open about it. What makes it more tragic is that he and his wife founded a mental health nonprofit called Anthem of Hope, designed to help people overcome things like depression, which can lead to suicide. An online USA TODAY article published September 14, 2019 mentioned how in the past some theologies have condemned people to hell for suicide. However, a gentleman in the article said, "with society's growing understanding of mental illness and the terrible places that people's minds can lead them, there is a growing pattern of theological reflection that says perhaps God can and will forgive what human beings will not understand."¹ Is there a doubt that God forgives suicide, that suicide CANNOT condemn you to hell?

Addressing Jarrid's suicide, pastor Greg Laurie argued that we won't be judged for the last thing we did before death, but the last thing Jesus did before His death. He said things like, "one dark moment in a Christian's life cannot undo what Christ did for us on the cross," and "We do not go to Heaven because of what we have done. We go to Heaven because of what He did."² Every Christian, even a day-old Christian should be able to answer the question, "Does a Christian go to hell for committing suicide?" In fact, the answer is contained in the very heart of the Gospel, not to mention countless other places where the Bible deals with sin, hell, heaven, salvation, etc. When studying God's Word, you have to meditate on what it means and how it applies to every-day, real-life problems like someone committing suicide. A textbook called the Bible won't help you, but a personal relationship with the Lord of the universe via His Word called the Bible will.

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/09/14/jarrid-wilsons-suicide-forces-churches-confront-mental-health/2313458001/>

² <https://www.christianpost.com/news/greg-laurie-on-jarrid-wilson-suicide-we-will-not-be-judged-for-last-moment-before-death.html>

A few places in Scripture that answer this question:

You cannot go to hell for ANY sin, as mentioned, a day-old Christian should be able to answer this question. Why? Because the Gospel means that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, period! This means several things: God is not a God of retribution, but love, NO sin can condemn you to hell, simple faith is the only condition to not winding up in hell, and simple faith is the only condition to acquiring everlasting life. All this and more is contained in one single verse: John 3:16 (not to mention countless others: John 1:12, 29; 3:15, 18, 36; 4:13; 5:24; 6:47). But in order to see all this and be comforted by it, you have to meditate on what God is personally saying to you in His Word about love, sin, death, hell, salvation, life, etc.

Eternal life is not temporary, God calls the life He gives you eternal. The millisecond you believe in His Son, He gives you everlasting life (John 6:47). This means that you won't ever face the second death, which is another name for the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). Why? Because you have **everlasting** life, so the second death can't EVER touch you.

Your eternal salvation is secure, the Lord promises not only eternal life but He guarantees it because once you believe in Him, you are in His and God the Father's hands and NO ONE is able to take you out of either! (John 10:28-30).

Sin is not the reason people go to hell, when you look at the Final Judgment reserved for everyone who rejected Jesus' offer of salvation, sin is not the reason why they go to hell. The ONLY reason anyone goes to hell is because they lack eternal life (Revelation 20:11-15).

NOTHING can separate you from God, God says that NOTHING can separate you from Him, NOTHING, not even you! (Romans 8:38-39).

Once God has declared you righteous by faith NO ONE can condemn you, the millisecond you believe in Jesus Christ, God gives you His righteousness (Romans 3:22) and you are declared righteous and NO ONE can condemn you after that, not even you!! (Romans 8:33-34—not only did Jesus die for you! After He saves you, He prays for you!)

Will a Christian have to answer for the sin of suicide at Christ's judgment seat? In short, NO! First, ALL sin has been paid for by Jesus Christ on the Cross, so you won't EVER have to answer for ANY sin! (John 1:2; 1 John 2:2). Second, at Christ's judgment seat, reserved for all who believed in Him and possess eternal salvation, your failures will go up in smoke but you won't. You'll be saved, *yet so as through fire* (1 Corinthians 3:15). In other words, you may suffer shame and terrible sorrow for failing to take advantage of the opportunity that your Master gave you to serve Him while He was away, as the Parable of the Talents shows: Matthew 25:14-30. But the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in that parable is a reference to deep mourning for failing to serve Him, not because you're in hell but because you'll suffer loss of rewards. A born again believer CANNOT go to hell, which brings us to the third point. Third, Christ's judgement seat is NOT about hell; it's about rewards and reigning with Him or not (1 Corinthians 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:12). Notice, if you "endure" i.e., faithfully serve Him while He's away, you'll reign with Him. If you fail to serve Him, then He'll deny you reigning. And if you fail so badly that you stop believing in Him altogether—perhaps you become a Hindu—He will NOT reject you because He CANNOT deny Himself! (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

III. Conclusion

This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.