

Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection

CHAPTER 7

"Seeking-Finding-Accepting God's Will Matures Us"

Because people will not seek and follow God's directions they often make a donkey of themselves much like Balaam in Number 22:21-31.

There is no need for any Child of God to be a "donkey." God is speaking all the time with many *voices* as I indicate in chapter 8 of my first book - Faith Alive in Heart, Home and Church where I note there are ten "voices" of God: *Nature, prayer, Bible, conscience, signs and wonders, events all about us, people, circumstances surrounding our lives, angels, dreams and Jesus.* Page 204 ff.

Not many really want to KNOW God's Will in specifics enough to seek HIS guidance by using a "**guidance covenant**". It is significant that people want to relate to earth by touching, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, but to experience God on this level is unthinkable. Most are like the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. At first the Mountain thundered and there was lighting, then God spoke directly to the people and they were frightened. So, they told Moses to go upon the Mountain and hear what God had to say and report back. Thus, I perceive a large percentage of "Church people" are like this today--- "**Preacher, you find out what God's will is, then tell us.**"

Unwillingness to *hear* the Lord when He "speaks" is perhaps the greatest hindrance in finding God's will. Man has had a severe hearing problem ever since Eden's gate was shut with Adam and Eve on the outside and God on the inside. It is a matter of some humor in Numbers 22:21-31 that a donkey could hear God speaking but Balaam was deaf and blind. It took a painful object lesson to convince Balaam to pay attention to the donkey.

Wouldn't it be nice like Jonah to have a compass-heading for God? To know at all times and in all circumstances where He can be found? But without a temple, or some sacred place or an exact location for His presence, how can one ever be certain that God is there or that he is listening?

This chapter will devote itself to assisting us in finding and following the Lord's Will through spiritual "show and tell" tools. Jesus called these "parables," heavenly truth demonstrated by an earthly meaning.

A simple formula for finding God's Will:

"Then he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'

"I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.'

"So I say to you: 'ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.'

'For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened'." Luke 11:5-12 (NIV)

There we have it--"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."--a simple Divine plan for seeking, finding and accepting God's Will for our lives. Luke 11:9

ASK

This word *ask* in the Greek language signifies *a simple use of the voice in making a petition*. (Luke 11:12) As we seek God's Will for ourselves the beginning point is yielding self to seek the leading of the Spirit-- Total openness to God's leading including prayer, perhaps fasting as Jesus said "When you fast..." Matthew 6:16.

A simple example of a "guidance-covenant" in today's world is Larry Wright's searching for a place to serve in his preaching ministry.

"I have been out of a regular pulpit since the end of April last year (1998). We had interviewed in at least 5 churches. We had to turn down two other churches who's compensation package was insufficient for us to survive on with a family of six. (One of them thought that they could get a preacher for \$1,000.00 a month plus Parsonage).

"During this whole process, we were basically considering one congregation at a time. As school started in September, we decided to "get by" however we could until spring. I sent out a bunch of resumes in January and had four churches call me the same week, three on the same night. In contrast to our first experiences last spring, summer and early fall when we were continually turned down, I now had four, (ultimately five churches when "Dearing, Kansas is included) that were expressing serious interest in me. Each of the congregations had good Christian people. My dilemma was, 'In the midst this whole process, **where does God want me to serve?'**

"This led me to a day of prayer and fasting on Friday. My prayer became specific. **"God, please show me where we are to serve. If it is Liberty, let them give me at least an 85% vote and preferably no negative votes at all. If it is not Liberty, make the vote decisively below that amount so I will know for sure.**

. I received word Sunday night that Liberty (Missouri) vote was **86.67% in favor and there wasn't any negative votes.** The other 13.33% were blank ballots or ones that had question marks indicating that they did not feel they knew me well enough to be voting. I took this to be a double verification from God. **85+% AND zero NO votes.** If I am asked to do the the Youth ministry at Liberty, the total compensation package will be close to \$38,000. Liberty,

Missouri does present some interesting challenges, as it is the only Independent Christian Church in a town of over 22,000 people and growing. Jeanette and I are both used to much smaller communities, so this will be a major change in our lives. The Church is only 25 to 30 years old and does still have a debt on their building. That also brings additional obstacles and challenges. I just hope that I am up to meeting all of these challenges. Only by God's strength.

"I request your prayers for strength as we enter into a challenging new ministry. ,..... Thanks again for all your wonderful prayers over many months.

In Christian Love,

Larry and Jeanette Wright "

Since the beginning of time God has chosen to give man guidance by communicating His Will through direct voice, answered prayer, signs, fleeces, wonders, etc. The earth itself is full of Divine directions (Romans 1:19, 20) and the heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1) Israel of old after the Exodus beginning with the crossing of the Red Sea was guided by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Exodus 13:21) Jesus was introduced on the night of His birth by a sign. (Luke 2:12) Jesus ministry is replete with signs and wonders (Acts 2:22) as was the beginning of the Church. (Acts 2:17-20)

**IN SEEKING TO DETERMINE GOD'S WILL BY
A GUIDANCE- COVENANT four things are
essential:**

1. Total openness to God's leading---a clean heart (Psalm 24:4,5) prayer, perhaps fasting.
2. Prayerfully select something that when it happens you will know the Lord is "speaking."
3. Prayerfully select something you cannot manipulate.
4. Prayerfully select something the devil cannot manipulate.

A prime example of asking God to reveal His will through a guidance covenant is that of our son, Galen. On a lovely Spring day of 1974, Galen and I were walking home after the Sunday morning assembly. I asked where he would be attending college in the Fall?

He said, "God and I have a *deal going*. I'm doing what you preached--Just "trusting in the Lord with all my heart, not leaning on my own understanding, acknowledging Him in all my ways and knowing he will direct my paths like Solomon said." (Proverbs 3:5,6)

My interest thermometer shot up high for this principle of faith-living was new to me and I did not know very much about applying this truth.

I inquired. "Galen, just how is God going to do this?"

He responded by saying, "My agreement with the Lord is that the first college coach that asks me to play basketball will be the school I am to attend."

My heart sank for I wanted my son to go to a Bible College for at least a couple of years. Galen had a lot of basketball and track trophies and medals at home and I felt sure some Juco Coach would be there first.

Coach Comeaux of Midwest Christian College (MCC) in Oklahoma City drove 300 miles up to Minneola. He found Galen out in a pasture loading limbs on a wagon. The Coach said to him, "Galen, come play basketball for me at MCC this Fall."

Instantly Galen recognized this invitation as being an answer from the Lord in directing his path. He responded "Yes sir Coach, I'll be here this Fall! You can count on me.' So, he followed the Lord's leading and God also supplied the needed funds, and a wife for life.

The Bible is replete with examples of people covenanting with God for guidance and "His willing answers:".*

- * Genesis 24:1-27 - Procured a wife for Isaac
- * Genesis 28:20-22 - Ladder to heaven .. Jacob's vow/fleece to God
- * Genesis 30:32-43 - Jacobs' ringed and spotted goats.
- * Exodus 33:13-23 - Special guidance for Moses
- * Leviticus 9:6-24 - Guidance for the People.
- * Numbers 17:1-8 - Guidance using 12 rods--one budded.
- * Judges 6:15-22 - Numbers 17:1-8 -meat/broth/bread/fire commanded of God.
- * Judges 6:36-40 - The word *fleece* is taken from Gideon's experience in which God provides directions by a piece of sheep wool--first wet, then dry when all else around was conversely dry then wet. (Judges 6,7)
- * Judges 13:1-20 - Instructions on child rearing..fleece-Let the angel come back again, vs. 8.
- * I Samuel 6:1-3 - Send gift with ark to know IF God sent the plagues.
- * I Samuel 6:7-9 - If new cows pulling the ark crosses border they would know God sent the plague.
- * I Samuel 12:16-18 - Samuel prays a fleece covenant. Answer is in a storm.
- * I Samuel 14:8-15 - Jonathan determines if God will bless them in battle.

* I Samuel 14:36-45 - Lots cast to determine if Jonathan was guilty.

Guidance covenants can be simple or complex according to the person seeking God's Will. All covenants involve the following four items.

1. Believe God can direct people in living and serving!
2. Believe that God answers prayer!
3. Know God answer prayers in specifics!
4. Be assured God can/does perform miracles!

Jesus said God keeps a running census on the sparrows and has the hairs on our head numbered, so He can work through little or big matters. (Matthew 10:29,30) Remember, He made the earth and its contents out of the unseen atoms. (Hebrews 11:3)

When the Lord was ready to call us into our present Faith Alive Days ministry of revival and renewal it started with my engaging in a three day fast. My simple petition was "*Lord, show me what your will is for future days in my serving you.*" The answer came quickly in a simple voice. As I rode my bicycle praising and praying He said to my spirit--"*Preacher, I am calling you to a larger ministry. Minneola will continue to be your home base for now. Wait for My instructions.*" I did not have long to wait as that very week a letter from Bob Osburn, minister at Syracuse, Kansas arrived asking me to come and share a week long preaching and teaching Revival with the Brethren. I wrote right back saying there were many Evangelists in the Brotherhood and named a few who would do them a good job. Bob called me on the telephone saying it was not *other Evangelists* who the Elders wanted to come and preach, but me. So, about as reluctant as Jonah in the Bible (although Bless the Lord He spared me from being swallowed by a whale) I agreed to go. The Lord

blessed that first Faith Alive Revival in glorious ways and made this crooked stick guy from the Kansas prairie stand in amazement!

SEEK

"Seek" in the Greek signifies to discover how to find or do something. In this chapter, I am using the word "fleece" from the Biblical record of Gideon in Judges 6:36-40. I define it as-- A thing, or event provided or acted upon by God so as to provide Divine directions for our lives; also referenced as a guidance covenant.

I grew up attending a country church, "Union Chapel", located southwest of Medicine Lodge, Kansas. The congregation was a group of down to earth people who tilled the soil and believed the Bible. If the Word said it, then that settled it, and we tried to live by it. As a teenager I entered Midwest Christian College in Oklahoma City and my professors were of the same vintage. Professor C.V. Dunn taught me Old Testament Survey reminding us that the Bible stories were examples for us to follow just as Paul said in I Corinthians 10:1-6.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples,...."

Gideon's covenant-fleece (Numbers 22) was one more example to

be followed. We sought God's guidance concerning leaving a seven year ministry in Indiana and entering into a new labor at Minneola, Kansas.

My covenant for determining God's Will was:

"Lord, if You will us to move from Indiana to Minneola, Kansas then cause the congregational vote to be 100%." My housing Host for that mini Revival at Minneola was Roy and Blanche Barnes. Saturday night Roy told me the Board had voted to recommend to the congregation and inquired what percentage of a vote I would expect. When I told him that if the Lord wanted me there the vote would have to be 100%, he was disheartened saying that the congregation had never voted 100% on anything. When the vote was tallied on Sunday morning it was 100% yes! So, the Lord 'spoke'. We moved, and enjoyed a long fruitful ministry.

Not all are willing to seek and follow the Lord thus, "Fleeces are not logical" asserted, a Sunday School teacher at Random Road Chapel of Arkansas City, Kansas; "therefore, anyone who practices the same is suspect." That was supposed to settle the matter; however, it only served to stir my mind and spirit on two counts:

1. "logic" is a limited system of evaluation, and 2. "fleeces" are valid throughout the Bible.

But, let it be noted that logic is a limited system of evaluation.

God did not invent logic. It is a manmade system of reasoning and one of the many "children" of humanism, upon which many Bible professors, preachers, teachers and church members rely heavily. A history of "logic" reveals that "LOGIC is a field of study that deals chiefly with "arguments" for the evaluation of truth.

What difference does it make? Much! The Virgin Birth is not

logical! The atoning death of Jesus is not logical! Christ's resurrection is not logical! In fact, none of the Bible miracles is logical. Example: Turning water to wine or walking on water, healing the blind, etc. are not logical. It is wrong to subject the Bible, which is Truth inspired- revealed by God to any man made test including logic.

" Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a fool so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness'; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." I Cor. 3:18-20>Psalm 94:11

That which discourages people from the blessing of Divine direction is leaning on their own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5), and the weakness of their faith. But it is a reasonable demand that God makes in replete places throughout the Bible-- "Prove me now." Malachi 3:10 "Come and see," is an invitation that is offered often in the Gospels. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Jesus said, "Seek, and you shall find," Luke 11:9

We must first do the work of trusting Him which is our part, and then wait upon Him for the reward.

Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method when he said, "Make me a little cake first, and then prove me whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son." 1 Kings 17:13

Seeking God's Will with a guidance covenant is really quite common. I heard **Dr. Robert Schuller, Sr.** of California tell how he used a guidance fleece in the early days of his ministry when the

Crystal Cathedral church was being established. The Lord answers loud and clear. **The late Don DeWelt** of Ozark Bible College, Joplin, Missouri revealed to me that his wife **Elsie** "fleeced" every prospective employee of their College Press Publishing company and their rate of hiring excellent employees was 100%. I heard Bro. Gene Appel speak at the Ozark Bible College Convention. He revealed the valid use of a fleece-guidance covenant in determining the Lord's Will whether to change his ministry from Las Vegas to the Willow Creek Church near Chicago.

KNOCK

The word in the Greek language means to *knock and keep on knocking until the door opens*. (Luke 11:9) Williams New Testament and the Amplified translates the correct verbal tense of this verse--...*keep on asking...keep on seeking...keep on knocking*.

"The oil that is multiplied shall not be stayed as long as there are vessels to receive it," 2 Kings 4:6 NIV. God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith and narrowness of our desires, we have not room to receive them.

Seeking God's directions with a guidance-covenant is a matter of faith and it only takes a "mustard seed" amount of faith to contact Him. (Luke 17:6)

At the end of our ministry at Minneola, Kansas--some thirty years ago-- we entered into our present ministry --"Faith Alive Day"-- seeking to be used of God to bring revival and renewal to churches and Christians everywhere. We started by using a **guidance fleece** to confirm the Lord's leading-- *Lord if you are calling us into this Faith Alive Days ministry, than let there be another invitation for a revival*

during the week of the meeting at Syracuse."

The Lord answered loud and clear. On Thursday of that week a long distance phone call from Havensville, Kansas via Howard and Kay Messer invited me to do a Faith Alive Revival and teaching seminar there the following month. I did and while at Havensville Christian Church two more invitations came from Soldier, and Rossville, Kansas. So, this ministry began and continues under God's Divine guidance.

Seeking and following the Will of God is a daily affair. Les Dubois shares an exciting testimony of how he sought God's Will and the Lord provided him a wife.

"Brother Wilbur:

"A problem arises in my writing about God leading me to my wife, and that is that God worked so many miracles to get Rosana back to Taiwan that I'm concerned to mention them all will cause this sequel to grow into a "chapter" size document. But I'll try to keep it concise at any rate.

"Your books have been encouraging to me as I seek to place my life wholly into God's hands, it has been difficult for lack of support and a lack of 'role models.'

What I mean by this is that it seems that a great number of people seem to place a lot of stock in the old adage 'God helps those who help themselves.' Now I can allow some truth to this, but only to a certain degree. Faith WITHOUT works IS DEAD. 'Helping ourselves' is limited to accepting what God provides us with, to initiating the request (prayer) concerning what we desire of God, to trust Him to accomplish His Word and to fulfill His promises, and to

make good use of those things which He has entrusted us with.

"Now the lack of 'role models' is not entirely what I meant--obviously the world is full of people who trust God and who lay their lives before him--I guess I should rather say that there is a significant shortage of 'role mentors,' for lack of a better word; someone real, tangible (and of course in close daily proximity), and experienced, able and willing to coach me in the ways of 'stubborn and unconditional faith.'

"Lack of support is also keenly felt. In many churches I have heard person after person state their faith in God, but easily become disappointed when it's not played out in their lives. Instead of praying for the provision of a car, they pray God will bless their decision to take out a loan and buy a new car. Same for a house. Instead of asking God for wisdom to raise and instruct their children in the Lord, they ask God to keep them from getting sick as they work two or three jobs to pay for a private education. Instead of accepting the promise of "nothing happens apart from the will of the Father", they worry over which life, health, or auto insurance policy will give them the most coverage for the smallest deductible. Now, of course, none of these things in and of themselves are intrinsically 'bad'--rather it is our reliance upon them instead of God that makes them 'bad.' One of the worst (and most frustrating) assumptions that I have encountered deals somewhat with my 'fleece letter' that I am 'adding' to: the ideas of courtship and marriage. Far too often I have heard 'well-intentioned' friends introduce me to their 'female friends' and ask me 'What do you think of her?' (obviously this was before I was married). 'As long as both

of you are Christians, you shouldn't have any problems' is (was) the typical response to my preference to wait on God. Now that I have written this, I feel that my 'lack of support' statement was also a little off. There are a handful of people who support and encourage me to wholeheartedly seek God's face, so the support is not lacking at all. I guess that what I really mean here is a 'lack of understanding' by the general (Christian) populace at large. When I try to explain the great things God has been doing in my life, I get blank stares or confused looks--as if they don't really comprehend the immensity or the reality of what is happening. And the most frustrating of all is when I try to encourage someone else to 'put out a fleece,' they say that they understand that, they believe that, and that that is the way Christians should live--but that it doesn't really apply to 'their current situation.'

"Waiting those few short weeks for my parents (Richard and Karen DuBois of Minneola, Kansas) to receive my letter were the longest weeks of my life. The long and the short of it is that they had already been expecting this sort of thing, and had no qualms, no questions, and no apprehensions. Out of my entire family, I--the future groom--was the most surprised of all!

"Rosana had wanted to wait for my parents' response before she talked to her parents about it. They, too were encouraging and accepting of the situation. Truly it was God's hand--never before had I heard of two people 'spontaneously' deciding to get married and then having BOTH sets of parents not only being accepting of the situation but also commending them for their willingness to wait on God! Praise the Lord!

"God had carried us over hurdle number one--yet many still remained before we could reach the finish line.

"It was mid-April. Rosana's contract with her company was expiring and she would be returning to the Philippines. We set our wedding date for September 16th. the Mid-Autumn Festival.

"It's no an easy thing for Filipinos to pick up a visa to come to Taiwan on their own recognizance, so we knew that we would need to have a civil wedding in the Philippines so that that we would be legally married before applying for her visa to return to Taiwan.

"I made my first trip to the Philippines in June of '97 to get the ball rolling on our wedding, and to spend the weekend with Rosana's parents. Philippine law requires the couple to 'apply' for a marriage license (a 10-day process) before the "marriage certificate" can be issued. However,

I had a pleasant surprise; her father had spoken to the mayor (who can perform weddings) and had planned for us to be wed on the following morning! Then the ten-day license application could then be processed while I was back in Taiwan.

(This whole thing was not a simple procedure and I didn't need to take three months off of work just to wait on paperwork to be processed.)

"In July, I had a two week vacation, and once again I headed south. The license was finished, and after attending a mandatory "marriage seminar" we could pick up our marriage certificate. We then went to the Taiwan embassy and they declined our application, saying we lacked certain papers. So we spent the rest of the two weeks on a paper chase, getting these documents, notarizing those, applying

for a legal name change in her passport, etc., etc. Finally the two weeks was up and I needed to return to Taiwan--only one paper was lacking and the documents for her application would be complete. We both prayed that she would be able to follow me within the next week.

"The big day came; she took all the documents to the embassy and tendered her application. Two days later, she went to pick up her visa and passport, only to find that her application had not been approved. She managed to get an interview with the Deputy Secretary, who glanced at her application briefly, tossed it back down, and answered "No. It is impossible for you to even think about going back to Taiwan. I can not and will not approve it." Why? All the documents were in order, all the legalities and requirements were taken care of. My residence in Taiwan was there, our marriage certificate was there, everything was there. Nothing had been overlooked.

Why was she still not approved? Taiwanese law allows Filipinos to come ONE time to Taiwan to work for a period of between one and three years. Once they finish their contract, they are not allowed to legally enter Taiwan again UNLESS they are married to a Taiwanese National ("resident aliens" not included). This "resistance" is due to the fact that many residents of "certain" countries try to get a temporary visitor's visa to travel to Taiwan, then "break their visa" and attempt to work illegally. They assumed this was just another ploy to sneak back into the country. The case was closed; there was now not a single thing that any man could do that would permit Rosana to return to Taiwan.

"Rosana was now greatly discouraged, but we knew that God's will would be made clear. So we prayed: '**Lord, you**

are the maker of heaven and earth; the one who build governments and knocks them down. Without you no one can stand, and with you no one can fail. If it is your will for us to stay in Taiwan for a while longer, then you and you alone will issue Rosana's visa. And if the visa cannot be issued, then we will know that it is your will for us to return to the States instead.'

"But we truly felt that despite all the obstacles that we encountered, God still wanted us to remain in Taiwan, at least for a while. My parents had already purchased their tickets (God provided them with a **very** good deal), and had already provided us with a place to hold the wedding and the wedding banquet. Upon my return to Taiwan, I continued in faith and ordered the wedding invitations and spoke with the "caterer" concerning what dishes we wanted and how many tables we were expecting.

(Banquets in China are calculated on a "per table" basis as opposed to "per person").

"Ted Skiles, one of our friends and a long-time missionary (30 years) here in Taiwan, offered to see what might be done. After several (very) long distance calls and a lot of bureaucratic run-around, God put him in contact with an officer in the embassy who was willing to take responsibility for us, if I could prove that my salary at the school was enough for the two of us to live on. The visa that he would issue would only be a visitor's visa, (as the resident visa could not be issued for the aforementioned reasons) but that it could easily be changed in Taiwan.

"So I went to the Philippines again, and met with the officer, who told us very quietly, that he was doing this thing, that he was sticking his neck out, only because the

man who recommended us had 'done so much for Taiwan.' Commendable logic, but we knew the real reason the visa had been approved! Praise the Lord!

The officer told Rosana to come pick up her passport and visa that afternoon, and then she would be free to go back to Taiwan. He also cautioned us that her resident visa must be applied for and approved within the two weeks limit of the visa or else she would risk over staying her visa and possible deportation. Furthermore, he instructed us, to complete the application in Taipei, we would need our Philippine marriage certificate authenticated by their embassy there in Manila, and that in order for them to do this, it must first be certified as being a "true and valid marriage contract" by the Department of Foreign Affairs there in Manila. We purchased a ticket for her to come to Taiwan and then I went back, as the certification and authentication would take a little while. Also, as she would be immigrating, she was required to apply for an immigration permit. Another minor matter, but one that was necessary for leaving the country.

At last, after almost five months of paperwork, praying, traveling back and forth, and standing in countless lines, Rosana entered Taiwan for the second time. This was on september 4th, and we were to be married "in the church" less than two weeks later!

And the Lord continued to blessed us--all that traveling and time off of work had used up most of the money that I had (with my human reasoning) set aside for our wedding and honeymoon--and God himself made us a present of a beautiful day (a semi-outdoor wedding) and provided enough money (called "wedding gifts" by some) to pay for the wedding, the banquet and most of the honeymoon! And

the blessings didn't stop there! Earlier I casually mentioned the "finish line"--actually the term "mile marker" would be more apt, as our lives didn't stop there. **God's work continues ever more abundantly in our lives as we strive to follow Him. Praise God for His faithfulness and for His concern for His children!**

Additionally, God has recently blessed us during the time of our son's birth a little over a week ago. Occasionally (during our engagement period) someone would ask us what we thought about "Family Planning" and were rather unenthusiastic about our response: 'If God wants us to have children, He will provide them AND the means to care for them; and if it isn't God's will to have them, then we'll be pleased with that, too. We're not going to tempt God, but we're not going to limit Him, either.' For the most part, the breath needed to say all that was wasted as it went over most heads, as evidenced by their replies: 'but what of the need to utilize birth control?' They couldn't comprehend that we relied on the most effective form of birth control in the universe. If we rely only upon our human reasoning, then it is possible that even abstention can be ineffective against the will of God (Isaiah 7:14).

When we discovered that Rosana was pregnant, we were eager to see what good the Lord would bring into our lives (mostly in terms of the child of course). We were concerned about the financial necessities surrounding pregnancy and delivery, as Rosana did not have health insurance (she was neither 'sponsored' by a local business, nor did we wish to pay astronomical amounts to get it ourselves when we knew that God would provide. Bev Skiles introduced us to a woman gynecologist and obstetrician whose clinic was

located only about two blocks from our home. She had truly been placed there by God. A nearby location, a woman doctor (a RARE specimen in Taiwan) which made Rosana more comfortable, she spoke good English (another rarity) so that we could both easily understand everything, she translated the LaMaze classes into English for our benefit, and allowed me (the husband) into the delivery room during the birth (an unheard-of concept here in Taiwan), extra copies of the birth certificate, etc., etc., etc. When I finally worked up the courage to ask her what we could expect to pay for the delivery of the baby, Rosana's three day stay in the clinic, and all the surrounding "hospital expenses", she replied that because of Bev's introduction, she would give us a discount and charge us only NT\$15000 (about US\$430). As everyone has been made painfully aware, the economy in Asia has been tumbling, and our budget has been tight and trusting. However, we were able to save twelve thousand NT before the baby was born. But God took care of us again--he provided us not only with enough money to pay for the doctor, but gave us an extra three thousand NT (US\$120) that we expected to pay for the baby's circumcision.

Apparently there is only one doctor in our city (pop. 100,000 plus) who has the equipment necessary to perform that operation. Another acquaintance of Ted and Bev Skiles (and also a doctor) offered to borrow the equipment and to perform the procedure. On the day that we went to see him, he asked us if we would trust him. This seemed a strange way to open a conversation, but we agreed and he continued: 'my hospital does not have this equipment, and therefore has no way to bill for this procedure. If you registered with the hospital, it would be unfair for them to bill you, as you

would be paying them for something they cannot do. Therefore, if you TRUST me, I will volunteer to do it free of charge.' Of course we answered that "we trust God, and we trust that God will guide your hand--and there is no danger in doing that which God commands."

Sometimes it IS hard to rely on God, but the fascinating thing is that the more I rely upon God, the more difficult it becomes to again rely upon human understanding. In college, my faith was in human understanding, and I am still paying the price for that reasoning (student loans), but God in His mercy allows that thorn of my foolishness to remain in my side, while at the same time, He generously provides for us out of his boundless riches.

Praise the Lord! May our Father continue to bless your life and ministry,

In X, Les, Rosana and = AERYN Mikaiiah

Guidance Covenants must be in accordance with God's Will

(Romans 8:26-28)

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

This promise of Romans 8:28 is beautiful, yet complex. I suggest the latter because of what Paul wrote about the promise in Romans 8:26,27.

1. At our best praying we do NOT really know what to pray for (8:28a)
2. Our simple or complex desires are translated by the Holy Spirit into groanings. (8:28b)
3. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts (to determine genuine motives), then makes intercession for us according to the will of God. 8:28c)

I suggest this is **WHY** Paul writes in I Thessalonians 5:18, "*in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for YOU.*" The Will of God is often best determined for us when we *accept our status quo* with praise. It takes genuine heart motives to praise God for our present tense situation.

As I write this chapter just last night sleep eluded me. I tried all the usual remedies--pray, recite Scripture, warm milk, heating pad; yet at 4:30 A.M. still no sleep. At that point the Spirit in my spirit prompted me to practice

I Thessalonians 5:18. So, simply I began to thank God that I could not sleep. that I was weary with tossing and turning, etc. and, in a matter of moments I was asleep. "*Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*" Psalm 37:4,5

Determining the Lord's leading/will from a Covenant ('fleece').

The greatest challenge is selecting an item for a "fleece-covenant" which God can and will speak through. Clearly once we have

established the premise we must wait upon the Lord to answer.

1. DON'T PANIC-- God is never late; but, He doesn't always answer in 24 hours. We have experienced a number of crises in our Faith Alive Ministry-- including shortness of funds and lack of immediate revival appointment. Examples include the Social Security audit in the late seventies and the need for a travel trailer. We learned not to panic, and in due time(a few months) the Lord provided \$5,000., and a travel trailer which met our needs.

2. DON'T READ A COVENANT (FLEECE) TOO QUICKLY.

I still remember the Fall of 1981 when on September 1st. we had only one Revival scheduled for the Fall. We prayed and reminded the Lord of our "Pillar of Fire and Cloud" covenant to indicate His leading for the ongoing of this Ministry.

On September 2nd. a phone call from Russ Johnson of Monahans, Texas scheduled a whole month of interim ministry plus two more meetings and the Fall was full.

In addition our automobile insurance company computer fluke causing the State of Kansas to believe that we were in default on our liability policy. The State informed us that since we had violated the Law our vehicle tags would be picked up by the Highway Patrol on or before December 31st. God didn't solve that dilemma in 30 minutes or days. We prayed fervently standing on our "Pillar of Fire and Cloud Covenant". God's promise that we *stood firmly on* was 2 Chronicles 20:15b--"*Thus says the LORD ...: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed.... for the battle is not yours, but God's.'*"

The lord took 90 days and it was within 24 hours of our tags being taken away when the miracle solution came--the State of Kansas changed their minds. . The crises passed and we praised the Lord and continued to drive our vehicles to and from revivals.

Learning and following God's will is a everyday necessity. When many people began to say to me some 16 years ago--"*You must write these Faith Alive events which illustrate Bible truths in a book.*" At first I objected, but the admonitions from many Brethren continued to "knock on my door." If such a venture was to be considered, I must be sure of the Lord's Will.

On this occasion I was prompted to use an incident out of Elisha's ministry as recorded in 2 Kings 6:4-6. A borrowed ax was being used to cut down a tree and the ax head fell into the Jordan River. The man using the ax was anxious and approached Elisha showing him the place where it fell. God worked through Elisha causing the ax head to *swim*. So, seeking God's will about writing a book I needed a green light for "Go," for I had no professional training in book writing and would have to lean heavy on the Holy Spirit for directions. Thus, I established a prayer covenant titled "Will the Ax Head Float?"-- "*Lord, show me Your will concerning the possibility of writing a book to Your glory and Your willingness to supply our needs. Please supply \$1,500. over and above our usual expense during June, July and August.*" Keep in mind that summer months are usually low income months. The covenant was established and I knew it would take a *little miracle* for this to happen. At the end of that three month period we rejoiced in God and I wrote to the Brethren these words---**GOD HAS SPOKEN! Covenant was for \$1,500. Received total \$2,005. I will begin writing!**

So the writing of Book one *Faith Alive in Heart, Home and*

Church" was begun, and the near 300 pages written and published in two years time.

3. ACCEPT WHAT THE LORD REVEALS

Certainly not easy when the path before us is unknown and may be filled with pain. But, Jesus left us an example in seeking and following God's Will.

"..... Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 2:42

Tom Milbern. pulpit Minister of the Boise City, Oklahoma Christian Church gave me permission to use his testimony as an example:

"Well, you have more bleeding in your eyes.' Clinical words spoken unemotionally by a white-coated doctor. For me or you, scary words, hard words. Words that carry a load of doubt, anguish and dread. Words that make you stop and think.

"It's not that you're going to go blind or anything like that, this will clear up in two or three months said the doctor later. Comforting words. Hopeful words.

"But, how can it be? This is my body. I want to be cured! I have work to do, a life to live. Too many people have prayed for else. I can't be sick. God needs me well. I know, it's not life threatening, but it's still frightening and debilitating

"Does that mean I'll face this monster again? And again?

Will my thorn in the flesh be removed? Or not?

"God can still pull thorns--I believe that with all my heart! Some people do regain their health. We common-folks say they're cured. Praise God that more and more people return to health, to a normal life. Their disease is stamped out. So I'm asking God to remove my thorn!

"Sometimes the thorn stays. I know that too. The wisest thinkers cannot answer why. Does God want us to be sick? Is He trying to teach us some lesson? There is no answer. Maybe there is no reasons, only that we live in a dying world. None of us get out of it alive. How do you cope if the thorn stays?

"I also pray for God's sufficient graces, sufficient to deal with festered thorns. Grace to be calm when panic stalks my mind. Grace to do today's work Grace to face another treatment. Grace to take all offered hands or hugs. Grace to answer the thousandth question from another caring soul. Grace to laugh and love. Grace to clutch God as He clutches me. So far, I can report that God's grace is more than enough whatever twists may be in the road ahead, I believe that He will see me through. I'm counting on that, with or without thorns."

Following is the Lord's beautiful counsel to finding God's Will.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

When you will call upon me and come and pray to me, then I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma

Chapter 7 - "AN EXERCISE IN MATURITY: SEEKING GOD'S WILL"

- 1. Why do people often make a donkey of themselves, much like Balaam in Numbers 22:21-31?**

- 2. What is a simple Divine plan for seeking, finding and accepting God's Will for our lives?**

- 3. What did Larry Wright do when seeking where God wanted him to serve?**

- 4. What are four essential things in seeking to determine God's will by a guidance/covenant?**
 - 1.**
 - 2.**
 - 3.**
 - 4.**

- 5. In Matthew 10:29, 30, what does Jesus say God keeps a running census on?**
 - 1.**
 - 2.**

- 6. Judges 6:36-40 uses the word "fleece" to discover how to find or do something. How does Wilbur Johnson**

define "fleece"?

7. How did Wilbur determine that the Lord's will was for them to move from Indiana to Minneola, Kansas?

8. What discourages people from the blessing of Divine direction?

Page 4, paragraph 9. Leaning on their own understanding and the weakness of their faith.

9. How does the Williams New Testament and the Amplified translate the correct verbal tense for Luke 11:9?

10. Seeking and following the Will of God is what?

11. What is the most frustrating of all when trying to encourage someone else to "put out a fleece."

12. Before the marriage of Les Dubois to Rosana, he stated that they finally reached what conclusion regarding them staying in Taiwan?

13. What is the fascinating thing that Les Dubois said in relying on God is?

14. According to Romans 8:26-27, how does the Sprit help our weaknesses.

15. What did Paul write about the promise in Romans 8:26, 22?

16. How did Wilbur Johnson get to sleep, after tossing and turning?

17. What are three things we need to practice when seeking the Lord's leading/will from a Covenant ("fleece")?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

18. In the fall of 1981, how did Wilbur Johnson learn and follow God's will in a everyday necessity?

19. What is not easy when the path before us is

unknown and may be filled with pain?

**20. What is the Lord's beautiful counsel to finding
God's Will? (Jeremiah 29:11-13)**

Notes