

"At Your Word"

Does God speak seriously? Does He mean what He says? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Stay with us, we're going to compare God's way with human reasoning.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Lord Jesus promised His disciples in John 8:31 and 32, that "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." We want the truth; we don't want to be deceived by speculation or human tradition. We want the truth that makes us free, and the Lord Jesus is the trusted source. He never misleads with half-truths or false promises. He doesn't play games or change the rules. You can trust Him to speak straight and to lead you to righteousness. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The great question of life is not whether God created the world in six days, or whether Jesus really lived, or whether there is life after death. No, the great question of life is whether we will listen when God speaks. Will we believe Him or will we trust our own judgment? Now if we listen to God, He will answer the other questions for us. If we're unwilling to listen to God, we'll live in uncertainty, blindly searching for a clear conscience and eternal life and yet missing the path. Wouldn't it be sad to miss your opportunity to know the truth? Don't let that opportunity slip away. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding."

When it comes to eternal life, ignorance is not bliss. To ignore the way of the Lord is to lose His grace, His favor, and His blessing. To ignore the way of the Lord is to abandon hope for heaven and living with God eternally. Don't miss the blessing of God; open your heart and your ears to hear God's teaching.

Now if you're interested, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Luke 5 verses 1 to 6, and then we'll explore what it means to follow the word of God.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, chapter 5, verses 1 to 6. "Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to be obedient to Your will, to listen even when it seems difficult and hard to understand. And Father help us to do Your will always on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

This event in the life of Jesus took place on the Lake of Gennesaret, sometimes known as the Sea of Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Chinneroth. Two empty boats were standing by the shore.

And the owners had returned from a night of fishing; and they had caught nothing and were washing their nets. Jesus entered into one of the boats, and Simon pushed the boat off the land a little. And Jesus sat down and began teaching the people, using the boat for his pulpit.

After teaching, Jesus said, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Now you can imagine how they must have felt after a long night's work with nothing to show for it. Simon Peter answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." Now even though they didn't feel like it, even though Jesus wasn't a professional fisherman like they were, and even though they were ready to quit, they did what Jesus said. They put out their nets and they enclosed a great number of fish, to the point that their nets were breaking and they needed help to draw in the fish. Both boats were so full of fish that they began to sink. Well astonished, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Peter, by trusting in his own experience and judgment, listened to Jesus with doubts and questions. He had to see for himself what God could do. When Jesus' words proved true beyond any expectations, Simon Peter recognized his sin in failing to trust the Lord. Luke, guided by the Holy Spirit, recorded this true story for our learning and our profit. We would do well to learn from this story.

First, we need to know that God's instructions do not arise from human philosophy or reason. The time for fishing had passed. To continue casting their nets now that it was sunny was foolish to their human standpoint. And I'm sure that they could have made some informed arguments against following the Lord's instructions. Now this is not the first time the Lord commanded something that defies human reason.

Do you recall the Lord's admonition through Moses that the children of Israel sprinkle blood on their doorposts to avoid the tenth plague? Now from a human viewpoint, one may ask what one has to do with the other.

Do you recall Moses stretching out his rod over the waters to bring about the parting of the Red Sea? Do you recall God's command to Moses to strike the rock to bring about water?

Do you recall God's telling Moses to put a bronze serpent upon a pole, which could cure everyone who looks upon it? You see, human philosophy would never connect the command with the promise.

Do you recall Joshua and Israel marching around Jericho for seven days in order to see the walls of Jericho fall? Surely, this was not a military plan that humans would design!

Do you recall Naaman the leper dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River to cure his leprosy? Now when Elisha told him to do this, Naaman got angry. He thought Elisha would call upon the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Dipping in a muddy river was offensive to his human pride and his wisdom.

In the wisdom of this world the cross is foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1 verses 18 to 29 says, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the

foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.”

God is the source of all spiritual truth; it is His place alone to say what His conditions are in order to receive the blessings of His promises. Human philosophy may help us understand some things, but listening to God is necessary. God didn't ask the counsel of the wisest men but has at all times revealed His divine wisdom in dealing with men. Romans 11:33 to 36 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD, who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Second, we need to remember human experience does not measure up to Divine wisdom. Many people today reject anything and everything that doesn't correspond to their own experience. But our Lord's power and wisdom cannot be measured by human experience. We cannot reject something simply because we don't understand it. Many can't accept the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection because they can't understand how these things could happen. They say such things are against nature. They've never seen a man raised from the dead, so they don't believe it can happen. However, the believer accepts whatever the Word of God says, even though he has never experienced such things. He realizes that truth can come from more sources than his five senses.

Some people refuse to obey the commandments of the Lord, because they think these commandments are foolish or because they go against the social grain of our day. Frankly, we need the attitude that Peter showed. He said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” (Luke 5 and verse 5). Peter sacrificed his own practical knowledge and skill as a fisherman to listen to the authoritative word of Jesus. We too need to say, “I will do as You say....”

When we truly love the Lord and believe in Him, we want to know what His will is for our lives. And so we're happy to ask, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” And we're ready and eager to do the will of the Lord, because we know that His wisdom and power work with what He teaches and instructs us to do. When the Lord teaches us His will, we don't consult with others. We listen to the One who bore the cross, the One who forgives! We don't want other voices to confuse and mislead us.

Third, we need to see the difference between listening to the Lord and refusing to listen. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed God's Word when Israel refused to hear. He said in Jeremiah 6 and verse 10, “To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.” Their refusal to listen to God led them to follow idolatry and to be enslaved to sin.

And Jeremiah wept over how far the children of Israel had fallen away. They became greedy and cheated one another; they worshiped other gods and they scorned the word of God. Jeremiah asked in chapter six, verse 15, “Were they ashamed because of the abomination that they've done? They were not even ashamed at all; They didn't even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those

who fall; And at the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD.

Though the Lord wanted to give them every opportunity to repent, the people refused. Jeremiah said in chapter 6, verse 16: Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Oh they were stubborn and rebellious people. Jeremiah's prophecy that Babylon would come in and destroy them came to be true. And the Jews suffered greatly because they would not do what the Lord says.

Now when the Lord teaches us what to do to be saved, how the church is to meet, how to worship, how to live pure lives, and how to serve others, are we listening? When the Scriptures teach that we are no longer under the old covenant but are under the new covenant, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us about the sanctity of life and marriage, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us that some behavior is sinful, are we going to debate with Him? Are we going to treat the Lord as if He doesn't understand our culture, as if He were naïve and has no right to govern our lives?

When it comes to our salvation, instead of debating with the Lord who created us, shouldn't we say, "I will do as you say"? If the Lord commands us as penitent believers to be baptized in His name, immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, why should we argue with Him?

When it comes to how we worship, shouldn't we take into account what pleases the Lord? You can't entertain people to the point they will deny themselves and take up a cross. No, conversion to Christ requires more than pop psychology, preaching and an entertainment form of worship. You can't get people to repent of their sins, if you never preach against sin. Sadly, some preaching has become so weak and ineffective that many don't even know their behavior is sinful. In some cases they've never been taught the Word of God; they've been deceived with a blend of selective spirituality and cultural dogma! Teachers have led them to believe they will face no consequences for their sins. The wisdom of men sounds reasonable, but it's not the Lord's way. It's a broad way that leads to destruction, always has been; it's a house that's built on sand.

If we intend to enjoy the promises and blessings of God, then let's listen to His instructions in the Word of God. When God makes a promise with a condition to be met, He never grants the blessing until the condition is met. The blessings of God come after obedience, not before. God cleansed Naaman after he dipped seven times; God healed the Israelites of their serpent bites after they looked upon the bronze serpent; God gave Israel water after Moses struck the rock; and God saves us after we obey His teaching. My friend have you obeyed? Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to open our ears and to open up our hearts to Your will. To love You fully and freely, and to give ourselves completely to You. Father help us to repent of our sins. And Father we pray that Your Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

When we obey the Lord, the Lord blesses us far beyond our expectations. When Peter let down the net, "they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break." Peter never imagined that they would catch so many fish. They had to get their partners to come and help them! They filled up both boats, so that the boats were beginning to sink! Our God is "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ephesians 3 and verse 20). When we obey the Lord in repentance and baptism, God grants us the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). But He gives us far more than forgiveness. He causes us to be born again (John 3 and verse 5). He adds us to the number in His church (Acts 2 and verse 47). God makes us His child

(Galatians 3 verses 26 and 27). He saves us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3 and verse 5).

Now someone says "Well, I don't understand how being immersed in water saves us; I thought the blood of Christ saves us." My friends, the cleansing blood washes away our sins when we are baptized in water. God does the cleansing. Romans 6 and verse 3 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Baptism unites us with Christ in His death. Baptism is the time when our souls come in contact with the death of Christ. Romans 6 and verse 6 says, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." Now this takes place when we are baptized. We have been buried and raised with Him in baptism, and that's when we begin our walk in newness of life. My friend the blessing follows the obedience. And so I'm asking you, won't you be obedient to the Lord today?

Well we hope today's study about choosing to serve the Lord has stirred you to make a lifelong commitment to the Lord. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.