

Questions for Reflection:

1. Who are the “footmen” who wearies you in your life and ministry?
2. What are the “horses” the Lord wants you to run with?
3. What should we be doing in our “land of peace” to prepare for the “flooding of the Jordan”?

Recap

To run with horses, we need to protect, strengthen and enlarge our spiritual, mental, emotional and physical capacities. There are 4 significant milestones in our spiritual journey:

1. Gilgal
2. Bethel
3. Jericho
4. Jordan

Last Sunday, we looked at Gilgal – The cutting of the flesh. We learned that the first step of our spiritual journey is to recognize the corruption of the flesh and we learnt of 3 applications:

1. We must bring our past under the Blood.
2. We must know the divine exchange.
3. As we do so, we must deal with all aspects of the flesh in our lives.
 - A. The flesh that sins. (Bad Flesh).
 - B. The flesh of our own natural goodness, abilities, zeal, wisdom, strength and power. (Good Flesh – but still Flesh!)

What is Bethel?

Bethel is encountering the Presence of God. In Genesis 28:16-19:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

Sensing a tangible presence of God in that place, Jacob named the place the House of God. He intentionally built an altar unto God. Some years later in Genesis 31:13, God reminded Jacob:

I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.

And in Genesis 35:1, he commanded Jacob:

Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.”

Bethel is:



In whatever words you may call it, Bethel is experiencing God where we are transformed, and where we'll never be the same.

Bethel - Experiencing God

How do we experience God? Scriptures record **significant encounters** of men with God. Moses encountered the burning bush, Gideon encountered an angel and fire consumed his offering, Isaiah saw the glory of God and Paul had a Damascus road experience where God changed the zeal of the flesh to the zeal of the Spirit. However, after Pentecost, God gave us the Holy Spirit to have an **on-going encounters** with Him. Depending on our situations and our spiritual journey, God will grant us occasionally significant encounters. SP likens such significant encounters to jumpstarts to spur us on in our walk and ministry similar to jumpstarts to a car when the car battery is dead. As believers, **we need both ongoing and significant encounters in our Christian journey.**

Milestones in our Bethels – Our encounters with God

There are milestones in our Bethels and SP suggests 4 milestones in our encounter with God.

Milestone #1 - We must first encounter God in His Love for us leading to Salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Milestone #2 - We then Progress in our walk to continually experience the goodness of the Grace of God in its various forms.

1 Peter 2:2-3

as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious

2 Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Other Scriptures of the goodness of God:

John 10:10b, 3 John 2, Isa 1:19, Prov 10:22, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2-3

Scriptures are only of value to us to the degree we believe and act upon them. And when these Scriptures come true for us, it results in praise, worship and thanksgiving to God.

However, **we need to guard against the snare of the devil - comparing/ looking at others** who seemingly do not experience His goodness. Essentially, this is none of our business (John 21) as this is how the evil one seeks to distract our attention away from God and His promises. We only need to pay attention closely to God and guard what is in our hearts.

Milestone #3 - We mature as we journey through Trials that purify our Faith in God.

Trials are a result of:

- A. Living in a Fallen world [John 16:33] - Imperfect People and Fractured Environment (No choice)
- B. Due to our own Sins [Galatians 6:7; Romans 6:23] (making a wrong choice)
- C. The works of the Evil One [John 10:10a] (make a choice to resist the devil)
- D. Our Journey in Discipleship [Luke 9:23] (making the right choice)

Examples of trials:



Some of the issues we need to deal with and mature in the face of trials:

- A. Unhealed Hurts [Hebrews 12:15]
- B. Guilt, Shame and Condemnation regarding our past [Hebrews 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:1-2]
- C. Unresolved Issues [2 Timothy 2:15]
- D. Our Isaacs - Idols of our hearts [1 John 2:15-16; Matthew 6:33]
- E. Fears [2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15-16] versus Faith
- F. Un-biblical beliefs and thought patterns [Matthew 22:29; John 8:32; John 16:13; 1 John 2:27]

We need to be free from the sins of the past (guilt, strongholds, words spoken, bad incident, molested, mocked, bullied, theft, adultery) and **we need to be free from the sins of the present** (addiction to pornography, gambling, temper, guilt, strongholds, adultery, loose tongue).

There are 3 Key Passages regarding Trials and the Believer

James 1:2-4

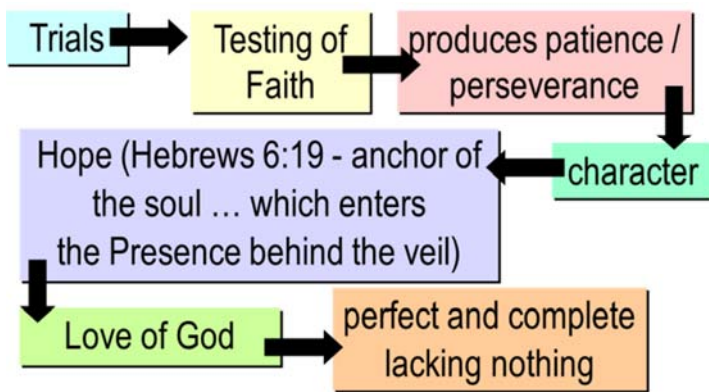
My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

1 Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

Romans 5:3-5

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.



In summary, every trial is a test of our faith which is a mixture of godly and ungodly beliefs. Like the refining of gold, the impurities of our faith are removed as we encounter trials. As we persevere, it produces the character of Christ. As we cling to Him as our hope, He anchors us through the ups and downs of our trials. Through this, we finally come to the realisation of the love of God as His love is poured into our hearts. And for that issue, we come to the position where we are complete or perfect, lacking nothing.

Hebrews 6:12

that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience perseverance inherit the promises.

Milestone #4 - We grow Deeper in knowing and understanding God.

Moses is an example of one who knows the ways of God.

Numbers 12:6-8

Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

Psalm 103:7

He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

Another example is found in Balaam who has spiritual sight.

Numbers 24:3-4

Then he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, the utterance of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open ...

We need to grow in our spiritual senses. We need to grow in seeing spiritually.

God's desire is for us to know Him and understand Him. When we fail to know Him, we misunderstand and misrepresent Him. In Jer 9; 23-24, the 3 characteristic we are to know of God are: He exercises loving-kindness, He is just and He is righteous.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.

When there is an apparent contradiction in Scriptures, SP reminds us to look at the weight of the Scriptures – the totality of Scriptures (Psalm 119:160). For example if we singularly look at 1 Samuel 2:25, we will misinterpret God as one who desires to kill. However when we read the full passage of 1 Samuel 2 and other Scriptures such as 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11, we understand God's desire is not for anyone to perish but for everyone to come to repentance.

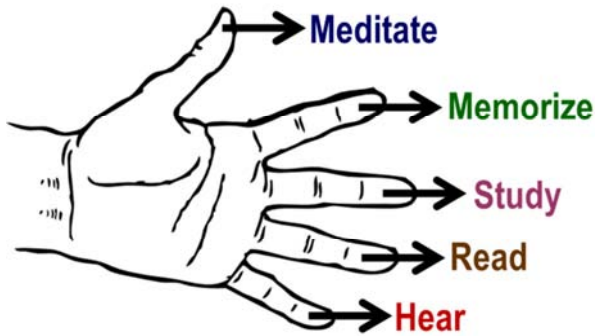
God Speaks to Us Today!

A. Direction - Broad Principles - Guidelines are always from the Word

The Word of God defines the parameters and paints the boundaries and framework. Some of the broad principles include instructions on:

- Dishonest Scales
- Submit to Authority
- Fornication & Adultery
- Honor
- Revenge-Record of Wrongs
- Being Gracious
- The Tongue-sowing dissensions.

Therefore, we need to partake of the Word of God which is food for our spirit. Below are ways we can partake of the Word of God.



B. The details of the guidance are always from the Spirit of Wisdom.

The inward witness is how the Holy Spirit speaks to us [Romans 8:16; 1 John 2:27]. God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit on decisions on studies, housing, medical, career; BGR, business deals, relationship, etc. He is the Spirit of Wisdom that will give us clarity and wisdom as we make these decisions.

The Holy Spirit guides us through people, even non-believers. If we need wisdom in specific areas, we need to talk to people who are in a position to advise us. The guidance may come in the form of:

- A Counsellor
- A Mentor
- A Coach
- An expert in that area
- A Consultant
- A Professional

For the believer, nothing happens by chance. Are we posturing our minds and hearts to hear from the Holy Spirit? The warnings or alarm bells may be ringing through the Holy Spirit as we speak to these people.

The Holy Spirit can also speak to us through resources, including:

- Seminars
- Websites
- Books
- Audio Sermons
- Articles

The Holy Spirit can also guide us through **situations and circumstances**. These include:

- Divine Appointments
- An idea or truth downloaded from God
- Divine Connections

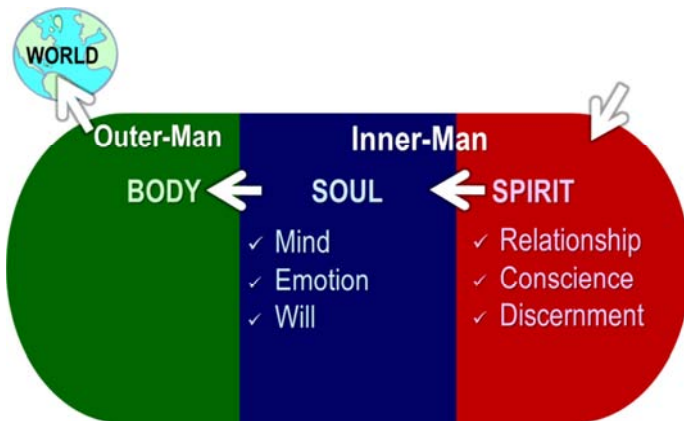
Hebrews 8:10 tells us:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

The bottom-line is to pay attention to everything as the Holy Spirit writes his laws on our hearts and mind.

Bethel - Experience God Continually

God wants us to have a continual on-going experience with Him through the Holy Spirit.



The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit (1 Cor 6:17). As He dwells in our spirit, He strengthens our relationship with Him through the word, prayer and the altar of thanksgiving, praise and worship. He causes our conscience to be sensitive to Him (Rom 9:1). The Holy Spirit guides us to discern what is of God and what is not of God (Heb 5:14). As our spirit-man grows strong, it will govern our souls. Our minds will be continually renewed, our emotions tempered by the Holy Spirit and our will aligned to the will of God.

Conclusion

Joshua 5:13-15.

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord[a] have for his servant?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Immediately after the cutting of the flesh at Gilgal, Joshua had his own Bethel experience before entering into the Promised Land. Joshua fell face down in worship of Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of host. The principle to learn is as such:

- Take off sandals - holy ground (Surrender our Issacs/idols on the altar)
- The Lord does not come to our side.
- We repent and move onto the Lord's side! (Seek first His Kingdom)

The Lord wants us to have an on-going experience with Him daily and to have significant experiences with Him from time to time. The Lord wants us to experience breakthroughs in our personal lives to move on to the Promised Land.

3. How do you partake of the Word of God?

4. How does the Holy Spirit speak to you?

5. What are some Isaacs (idols) that hold you back from total surrender unto the Lord?