

"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 to 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 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, 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 trust our own judgment? 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 yet missing the path. Wouldn't it be sad to you and your opportunity to know the truth? Just to miss it. 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 of our study and 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 at www.searchtv.org.

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

Our reading today comes from the gospel according 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;

Oh the word of God is true. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for these stories of old that help us to understand that You always know the truth and that You always speak it. Help us to be believers in Your word and in You. 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. The owners had returned from a night of fishing; they had caught nothing and were washing their nets.

Jesus entered one of the boats, and Simon pushed the boat off the land a little. 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 down for a catch." Well, you can imagine how they must have felt after a long night's work with nothing to show for it. But Simon Peter answered well, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 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 enclosed a great number of fish, to the point 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. 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 the idea of a human standpoint. I'm sure they could have made some informed arguments against following the Lord's instructions. 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? From a human standpoint, 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? 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? 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 wisdom.

In the wisdom of this world the cross is foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:18 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, in the the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom didn't 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 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. (And then he says,) 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's His place alone to say what His conditions are in order to receive the blessing 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 people. Romans 11:33 to 36 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD, or 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 that human experience does not measure up to Divine wisdom. Many 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 can't 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's never experienced such things. He realizes that truth can come from more sources than his five senses.

Some 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 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 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. We're happy to ask, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” 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.” You see, their refusal to listen to God led them to follow idolatry and to be enslaved to sin.

Jeremiah wept over how far the children of Israel had fallen away. They became greedy and cheated one another; they worshiped other gods and scorned the word of God. Jeremiah asked in chapter six and verse 15, “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; 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.” They were a stubborn and rebellious people. Jeremiah’s prophecy that Babylon would come in and destroy them came to be true. The Jews suffered greatly because they wouldn’t do what the Lord says.

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 that they will face no consequences to 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; it’s a house built on sand.

If we intend to enjoy the promises and blessings of God, then let’s listen to His instructions. 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. We are to be repentant and to be people who are baptized immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. Have you obeyed? Has God washed away your sins.

Let’s pray together. Father we are thankful for Your love and Your grace. And Father help us to be good listeners and not only to hear what You say but to believe it and to obey it. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, 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 they would catch so many fish. They had to get their partners to come help! 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 that’s in His church (Acts 2 and verse 47). God makes us His children (Galatians 3:26 and 7). He saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3 and verse 5).

Someone says “Well, I don’t understand how being immersed in water saves us; I thought the blood of Christ saves us.” Folks, 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 into 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're baptized. We have buried and raised with Him in baptism, and that's when we begin to walk in newness of life. My friend the blessing follows the obedience. Won't you obey the Lord today?

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 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. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Hit that button that says, you know, notify us when a new one comes out. And be sure to like the programs that you watch; now what that does is helps spread the program so that others will see it. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God. We want you to be close to Him and to serve Him.

And that's why we ask you to focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ that's near you. People write to us and call us telling us they're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, and we gladly help them to find it. And they go there and many of them are wanting to be baptized and become member of the church. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. We ask that you keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about this program. Let em know how much you've gained from it and encourage them to watch this program too. As always we say, God bless you and we want God to bless you and to be with you. We also say that we love you, and we do. And that comes from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.