



Week of Jan 26th—Feb 1st 2014

Chapters 22-28

the **gathering**
of the Inland Valley



Dear Family of God,

Happy New Year! We are excited and filled with faith for the new opportunities that will be afforded to this spiritual family in 2014!

We together as a spiritual family are truly blessed. As we approach what the Lord desires us to put our hands to this year, we are grateful so many have responded to fast and pray for month of Jan. The Gathering of the Inland Valley has covenanted with the Lord to be led out of His voice and not out of ritual and/or tradition.

I want to remind us of what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy as he left him back in Ephesus to teach, reprove, encourage, oversee and to put things in order.

Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:18-19 *“Instruct them to do good, **to be rich in good works**, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”*

Let us heed these words of Paul to Timothy as we enter into the good work of fasting and prayer together as a spiritual family.

Blessings as we take yet another step together on our spiritual journey. May you all grow closer to the Father through Christ and enjoy your fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Ministers of the Gospel,

Mark & Joana

Contents & Components

4 Keys to hearing the voice of God–

Instructions for how to dialogue with God in a journal format!

Core Values:

ENCOUNTER

- Jesus in His *Word*, by His *Spirit*, and through your *Life!*

PARTICIPATE

- Practically engage God's heart and message!

IMAGINE

- Learn to access Divine strategies for your life and others!

CONNECT

- Learn to go deeper and hear God's voice and wisdom for your daily life!

How to get the most out of this Devotional

The devotional material is designed and laid out where each section builds on the one before it. You can take as little or as much time as you want each day in your time with the Lord. For maximum impact engage with every component every day.

4 Keys to hearing the voice of God~Mark Virkler

KEY #1- God's voice in our hearts sounds like a flow of spontaneous thoughts. Therefore, when I tune to God, I tune to spontaneity.

The bible says that the Lord answered me and said..... (Hab. 2:2). Habakkuk knew the sound of God's voice. Elijah described it as a still, small voice. I had always listened for an inner audible voice, and surely God can and does speak that way at times. However, I found that for most of us as spontaneous thoughts, visions, feelings or impressions. For example, haven't each of us had the experience of driving down the road and having a thought come to us to pray for a certain person? We generally acknowledge this to be the voice of God call us to pray for that individual. My question to you is, "What did God's voice sound like as you drove in your car? Was it an inner, audible voice, or was it a spontaneous thought that lit upon you mind?" Most of you would say that God's voice came to you as a spontaneous thought.

So I thought to myself, "Maybe when I listen for God's voice, I should be listening for a flow of spontaneous thoughts. Maybe spirit – level communication is received as spontaneous thoughts, impressions, feelings, and visions." Though experimentation and feedback from thousands of other, I am now convinced that this is so.

The Bible confirms this in many ways. The definition of *paga*, the Hebrew word for intercession, is "a chance encounter or an accidental intersecting." When God lays people on our hearts for intercession, He does it through *paga*, a chance encounter thought, accidentally intersecting our thought processes. Therefore, when I tune to God, I tune to chance encounter thoughts or spontaneous thoughts. When I am poised quietly before God in prayer, I have found that the flow of spontaneous thoughts that comes is quite definitely from God.

KEY# 2 – I must learn to still my own thoughts and emotions, so that I can sense God’s flow of thoughts and emotions within me.

Habakkuk said, “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart...” (Hab. 2:1)

Habakkuk knew that in order to hear God’s quiet, inner; spontaneous thoughts, he had to first go to a quiet place and still his own thoughts and emotions. Psalm 46: 10 encourages us to be still, and know that He is God. There is a deep inner knowing (spontaneous flow) in our spirit that each of us can experience when we quiet our flesh and our minds.

I have found several simple ways to quiet myself so that I can more readily pick up God’s spontaneous flow. Loving God through a quiet worship song is a most effective means for me (note 2 kings 3:15). It is as I become still (thoughts, will, and emotions) and am poised before God that the divine flow is realized. Therefore, after I worship quietly and then become still, I open myself for that spontaneous flow. If thoughts come to me of things I have forgotten to do, I write them down and then dismiss them. If thoughts of guilt or unworthiness come to mind, I repent thoroughly, receive the washing of the blood of the Lamb, and put on His robe of righteousness, seeing myself spotless before the presence of God.

As I fix my gaze upon Jesus (Heb. 12:2), becoming quiet in His presence, and sharing with Him what is on my heart, I find that two – way dialogue begins to flow. Spontaneous thoughts flow from the throne of God to me, and I find that I am actually conversing with the King of kings.

It is very important that you become still and properly focused if you are going to receive the pure word of God. If you are not still, you will simply be receiving your own thoughts. If you are not properly focused on Jesus, you will receive an impure flow, because the intuitive flow comes out of that upon which you have fixed your eyes on. Therefore, if you fix your eyes upon Jesus, the intuitive flow comes from Jesus. If you fix your gaze upon some desire of your heart, the intuitive flow comes out of that desire of your heart. To have a pure flow you must first of all become still, and secondly, you must carefully fix your eyes upon Jesus. Again I will say, This is quite easily accomplished by quietly worshiping the King, and then receiving out of the stillness that follows.

KEY #3 – As I pray, I fix the eyes of my heart upon Jesus, seeing in the spirit the dreams and visions of Almighty God.

We have already alluded to this principle in the previous paragraphs; however, we need to develop it a bit further. Habakkuk said, “I will keep watch to see,” and God said, “Record the vision” (Hab. 2:1 &2). It is very interesting that Habakkuk was going to actually start looking for vision as he prayed. He was going to open the eyes of his heart, and look into the spirit world to see what God wanted to show him. This is an intriguing idea.

I had never thought of opening the eyes of my heart and looking for vision. However, the more I thought of it, the more I realized this was exactly what God intends me to do. He gave me eyes in my heart. They are to be used to see in the spirit world the vision and movement of Almighty God. I believe there is an active spirit world functioning all around me. This world is full of angels, demons, the Holy Spirit, the omnipresent God, and His omnipresent Son, Jesus. There is no reason for me not to see it, other than rational culture, which tells me not to believe it is even there and provides no instruction on how to become open to seeing this spirit world.

The most obvious prerequisite to seeing is that we need to look. Daniel was seeing a vision in his mind and he said, “I was looking....I kept looking...I kept looking” (Dan. 7:1, 9, 13). Now as I pray, I look for Jesus present with me, and I watch Him as He speaks to me, doing and saying the things that are on His heart.

Many Christians will find that if they will only look, they will see. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. It is as simple as that. You will see a spontaneous inner vision in a manner similar to receiving spontaneous inner thoughts. You can see Christ present with you in a comfortable setting, because Christ is present with you in a comfortable setting. Actually, you will probably discover that inner vision comes so easily you will have a tendency to reject it, thinking that it is just you. (Doubt is Satan’s most effective weapon against the Church.) However, if you will persist in recording these visions, your doubt will soon be overcome by faith as you recognize that the content of them could only be birthed in Almighty God.

Key 3: Continued

God continually revealed Himself to His covenant people using dream and vision. He did so from Genesis to Revelation and said that, since the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2, we should expect to receive a continuing flow of dreams and visions (Acts 2:1-4). Jesus, our perfect example, demonstrated this ability of living out of ongoing contact with Almighty God. He said that He did nothing on His own initiative, but only that which He **saw the Father doing, and heard the Father saying** (John 5:19,20,30). What an incredible way to live!

Is it actually possible for us to live out of the divine initiative as Jesus did? A major purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection was that the veil be torn from top to bottom, giving us access into the immediate presence of God, we are commanded to draw near (Heb. 10:19-22). Therefore, even though what I am describing seems a bit unusual to a rational twentieth century culture, it is demonstrated and described as being a central biblical teaching and experience. It is time to restore to the Church all that belongs to the Church.

Because of their intensely rational nature and existence in an overly rational culture, some will need more assistance and understanding of these truths before they can move into them. They will find this help in the book ***How to Hear God's Voice*** by the same author.

Key#4 – Journaling, the writing out of our prayers and God's answers, provides a great new freedom in hearing God's voice.

God told Habakkuk to record the vision and inscribe it on tablets.... (Hab. 2:2). It had never crossed my mind to write out my prayers and God's answers as Habakkuk did at God's command. If you begin to search Scripture for this idea, you will find hundreds of chapters demonstrating it (Psalms, many of the prophets, Revelation). Why then hadn't I ever thought of it?

I called the process "journaling," and I began experimenting with it. I discovered it to be a fabulous facilitator to clearly discerning God's inner, spontaneous flow, because as I journaled I was able to write in faith for long periods of time, simply believing it was God. I did not have to test it as I was receiving it, (which jams one's receiver), Because I knew that when the flow was over I could go back and test and examine it carefully, making sure that it lined up with Scripture.

You will be amazed when you attempt journaling. Doubt may hinder you at first, but throw it off, reminding yourself that it is a biblical concept, and God is present, speaking to His children. Don't take yourself too seriously. When you do, you become tense and get in the way of the Holy Spirit's movement. It is when we cease **our labors** and enter His rest that God is free (Heb 4:10). Therefore, put a smile on your face, sit back comfortably, get out your pen and paper, and turn your attention toward God in praise and worship, seeking His face. As you write out your question to God and become still, fixing your gaze on Jesus, who is present with you, you will suddenly have a very good thought in response to your question. Don't doubt it, simply write it down. Later, as you read your journaling, you, too, will be amazed to discover that you are indeed dialoguing with God.

Some final notes: No one should practice this without having first read through the New Testament (preferably, the entire Bible), and being submitted to solid, spiritual leadership. All major directional moves that come through journaling should be submitted before being acted upon.

ENCOUNTER

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

PARTICIPATE

Compare vv.16-21 with the teaching of Jesus in Matt 7:6.

Record your findings and insights below.

IMAGINE

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min about the Gospel message of the Kingdom and the sense of urgency to respond.

CONNECT

Journal Question: Lord can you show me the area of my life where you are desiring an urgent response?

 **ENCOUNTER**

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

 **PARTICIPATE**

In this chapter Apostle Paul is in custody and before the Jewish court. There is now death threats from a mob of over 40 men who have made a vow not to eat or drink anything until he is dead.

Notice the voice of Jesus to Paul in v.11. God's will for him was to go to Rome.

What does this say about God's power to deliver? And can our life be cut short if we are on mission for God?

 **IMAGINE**

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min. Gods will for your life. Record what He said to you or showed you.

 **CONNECT**

Journal question: Lord if you can use Paul a murderer of your people and make him an Apostle, what could you use a person like me for?

 **ENCOUNTER**

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

 **PARTICIPATE**

Read Luke 12:1-12 particularly v.12 and consider Paul's circumstances before the Roman Governor Felix.

Jesus also taught 'in this world you will have trouble, for if they persecuted me they will persecute you. If they hated me they will hate you.'

How do scriptures like these apply to our life today? Can you identify a principle from chapter 24 Instead of a Governor could this apply to other authorities in our life?

Name 2 where this could apply.

 **IMAGINE**

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min. Record any thoughts, impressions, pictures or scriptures the Holy Spirit has brought to mind.

 **CONNECT**

Pray for someone in the church family and then send them an encouraging text.

ENCOUNTER

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

PARTICIPATE

As Paul is yet again being brought before another governmental authority in this chapter. Notice how he's been in prison for over two years now Acts 24:27 and the conspiracy to kill Paul has not subsided.

What wisdom can we draw from Paul when we are confronted with religious spirits?

IMAGINE

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min. regarding a practical way the church in North America could support those who are be persecuted and imprisoned today in other nations. List 3.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

CONNECT

Write out a prayer of Thanksgiving to the Lord for the many things you have to be thankful for in our country.

Or Journal question: Lord what traditions of men do I still follow and insist on others following too?

ENCOUNTER

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

PARTICIPATE

Notice how the Holy Spirit has taught Paul to use his testimony for his defense. Many times simply telling our own story of our experiences with God is all we are called to do.

In 1 Peter 3:15 it says we should always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

On a separate sheet of paper write out your defense and give an account for the hope that is in you.

IMAGINE

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min. about what ever is on your heart right now. Record anything you feel you need too.

CONNECT

Write your own Journal question.

 **ENCOUNTER**

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

 **PARTICIPATE**

(This is one of those 'we' passages where Luke is traveling with Paul)

V.24 When we are in the will of God not only are we protected but the grace that is on our lives is often extended to those who are involved with us directly or indirectly.

Identify areas of your life that you are in the will God right now. Who besides you is benefitting?

 **IMAGINE**

Pray in the Spirit for 2-5 min and ask Holy Spirit to reveal how you may grow in the knowledge of Christ and His will for your life. Record anything pertinent.

 **CONNECT**

If your next EPIC group if there is a time for open sharing, share some of the insights you gained from this chapter's questions.

 **ENCOUNTER**

Write the verse(s) that stands out the most to you word for word in the space below.

 **PARTICIPATE**

V.5 compare with Jesus' teaching from Mark 16:18

What else does Jesus say we do in Mark 16:15-18?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

 **IMAGINE**

Pray in the Spirit (Jude 20) for 2-5 min then make declarations out loud in English regarding the things you can do from Mark 16:15-18

 **CONNECT**

Journal question: Lord is there anything you would like to tell me about the letter of Acts?