

## Life Lessons from the Psalms

### This to That

#### *How Much of a Relationship with God Do You Want?*

I had a deep theological conversation with a pastor friend and his belief is that when it comes to the will of God, you don't need to spend much thought figuring out what it is. Just let the Scriptures guide you in the broad scope of life and then decide, utilizing the wisdom you have been given, how to navigate through the various decisions you must make each day. His belief is that you are much happier and at peace if you are not constantly trying to figure out what God wants you to do in each situation. Is he right? I agree with him that we are not to fret over what God expects us to do in any given circumstance but that does not mean God cannot and does not guide us personally as we go along. I believe we are to have an intimate relationship with God that includes Him giving us individual direction and guidance rather than just a firm understanding of Scripture as a global guide to the best way to live. We are going to look at the degree to which you can count on God to guide you and just how intimate your relationship with Christ can be. Here is the Big Idea. Consider it an honor and a privilege for Christ to want to build a personal relationship with you.

Psalms 91 lays out the type of life God wants with you. It starts with a condition. **He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.** (Psalm 91: 1 NIV) To dwell in the shelter of the Most High is to build your life in God. He is the source of your protection but more than that, your place of peace and security. If that is the case, then the LORD makes a promise. God says of that person, **He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.** (Psalm 91: 15 NIV) When you make God your home, you are building your life in Him and there is a thorough-going transformation of how you operate. The more you rely on God to guide you, correct you, provide what you need and be in charge of how you live, the more He becomes your home. The relationship that Jonathon, the son of King Saul had with David his friend is precisely the sort of relationship you and God can and ought to have. **After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.** (1 Samuel 18: 1 NIV) That only happens over time as you and God love each other and build on that love through trust and mutual affection.

The Bible uses the expression "walked with God" to describe the sort of bond you can have with Him. **When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters.** (Genesis 5: 21-22 NIV) Of course Enoch had a special connection to God but the same was also said of Noah. **This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.** (Genesis 6: 9 NIV) It is argued that we cannot and do not have that sort of life, "walking with God" because that was unique to Enoch and Noah. Those days are gone many theologians claim. But I would argue that it is possible for you to have a deeper and more profound relationship with God now than those two did. Here is why. The Scripture insists that there is a supernatural union that exists when you put your faith in Christ. Paul, in the Bible puts it this way. **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** (Galatians 2: 20 NIV) How much closer to God can you get than that? Christ lives in you, not just near you or above you but actually in you. The potential for knowing God and being in a close relationship with Him is infinite. In his discussion of marriage and the command for believers not to marry unbelievers, the Apostle Paul makes this incredible point about how profound is your relationship with God when you are truly Christian. **What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."** (2 Corinthians 6: 16 NIV)

With this beautiful relationship you have with God, you can still get it wrong regarding the direction the Holy Spirit wants you to take. In every relationship, there is the possibility of misunderstanding the motives of the other person or not being sure what is going on between the two of you. There is a fascinating account found in 2 Samuel. David was eager to start work on a Temple for the LORD and went to Nathan the prophet to see what he thought. Nathan believed the LORD was for it. **Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you."** (2 Samuel 7: 3 NIV) But then Nathan had to backtrack. That night, the LORD somehow let Nathan know that David was in fact not to build the Temple. It may have been somewhat embarrassing for Nathan to admit he was wrong about God's direction, but he brought back to David his revised counsel. Even someone who had

such a developed relationship with God could be off and as you pursue your relationship with Christ, wanting Him to lead you, do so with humility. Avoid the trap many Christians have fallen into who confidently tell others the "word of the Lord" for them. Be confident of two truths. God can and will guide you as you seek Him and God can and will guide others as they seek Him and God does not need your help doing that. The key components to seeking the Lord's direction and guidance are faith that He will do it and humility that you might not be right in what you think He has told you.

Jesus had a stinging criticism of Peter and it is a warning for you and me. Jesus had been explaining to the Disciples that He was going to be beaten by the Jewish religious leaders, killed and on the third day rise from the dead. All Peter heard of this was that Jesus was telling them He would be killed and Peter rebuked Jesus for His negativity. He admonished Jesus for insisting He would die. Jesus swiftly responded to Peter's scolding. **Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."** (Matthew 16: 23 NIV) Take careful note of the last part of Jesus' censure. Peter did not have in mind the things of God but rather the things of men. How universally true is that among Christians today! If even someone as great and faithful as Peter could fall into that trap, is it not likely many, way too many also have in mind the things of men rather than the things of God? Perhaps that is why so few Christians actually hear from God, are really led by the Holy Spirit and have true intimacy with Jesus. They've got their minds on all sorts of things other than God. A frequently overlooked aspect to being born again is found in Jesus' laying out of the "great commandment". **Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** (Matthew 22: 37 NIV) Typically when we think of loving God, we try to get the heart and soul part of it right. We stir up fervency for Christ and desire to be faithful to Him. Perhaps though you like so many, have not paid enough attention to the mind aspect of this.

It takes great effort to get your mind off the things of men and have it on the things of God. This requires concentration and exertion, and most believers are not willing to go to so much trouble. There is a plague of spiritual laziness in the church today that we all must consider might be something we also face. How hard do you really try to keep your mind on the things of God? If you do not do so, you run the risk of having the same sort of thinking approach as Peter who outright rejected what Jesus told him. You just will not have much idea how God is directing you and your relationship with Him will be shallow. Do you recall this promise made in the Bible? **The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.** (1 Corinthians 2: 15-16 NIV) With the mind of Christ, your thinking takes a significant upgrade if you hone in on Christ living in and through you. You do not have the mind of Christ in you to give you some sort of spiritual swager! It is so that you can know Christ better and see things as He does. Not every opportunity is for your good. The mind of Christ lets you know which is and which isn't. Not every relationship is one you should give your time and focus. The mind of Christ gives you insight on which people you need to focus on, who you can trust and how you should respond to the people God puts in your life. What a tremendous responsibility it is to have Christ living in and through you. What a privilege to get to know Christ intimately and for the Holy Spirit to guide you and reveal Himself to you. The Big Idea is a tremendous one. Consider it an honor and a privilege for Christ to want to build a personal relationship with you. Make this week one where you devote yourself to focusing on the Holy Spirit and challenging yourself to follow His lead more than ever.