

GETTING DIRECTIONS FROM THE OWNER (Part 3)

In Part 1 and 2 of the *Getting Directions* series, we considered how God gives us, his stewards, directions through His word and other people. In this final part of the series, we will examine what is no doubt the most subtle and the most subjective of the three ways God communicates His will to us—through our thoughts.

God is constantly speaking to us by introducing thoughts into our minds. Yet our minds are so inundated with distractions and overloaded with information that we hear little of what He is saying to us. I'm sure you remember being taught as a child to do three things before crossing a railroad track: Stop, Look, and Listen. Heeding these same three directives can position us to hear more from God than we ever have before.

First, We Need to Stop

David counsels us in Psalm 46:10 (NASB), *Cease striving and know that I am God...* Most of us live hurried lives, dashing from this activity to that meeting, then on to church and finally back home to crash. We hardly have time to stop and take a breath! Once we finally do stop, we are so exhausted that we collapse in a chair or in bed and we are gone. Does this describe your life at all?

You may have heard the old saying, "Don't just stand there, do something!" But let me suggest that God's message to us is this, "Don't just do something, stand there!" Stop! *Cease striving!* How often do we shut off the TV, cell phones, computers, and iPads, and get away from people long enough to give our loving Owner an opportunity to speak to us through our thoughts?

Second, We Need to Look

Because we homeschooled our four daughters all the way through high school, we were able to spend a great deal of time teaching them the Bible in addition to their other subjects. When our two eldest daughters were still quite young, we shared with them I John 3:17 (ESV), which says, *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* We were trying to teach them that how a person responds to those in need shows how they truly love God.

The next Sunday, I was committed to preaching and my wife to playing the piano at church; yet as is often the case with families with small children, we were running late. Church was set to start in ten minutes, but we were at least twelve minutes from the church building. We hurriedly jumped into the car, rushed out of the driveway, and sped off to church.

On the way there, we drove by a very elderly woman who was trudging down the side of the road pulling a cart with a big bag. I crossed over into the left lane to allow some distance and kept driving. Bethany, my oldest, who

was about five at the time, broke the silence and asked, “Daddy, don’t you love God?” I said, “Of course I do, honey; why do you ask?” She replied, “Daddy, that lady needs help and we have a car. If we really love God, shouldn’t we stop and help her?” Her comment has been indelibly etched in my memory since that day. This young girl had seen a need because she was looking. I, on the other hand, with my obvious blind spots, had not seen a thing. I was in too much of a hurry to get to church to minister to the needs of the congregation that I could not see the needs of someone on the way.

I immediately backed up, opened the trunk, and put in the lady’s laundry. She climbed in the back seat with the girls, and we drove her to the laundromat. I gave her my name and phone number and told her if she ever needed a ride anywhere to call me. We jumped back in the car and dashed on to church—amazingly arriving two minutes early instead of two minutes late. Go figure. Here is a profound spiritual truth that very few stewards ever come to fully understand—a truth which can radically impact your life: *We need to give just as desperately as the poor need to receive.* We are just as needy as they are, but in a different kind of way. When we see a need and respond to it, we are proving to ourselves and to our Owner that His love does indeed abide in us.

We all need to begin looking more carefully at what and who are around us and how we might be a blessing to those in need. Try this: start carrying a few \$5 bills around with you so whenever you see anyone in need, you have something already set aside to share--thus blessing them in Jesus’ name. It is amazing how much easier spontaneous giving is when we already have something set aside to give away.

Last, We Need to Listen

Do you remember when Elijah encountered God at Mt. Horeb? 1 Kings 19:12 (KJV) tells us that God spoke to him in a *still small voice*. Isaiah 30:21 (ESV) says it this way: *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.* God is speaking thoughts into our minds all the time with His still, small voice. Only when we stop, look, and listen will we actually recognize that the Lord is sharing a thought for something He wants us to do.

Recently I was on my way to an appointment when an oncoming car tried to turn left directly in front of me. I swerved to avoid a collision, but the driver plowed into the side of my car anyway. After I skidded to a stop, I immediately prayed and asked God to not let this be just another frustrating delay and irritating inconvenience, but to do something with it that would honor Him. I accepted that God apparently wanted this lady and me to “bump” into each other that day.

The lady was driving without insurance and was an emotional basket case. She pleaded with me to not have her put in jail because she had small children at home. She promised to pay every penny of the damage to the car. I reassured her that she would not be going to jail, and even though she didn’t have insurance, I did, so everything would be okay. The officer arrived and did give her a ticket for driving without insurance. The wrecker soon arrived to tow my un-drivable car away.

I called my wife to tell her that I had been in an accident, but I was fine. As I was talking to her, I was deeply impressed by the Lord to give the lady some money. Since I had begun the practice of carrying \$5 bills around with me to give to those in need, I took out my wallet. To my surprise, I only had a \$50 bill in it that my son-in-law had given me the week before to repay me for something I had bought for him. I had totally forgotten it was even in there.

I pulled out the bill, walked over to the lady and told her I wanted to give it to her because she was going to have a lot of additional expenses from this wreck. She went from weeping to sobbing and refused to take it. I implored her, “Please take it; God asked me to give it to you. He wants you to have it.” She finally accepted it. I climbed into the cab of the wrecker and rode off with my damaged car in tow, missing my appointment and happy as a lark!

Honestly, I am not sure there was anything I could have done with that \$50 bill that would have been more fun and more of a blessing. I was thoroughly refreshed by this little act of giving. I came away from that calamity less needy than I was before it happened. Maybe the accident was really for my benefit.

Have you ever had some out-of-the-blue thought pop into your head? Someone you haven’t seen or talked to for ages for no reason comes to mind? You have the thought that you ought to do something completely random that was not part of the plan for your day? You sense the need to pray for someone right at that moment? That is very likely the still, small voice of our Owner speaking to you—giving you directions on what He wants you to do today with the time, talents, and treasures He has entrusted to you.

What incredible fun it is when we stop, look, and listen to the thoughts that God puts into our minds to direct us! If we want to be a good and faithful steward of all that God has entrusted to us, we will need to become very attentive, learning how and when and where to hear from Him. He will communicate His will for us through His word, through other people in our lives, and through the still, small voice of our thoughts. What a joy and a blessing it is to fully embrace the idea that God owns everything, and our singular task is to manage carefully all that we have been entrusted with according to His will—and to carry out His directions for what to do with His stuff with all our heart, soul, and mind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR — E. G. “JAY” LINK

E. G. “Jay” Link has a unique combination of being an ordained minister with a Master Divinity degree in Biblical Theology and a professional Stewardship planning coach who for over 40 years has been working with very affluent Christian families to enable them to optimize their Kingdom impact with all that the Lord has entrusted to them to manage. After retiring from his personal practice, he then served for five years as Director of Taylor University’s Stewardship Planning Ministry, which he launched for them. Most recently, Jay founded the Stewardship Resource Group to serve Christian ministries, colleges, and churches to better minister to their highest capacity families. He has written six books, hundreds of articles and has provided extensive training curriculum for hundreds of professional financial and legal advisors in how to provide stewardship planning services for their clients.