



Excerpts from Book Two

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Chapter One

Reading the Bible

His Instruction (Calling)

Another way that God can speak to us from the Bible is by giving us direction in important decisions in our lives, such as when He calls us to do a specific work. In his book, *Come Let Us Go* Peter Yarrell tells how some years ago he and his wife Jill had been led by God to buy a block of land overlooking Lake Hayes near Queenstown in New Zealand. They were going to establish a hostel on it where up to 35 people could stay and spend time with the Lord in peace and quiet.

Peter Yarrell had previously read the story of how Francis and Edith Schaeffer had left America to establish L'Abri in Switzerland. This story made a big impact on Peter and he discussed it with his wife. Peter and Jill talked about how the Schaeffers had received confirmation of their thoughts and prayers in the form of a scripture they believed that the Lord had given them from Isaiah 2:1–3. While the scripture was referring to people going up to the Mountain of the Lord in the latter days, the Schaeffers had personalised it, and they believed it confirmed they were to establish a guest home for Christians wanting to come aside from their busy lives to spend time with God.

The Yarrells were quite excited about Edith Schaeffer's book and something deep down inside them resonated with the story. They believed the Lord was leading them do to a similar work in New Zealand, but they were not totally sure whether it was just the way they felt, or whether God had inspired the idea. They prayed about the situation and then went to their daily Bible reading. The reading for that day was Micah 4:1–2, and it was exactly the same description from Scripture that the Schaeffers had received, but from a different part of the Bible. They both marvelled at how God had confirmed what they believed, and they knelt together and praised Him.

Peter and Jill were amazed that not only was the reading exactly the same as the Schaeffers, but the fact that God had provided it the same day they had prayed and committed the idea to Him.

Chapter Two

Our Conscience

When Does a Person's Conscience Function?

Hallesby explains in his book *Conscience* that a person's conscience can function before, during or after an event, and that it can be either a bad or a good conscience.

It functions beforehand by instructing a person not to do what they are thinking of doing, or encouraging them to carry out what they are thinking. It functions during an event by reinforcing a person's earlier actions when they have actually responded, either positively or negatively. However, this is the time when the conscience's impact is weakest, because the person has become absorbed with what they are doing. Conscience functions after an event by objecting to what has happened – if it is the wrong choice – which causes the person conflict and embarrassment, or by agreeing with it so that the person feels happy and contented.

Dr Hallesby also explains that when something really bad happens, a person's conscience can make them despise and loathe themselves. Although the outward appearance may look to be in order, psychological research has shown that the negative event can become deep-seated in the person's subconscious, and ultimately lead to suicide.

On the other hand, when something really good happens, the quality of the pleasure that is experienced is quite intense. Anyone who has been successfully used by the Lord knows what that is like. The person feels enriched and fulfilled and these feelings can lead to both mental and physical well-being.

It is interesting to note that Dr Hallesby says that the depth of response to the conscience is not something solely for Christians to experience. They can also be evident in the life of non-believers because, as Matthew 5:45 states,

For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. (NLT)

In Romans Chapter Two, Paul says there are diligent non-believers who not only know about the Law, but who allow their consciences to bind them to that Law and also to obey it. This behaviour has been confirmed by missionaries who have met people with responsive consciences who were leading upright lives despite the lack of a biblical world view.

Chapter Three

His Still, Small Voice

Christian Journaling: A personal record of occurrences, experiences and reflections with God

We do not have to talk to the Lord about only spiritual and important matters. He is very happy to be part of our everyday lives. We can understand this more if we think about what it might have been like for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Also, we can see God's desire for involvement with us more clearly in what the Bible says in the following verses:

Then you will call out, and the LORD will answer.
You will cry out, and he will say, 'Here I am' (Isaiah 58:9a NCV).

Then they will call on me, and I will answer them (Zechariah 13:9b NCV).

Then you will call my name. You will come to me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will search for me. And when you search for me with all your heart, you will find me! (Jeremiah 29:12–13 NCV).

But if any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He is generous to everyone and will give you wisdom without criticizing you (James 1:5 NCV).

And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him (Hebrews 11:6 NLT).

Some readers might wonder why God would be interested in small details. After all He has billions of people across the Earth to consider. To understand this a bit better, let us look at the sort of detail God does consider:

What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows (Luke 12:6–7 NLT).

Look at the birds. They do not plant seeds. They do not gather grain. They have no grain buildings for keeping grain. Yet God feeds them. Are you not worth more than the birds? (Luke 12:24 NLT).

These verses are a statement about God's omniscience, His ability to know *all* things. This means that He notices every small detail.

Yes, this includes everything that happens in everyone's life – yours and mine.

But it does not stop there. How we handle the small situations in life determines how we are likely to handle the bigger ones. If we look at people around us we can see all sorts of examples of this. There is the person who is regularly late to work. No one may say anything, but when dependability is important what happens to this worker? They are avoided. Why? Because if they are late to work can they be relied on to be punctual in other matters? It may be something like getting an assignment completed on time, or being on time for an important meeting. Consider also whether someone who cannot be trusted with a few dollars, could be trusted with a large amount of money?

The reverse of this is also generally true. If someone is consistently honest, can they be relied on to tell the truth over a big issue? Most probably. If an apprentice has mastered some of the basic skills in his job, is he ready to move on to more complicated work? Almost certainly.

The Lord sees all this too:

For sure, I tell you, anyone who gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he follows Me, will not lose his reward (Matthew 10:42 NLV).

His owner said to him, 'You have done well. You are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will put many things in your care. Come and share my joy' (Matthew 25:21 NLV).

For unless you are honest in small matters, you won't be in large ones.
If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities (Luke 16:10 TLB).

Our attitudes help determine what our actions and reactions to situations are likely to be. This is therefore an important area for God to focus on. At one stage in my life I could not see why certain issues that were really important to me were not just as important to others. Likewise, if the Lord was highlighting something in my life that needed addressing, then why were others that I saw with the same problem not dealing with it too? Maybe I needed to talk to them about it?

The Lord gently showed me that it was not my responsibility to try and sort out anyone else's problems. That was His job. He also showed me that we all have different life experiences, and while He may be working with me to resolve an issue, it may not be appropriate for Him to do the same with others whose experiences have been different to mine.

When I was journaling, I found that after 20–30 minutes I would have two sides of an A4 sheet of paper with queries, comments and responses that I could review. On many occasions it was as if I was talking to myself, but there were other times when there was a gem of a comment that was phrased differently to the way I would normally speak, or something was said that I had never thought of before. It was these times when I was confident that I was tuning in to God's voice.

Once this procedure has been developed, a Christian will no longer be limited to just a written exercise, but will be able to apply the same principles wherever they are, as a part of normal prayer.

Finally, we should be careful that when we pray, we are not so busy doing the talking that we do not allow time to hear if the Lord wants to respond. This is just unloading and does not allow for a two-way relationship.