



INSTRUCTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

ENTRY 21-12

GOD'S VOICE AT CHRISTMAS

God can speak to us with a shout or a whisper, but His words always bring purpose and life. He speaks at unlikely times. He calls us when we are young, when we are adults, and when we are seniors. God speaking to us, however, is not something that comes out of the blue; it is initiated by human behavior. Scripture says, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8). In other words, if you seek the Lord with all your heart, you will find Him. And if you are listening intently with a heart of faith, He will speak to you. It happened nine months before the first Christmas. The angel visited a young virgin and told her she would have a baby. When God searched for a woman to be the mother of His Son, He did not choose randomly. He found a girl who was already seeking and worshipping Him. She was drawing close to God and He drew close to her. Then Gabriel came to Mary with a message that surprised her, and the Christmas story began.

WHISPERS FROM GOD

It often begins because someone like a grandmother or even a complete stranger prays for your salvation. Then Jesus will whisper to you. Like with young Samuel, at first you may not recognize his voice (see 1 Samuel 3). I am sure that Samuel's mother prayed for him on a daily basis. If people keep praying for you, God will keep whispering. The whispers may come in the form of a dream, a stirring in your heart, unbelievable circumstances that somehow come together, or just an awesome wonder as you look up at the stars on a beautiful night. When God whispers, you are expected to respond. You have to draw near to God by initiating a conversation with Him. When you do, you must open your heart and expect that God will speak to you in some personal way. He will, and at first you may think it is just your imagination, but if you dare to believe and press in, His voice will become clearer. Then you will find that you are starting to enjoy a personal relationship with the Almighty. The more you speak, listen, believe and obey Him, the more He will speak to you. Then you enter the realm where you and the Lord are always speaking to each other. I'm sure that this was the kind of life that Mary had with God, and is why He chose her to be the mother of Jesus.



CHRISTMAS IS COMING

I write this message at the end of November, with great anticipation of Christmas. Actually, for me it is already here a month before the actual day arrives. I love it and I press in, talking with God about the many details of the season. I ask the Lord how I can be a blessing to others, to my family, my friends, our church congregation, and to many who suffer around the world. I will hear from God, and I will bless many people as God directs. Ultimately, I hope that all will become followers of Jesus, repent of their sins and become His disciples.

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

One of the keys to being a disciple is to discover the big picture of God's blessings in your life. With all of your giving and serving and helping others at Christmas, you should not lose your peace or your joy in the process. That is the big picture. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. There are times of hardship that all of us face, but this is not the permanent place where we live. All of us should learn how to be overcomers and live a life of celebration and joy. Some of that joy comes as we serve, give and bless others.

Mary had such a difficult time preparing for the birth of Jesus, and she delivered Him under such primitive conditions. Nevertheless, Mary is not seen as a complainer, instead she is welcoming shepherds and rejoicing with the miraculous birth of her child. Even in your most difficult hours, the joy of the Lord will be your strength. It is then that your conversations with God are most important.

THE ANNUNCIATION

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel came to a virgin who lived in Nazareth. It was a distant, tiny town in a remote place and Mary was an unknown, seemingly unimportant resident of the village. Yet God chose that place, and that young girl to bring about the most significant blessing the world has ever known. Gabriel announced the coming of Jesus and Mary became the most famous lady in all of history.

You never know what will happen when God speaks and illuminates your future. Whether He speaks to you in a whisper or with a booming voice, His plans for you are higher than yours. Every year I enter the Christmas season with increased anticipation that God will speak to me with fresh revelation. It is one of the reasons I like this season so much. What will He announce to you this year? It may be something small or something with far-reaching consequences. Regardless of its scope, it will always be adventurous.



GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Immediately after the announcement of the incarnation, Mary left for the hill country to visit her great aunt Elizabeth, whom the angel said was also pregnant. She had already been with child for six months and nobody except her and Zechariah knew. For Mary, the adventure of hearing God continued to be more thrilling with each passing day. Now Mary was connecting with Elizabeth, and she was about to have an amazing Holy Spirit time with her. Walking through life with the Lord is fantastic and the Christmas story highlights that personal journey better than any other.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom10:17). So, talk with the Lord and listen to what He says. Soon you will be celebrating Christmas in a whole new way. He will lead you to unfamiliar territory and you'll be challenged to get out of your comfort zone. You will learn to serve better, give more and bless more people. That is God's mission for your life. Then you will discover a happier you. Hearing God's voice will fill your world with awe and wonder and make life worth living. He is the Christ-child. He is the Savior, Christ the Lord. Draw near to Him, listen His words, and live the life that you have been called to live.

Instructions in Righteousness is produced by Christians for Messiah Ministries (CFM). Dr. Peter Wyns is the President of CFM and the Head Pastor of Antioch International Church. He has served as a pastor for 54 years and traveled to more than 45 nations.

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