

How God Guides Us

Session 3: Through Jesus' Words in Sacred Scripture

I. Opening Prayer

The passages that will be prayerfully read as part of the opening prayer are the Scriptural foundation for this teaching.

- “Thy Word (in the Bible) is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.”
(Psalm 119:105)
- “All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching – for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- “Don’t lose sight of My words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning.”
(Proverbs 4:21-22)

II. The TEACHING for Session 3: How God Guides Us through Jesus' Words in Sacred Scripture

A key point to remember from session 2 – “God will guide us one step at a time” – is that it is essential that we not only speak with God but that we also allow time to listen to Him during our quiet time of prayer.

One of the most concrete ways that God will guide us is through the Scriptures. It is amazing to know that God speaks directly to us through this incredible gift of His revealed Word in the Bible.

We want to enter the time of prayer by focusing on God’s words in a Scriptural passage. We desire to open our hearts and follow His direction as we come to understand His guidance. God *will* guide us. He cares about every minute detail in our lives. We want to bring to Him what may seem like trivial matters, but to Him and to us are important, such as, “What shirt should I wear for this occasion?” And an obviously more important one, “Do I need to apologize to this person?” It is comforting to know that the Lord will guide us in all aspects of our life.

To prayerfully read the Bible, we need to ask the Holy Spirit for help in understanding what is being read and how it applies to our life. Sometimes as we are reading, the Lord will “quicken” or “highlight” a verse or passage in our heart – it will speak to us personally and help us to know our next step in His way for us. When we receive these very personal words from God, we will be energized, encouraged and strengthened by them.

One example of God highlighting a verse from Scripture is illustrated in what a friend related to me. She was experiencing discouragement, and was needing to know that Jesus knew her and cared about her personal situation. She was reading the Scripture, which included the phrase “oh you of



little **faith**" (Mt 14:22-33). Why did this simple phrase encourage her and move her so deeply? She comes from a small town called **Faith**, South Dakota. For her, through that personal word, God was telling her that He knows everything about her and He cares deeply for her.

When we pray with a Scripture passage, we offer the Holy Spirit the opportunity in our heart to make a connection between the passage and a personal situation in our own life. This could be encouragement as was given to my friend, a challenge, or specific guidance that we might be seeking. Importantly, when reading the Scripture, we are continually receiving overall direction for life.

How do I make God's Word a part of my daily prayer? The best way to begin reading the Bible is by starting with 5 minutes a day. A good place to begin is the Gospel of Luke, prayerfully reading one short passage of Chapter One, so that it can be read over a second time in the same sitting. The next passage of Chapter One may be prayerfully read and pondered the following day and so on, until reading that book straight through. It is also beneficial to follow a set schedule, reading Scripture at the same time each day so it will not become just a "hit or miss" commitment.

God's Word is always *alive* and new for us and it has the power to be "spot on" to what is happening in our life at that moment. Receiving guidance in answer to a specific request will not happen every time. Our faithfulness is what is important and when we *need* to hear from God, He knows how to get through to us.

We don't want to seek God's guidance through the Bible *just* during times of crisis. God is always speaking to us through His Word of Truth, to each person individually. Therefore, we need to read God's Word on a daily basis, first and foremost, to get to know **Jesus**. Even more importantly than discovering His guidance, we want to know the Guide.

Life becomes exciting and peaceful when we know that the God of the universe cares and that He will guide us through His Word in Scripture.

A simple "Praying with Scripture" prayer worksheet to pray with a Scripture passage is available for download by returning to the webpage, and is listed under Session 3: diolc.org/prayer.

Discussion questions for small groups

Question 1. What stood out for you? or What resonated most with your personal situation currently? Why? Summarize below.

Question 2. Why is taking time each day to prayerfully read the Bible so important?

Question 3. Summarize in one or two sentences what your takeaway is from this section.



Question 4. If you were going to relate something from “God Guides Us through Jesus’ Words in Sacred Scripture” to your family tonight at the dinner table, what would you tell them? Would you

- 1) share the story with them or
- 2) mention something that was helpful to you from the teaching or
- 3) bring up something that resonated with you in connection with your own life experience?

III. Helpful Scripture passages about God’s guidance (20 min)

God has revealed to us in the Scriptures that He will us guide us through prayerfully reading His Word. Read the following Scripture passages below.

- Jesus said, “If you live according to My teaching [His Word in the Bible], you are truly My disciples; then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)
- “All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching – for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8)
- “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)
- “O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.” (Isaiah 25:1)
- “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:105)
- “Is not My word like fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)
- “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)
- “Don’t lose sight of My words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning.” (Proverbs 4:21-22)

Question 1: Put a check mark by one of the passages above that interest you or touches your heart in some way. Why do you feel drawn to this passage?



Question 2: What particular word or words stand out or seem to speak to you most directly?

Question 3: As you take some quiet time to read over this passage 3 or 4 times, is there something more specific that relates to you personally?

Question 4: Would you describe this experience as something encouraging or hopeful or consoling or comforting or energizing? These would be the hallmarks that identify it as coming from God.

Discuss your responses with another person or a small group.

IV. True, modern-day stories that relate How God Guides Us through Jesus' Words in Sacred Scripture

Read both stories below, one written by a man and the other written by a woman, regarding their reception of God's guidance through prayerfully reading the Bible. These stories reveal how the Holy Spirit still gives guidance through prayerfully reading the Sacred Scriptures.

Story 1

'Feeding the Angels' by Keith Miller

A friend of mine seemed so serene in the face of dragons (the problems and pains) of life. "I quit feeding them!" she told me. "I quit nursing the lizards (my doubts and fears) while they're small and it keeps them from becoming those huge, fierce dragons."

I made a conscious effort to do the same, and it helped. But from time to time an emotional lizard would appear that I couldn't seem to avoid feeding. Finally, one sleepless night, I cried out to God, and a memory came into my mind. I was a boy, and my mother was telling me, "What you put in your mind on a regular basis is what you will become in a few years, or even a few months."

So I began to memorize Bible passages that would, if I really lived them, change me into a strong, confident man of God. One was Paul's admonition from Philippians 4:8. I added the Twenty-third Psalm, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, the Beatitudes and others.

Yesterday someone in our prayer group asked me, "What are you feeding the lizards these days?"

I smiled and said, "You'll never believe it, but the 'food' I'm putting in my mind now is the Word of God."



“Do the lizards eat it?”

“Gosh, no, they *hate* it.”

My friend smiled and asked, “Then to whom are you feeding the Word?”

“Um, “I said, thinking about that, “I guess I’m feeding the angels God sent to free me from my fears.”

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Story 2 *‘Bless Them That Curse You’ by Louise Majors*

During the summer, before our children went off to elementary school, I started looking for a job. I pounded the pavement unsuccessfully for weeks. Then I answered an ad placed in the *Los Angeles Times* by the California Institute of Technology.

The opening turned out to be for an accounting clerk at the Cooperative Wind Tunnel facility, which tested aircraft parts for strength and wind resistance. Carl Jorgensen, who headed the finance department, was a matter-of-fact man who peered kindly through his black-rimmed eyeglasses and said, “Louise, you have excellent qualification. If you are willing to start at minimum wage, a dollar and nineteen cents an hour, you can begin next Monday.”

I gulped. In my previous job, before I took years off to rear our children to school age, I’d made in a day almost as much as he was offering for a week. But I’d already been turned down for six other jobs. “Thank you, Mr. Jorgensen,” I replied. “I want the job very much.”

Come Monday morning I went directly to Carl Jorgensen’s office. His cheeriness put me at ease, and I followed him as he introduced me to the office staff. “Everyone here goes by first names,” he said. He stopped at the first desk. “Hildur is our payroll clerk. Hildur, this is Louise, our new accounting clerk.”

I smiled, “I’m glad to meet you Hildur.”

She was grandmotherly with soft, wavy white hair, rimless eyeglasses, smooth fair complexion-pleasant looking. She looked me up and down, then her expression changed. Getting up, she railed, “We don’t need an accounting clerk. I don’t know why you were hired!” She slammed shut the record book she’d been posting, snatched up her purse and stomped out the door.

Everyone’s mouth dropped open. I stood stupefied, feeling the blood surge to my neck and face. This was awful!

Carl Jorgensen was quick to regain his composure and started more introductions: “Bernice, Manna and Esther, the last desk on the right, are members of the steno pool. Joy is our mail clerk and relief switchboard-operator. Please welcome Louise.”



It didn't take long to be welcomed. The "girls" (as even we called ourselves back in the forties and fifties) were very kind and helpful, and they asked me to have lunch with them later.

I'd just returned from Carl's office with my first assignment when Hildur appeared. She ignored everyone, slammed drawers, and was testy on the telephone and to people stopping at her desk. There was no conversation in the office until shortly before noon.

"Did you bring your lunch today, Hildur?" Bernice asked.

Hildur looked up warily. "Is she going to lunch with you?"

"Yes"

"I'm working." Hildur snapped."

I liked the "girls"; they were relaxed and friendly. But I was troubled by Hildur. On the way back to the office I mentioned I was going to bring my lunch and study in my car, starting tomorrow. I didn't want to be the reason for Hildur not eating with the others. She would soften up after a bit, I reckoned.

Meantime, I was enjoying the bustle of the Wind Tunnel facility – the Tunnel" as we called it. Four or five times a day the warning bells would go off, and we'd hear the high whine of the turbines that generated the air flow in the test chamber. I loved the family atmosphere in the halls and offices. No matter whether you were greeting a hard hat or a world-famous scientist, it was "Hi, Ted" or "Hi, Fred," with a genuine friendliness and a shared sense of mission.

Yet Hildur didn't mellow. Weeks passed, and the tension only worsened. When I was out of the office, the other women said Hildur was congenial and talkative. The minute I walked in, she fell glaringly silent. Each morning she would ignore my cheery greeting.

I searched the Bible and ended up by pasting my mother's favorite Scripture in my middle desk drawer. As Hildur rebuffed each of my advances, I referred to it: "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matthew 5:44, KJV). I nearly wore out that drawer as the weeks went by.

A couple of months passed. One of the women I'd come to know in the next office was retiring. We all chipped in for a little afternoon send-off party that I looked forward to. Maybe I could get an opportunity to talk with Hildur in this kind of a setting.

I was just getting ready to go when Bernice called over to Hildur, "Aren't you going to the party?"

Hildur glared over at me, then at Bernice. "Is she going?"

"Well, of course," Bernice said, "we're all going."

"Then I'm not."



I gritted my teeth and then said as evenly as I could, “Oh Bernice, you all go on without me. I’ve some catching up to do. Maybe I’ll come in later.”

But after they’d gone, I brooded. I pulled open my drawer, and there was the message. “Do good to them that hate you,” I read aloud. Then I said, “Lord, You know I’m doing that. My question is: How long must this go on?”

As if by answer, I recalled a scene of twenty years before, when I’d had a falling-out with an adolescent friend. I was back in Mother’s kitchen and she was telling me, “Seventy times seven, that’s how often Jesus told us to forgive. Remember, Louise, the only way to destroy an enemy is to make a friend of him.”

I shut my drawer gently. “Thank You, Lord,” I whispered.

A couple of months later, on a windy March day, we had a torrential rainstorm. Creeping along in our old green Pontiac coupe on my way home, windshield wipers batting furiously, I spotted Hildur standing at a bus stop, huddled under an umbrella. I stopped and flipped open the passenger door.

As kindly and as firmly as I could, I said, “Hildur, get in.” She hesitated a second and then lowered her umbrella and scrambled in. Water dripped from her hair and she looked soaked through. I turned up the heat. “Hildur, please give me directions as we go,” I asked.

Except for directions, she was silent all the way to her apartment in East Pasadena. Before dropping her off, I asked her if there was anything I could do. She said, “No, but thank you very much.”

After I had watched her disappear into her apartment, I exulted, “Well, praise the Lord, at least she talked to me!” All the way home I felt elated, singing the old hymn “Love Lifted Me.” Hildur may not have changed, but at last I felt better.

The next morning was bright, crisp and clear. “Good morning, Hildur!” I said when I got to the office.

“Good morning, Louise,” Hildur said with a shy smile. The whole office seemed to give a collective sigh of relief. The harmony was instant; it was as if someone had let the sunshine and singing birds right into the office.

That Friday Hildur and I went out to lunch. She admitted her job was her love, and that she had felt threatened when I was hired. She thought management intended to replace her with me. But over lunch we became friends.

On the way home from work I stopped in Pasadena, had my hair cut and styled, bought a geranium-red dress, patent leather shoes with a pocketbook that matched, and a nifty wide-brimmed straw hat. Mac and the kids went into shock when the “new me” walked in that night. “Wow,” Mac said, “I thought your job was getting you down!”

“That was last week,” I said. “Now it’s getting me up!”



And it stayed that way. Making a friend of Hildur was one of the hardest things I ever did, yet one of the most rewarding. It was wonderful to have her as a friend, and I have Jesus to thank for that.

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Discussion questions

Question 1: Underline the places where the persons received guidance. Briefly describe how the individuals received guidance from God by reading the Bible.

Question 2: How did these stories affect you?

Question 3: Do one or both of these stories or anything about them remind you of something in your own life?

Question 4: Did you find one or both of the stories consoling, challenging, comforting? Why?

Question 5: In reflecting on one of these true, modern-day stories, what is the take-away for you?

V. Closing Prayer: The 12th Grade Prayer Card

Using the "Seeking God's Guidance" Prayer Card, as found here diolc.org/prayer, pray the front side together as a group.

