How do I know its God?

Week 1: Allegiance

“Follow your heart”

“Be true to yourself”

“Believe in yourself”

“Live your Truth”

“As long as you are happy”

We hear a lot of these thing – ALL THE TIME – from the world around us, and sometimes even other Christ followers. But… Is this the message that Jesus has for us? More than that… if you get a feeling or an impulse – or maybe a “strong pull” toward something – is that God? Or is it just your own human nature? Or worse… is it an enemy distracting you from the things of God?

These are the questions we are going to try to answer during this next teaching series. We’ll attempt to debunk some mistruths and myths – while at the same time bolstering our collective discernment to serve each other better in our walk with Christ. All focused around a central question… “How do I know it’s God?”

We have talked about the importance of hearing God’s voice and then acting or obeying what he is communicating to you. But how do I know if its God and not just my own thoughts or something that my family, my friends, my boss or the culture is trying to get me to do.

The idea of discerning or being able to tell if it’s God communicating something or its another voice. Keep in mind that when we say things like distinguishing God’s voice, or what God is saying to me that doesn’t typically mean hearing an audible voice. God can speak to me through what I read in the bible, what I sense when I pray to him, what I hear from other believers and through his creation. That’s how God communicates but how do I “hear” him?

Sometimes its through words from the bible or another believer that just sticks with me. In my emotions I feel like this is something important. That could be The Holy Spirit. Or I hear it and it actually makes sense to me, I believe that I am hearing truth. Or it fits a need that I have in my life, a question I have had, something that is missing, and that question gets answered or missing spot gets filled. I suddenly realize that what I am doing is wrong, its hurting me and others and it just clearly doesn’t fit who Jesus is. It can be the motivation that life can be different for me, I can change. Other times there are circumstance in my life happening and I believe that God might be trying to tell me something through these circumstances.

Heart…emotions, motivation, passion

Mind…understanding, truth, answers to questions

Circumstances…events, life changes, good times or bad times

During this series we will also debunk some Christian nonsense that just isn’t biblical and therefore will not help us know whether it is God or something else moving on my life.

Here’s an example: “God is good, you are bad now go try harder.” Or how about this one, “God will never give you more than you can handle.” Ideas and thoughts like these make it almost impossible to decide what God is trying to say to me. The first one starts with an outright lie about the character of God. He doesn’t speak like that, and he isn’t like that. The second will cause us to view our circumstances in a way that isn’t accurate. If things get too hard then you will believe that God isn’t real because he is the one giving you more than you can handle. There’s a lot wrong with this one but I’m sure it will come up at some point in this series.

Today we begin with one of these more troubling and confusing ideas in scripture. This is where God’s kingdom is upside down from the way this broken world tries to operate.

**23**Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. **24**For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. Luke 9:23-24 NIV

None of this verse makes any sense in our culture. First of all, if you have a desire for something, a passion for something then to not go after it is really being phony. We have been conditioned to believe that we simply believe that Jesus is real and we get eternal life. We don’t really need to deny any of our urges.

“Take up your cross” that is almost offensive. That is another way of saying “take up your hangman’s noose, electric chair, lethal injection daily and follow me.” Think about people hanging pendants of an electric chair by a gold chain around their necks. People would think that’s morbid.

Losing is not winning in the world I live in. I remember Tiger Woods the great golfer once said that 2nd place is first loser.

What does it mean to lose your life and save it? Jesus is the example. He allowed himself to be killed so that he could return to life having accomplished something that he could never have accomplished had he not died and rose again.

**2**Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? **3**Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? **4**For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Romans 6:2-4 NLT

Jesus is our example and baptism is how we change the way we view losing our life to save it.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012%3A1%2D3&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28208b)] **2**Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 NLT

The odd image of a “living sacrifice.” Sacrifices don’t live they die - but not in this case. The Jewish readers would have understood this completely. The operation of the temple was based upon sacrifices of both grain and animal - that were burned up with the aroma going up to heaven. They took something that their hands had raised that had worth to them for food or to sell for money and then simply killed it and then burned it up. Sacrifices don’t live they die.

How does this help me know if its God who is speaking to me, or moving my emotions or at work in circumstances around me?

If what is offered costs me nothing, **it isn’t God**.

**18**Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: “Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

**19**“Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “Only God is truly good. **20**But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2018&version=NLT#fen-NLT-25676c)]”

**21**The man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”

**22**When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

**23**But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich. Luke 18:18-23

This man didn’t want something that would cost him. He wanted to explain how he already qualified to be in with God.

Keep in mind that giving up what you own isn’t the normative question for everyone. God doesn’t ask everyone to sell all they have. He just knew that this would get at this man’s heart.

If it doesn’t demand change, **it isn’t God**.

Demanding change and providing the ability to change is love.

**12**Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **13**for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Phil. 2:12-13

“demonstrate proof of your salvation”

Not head but heart…

Here we can see that God “works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” That’s giving us both the want to or the desire to and the ability to. He helps us want to be different more like him and then he gives us the power to become that person.

If it demands allegiance no matter the cost, **it is God**.

Allegiance is “loyalty or commitment of a subordinate to a superior or of an individual to a group or cause”

Allegiance is different from qualifying…back to the rich man story, qualified means I have it coming to me. Allegiance means being grateful and willing to sacrifice for. Contrast with what we pledge to in America because of what America does for us. Why would any less be ok with God. Soldiers willing to die for America, to sacrifice again anything less for God makes no sense.

We do the pledge of allegiance while looking at the flag. In VBS we would pledge allegiance to the American flag and then to the Christian flag. That seems strange to me now. As a kid its just what we did each year during VBS.

**16**Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? **17**But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. **18**You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. Romans 6:16-18 NIV

Allegiance to Jesus means that I am set free. In becoming a slave to Jesus I can be free and seen as righteous in God’s eyes. I receive Jesus’ righteousness as a gift but only in becoming his slave. I know its upside down but to renounce my status as a free agent and give my allegiance to Jesus no matter the cost I become completely free.

The opposite is true if I give no allegiance to Jesus then my allegiance is to myself. That means I am still in my sin and God sees my sin instead of Jesus’ righteousness. That does not lead to freedom but instead leads to death.

In baptism we say we give our allegiance to Jesus no matter the cost. We use this exact phrase before dunking the person under the water. This act of baptism means that you have already given your allegiance to Jesus no matter the cost and today you are proclaiming for all to see. Its on step of obedience proving to whom you belong.

We are not talking about allegiance to Eagle Ridge we are talking to King Jesus. Eagle Ridge is the fellowship within which I have my home base. Dow and MHS each have school spirit but we are all Americans.

Allegiance means I am willing to be sent. Willing to be deployed.

Let’s review. We know that its not God if it cost me nothing and I can stay just as I am. If that is what I am thinking about my life then I’m getting those messages from someplace other than Jesus. Jesus is not going to say, “I went to the cross, suffered died, was separated from my heavenly father so that the people who associate with my name don’t have any discomfort by joining with me. And if that isn’t enough, they can stay exactly as they are, where they are in whatever ruts, bondage, addictions, sinful patterns that lead to spiritual and then physical death. No if its God speaking to me through my thoughts, emotions or circumstances it will always be a message of dying to self and giving ones complete allegiance and trust to Jesus.

Let’s dig a little deeper into this idea of allegiance. Allegiance to Jesus means I submit to him.

This brings us back full circle to losing your life, dying with Christ in baptism and giving yourself as a living sacrifice.

He’s on my team

**Trust** in the Lord with all your heart
    and lean not on your own understanding;
**6**in all your ways submit to him,
    and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Soldier…the unbreakable rule is the chain of command.

All but John died for Jesus. Because of their willingness to submit and allegiance to him the gospel moved forward and we have benefited from their sacrifice.

Return to “die to self”.

Steps of Obedience

1. Take the 3 for 30 Challenge.

Images from last week ie 30 day challenge. We must have the Jesus paradigm if we are to debunk or discern. The human paradigm is the “I’m qualified”.

1. What lie have I believed?