

The Refiner's Fire ***Dying Like a Seed***

Lesson #12 for December 22, 2007

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 2:12-3:18; 13:1-14; Zechariah 4:1-14; Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 2:5-9.

1. This lesson is about “complete surrender” to God’s will. Are we willing to “die like a seed”? What does that mean? When seeds mature on a stalk, they fall or are harvested. They may wait for a long period of time doing nothing. Then, when placed in the right surroundings, they sacrifice everything—even disintegrating—in the process of giving birth to a new plant. What does that teach us about the Christian life? (John 12:24)
2. Which seems more of a challenge to you at this point in your life: 1) Knowing for sure what God’s will is for your life, or, 2) Carrying out God’s will, once you know for sure what it is?
3. If we pray to God and tell Him that we are prepared to do whatever He asks us to do, is His will always immediately obvious? How do we respond if God’s plan for our life is not immediately obvious? How do we deal with the unknown? How do we deal with the stresses of day-by-day life?
4. It is not always easy to be certain what God is saying to us? Do we need to practice our “God listening” skills? Or has God stopped speaking to humans because we have ignored Him for so long?
5. When we consider doing God’s will in our lives, are we really convinced that His will and His plan for us are better than our own? Why is it so difficult for us to accept that idea?
6. Read Philippians 2:5-9. Think of the steps that Jesus went through from His role as the Commander of the universe to the cross. He first veiled His divinity and walked among the angels as Michael, the Archangel. Then, at a later time, He veiled His divinity further and became a human baby and lived as a human being. Finally, through His experiences in Gethsemane and Calvary, He sacrificed everything—dying the death of a common criminal. Jesus did not have to do any of those things! Each step was made voluntarily. How many rights did Jesus give up descending from divinity to death? How often do we “exert our rights” instead of submitting to God’s will?
7. How do you fit together what is said in John 12:24, Philippians 2:5-8, and Galatians 5:23? There, we are told that the last part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. How does that relate to surrendering as a sacrifice? What is the difference between “self-reliance” and “self-control”?
8. In our world the theme seems to be “survival of the fittest”! The “world” seems to want to exercise its rights, its control over others, its supremacy. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* suggests that before we can really know God’s will for our lives, we must “die to self.” How can we overcome our natural, human tendency and choose to “die to self”? Why is that necessary? What are the biggest barriers to complete sacrifice? What do you think God is asking us to do in Romans 12:1,2?
9. Why is surrender of our plans for our own lives and surrender of our own selfish desires referred to as “death”?
10. Read Romans 6:1-3. Do our old selfishness and our selfish desires die when we are baptized? How different is the new, “baby” Christian that rises from the “grave” after baptism?

11. Thinking about “complete surrender,” could you do what Jesus did in Gethsemane and on Calvary and give up everything, not knowing for sure if you would ever rise from the dead?
12. Are we afraid of the “dying experience” because it is such an unknown or because we are afraid that what God will ask us to do is something that we are not comfortable with or that we do not want to do?
13. Growing up and becoming more mature is generally a process of learning how to make better choices for oneself. How does that fit with the idea of “complete surrender”?
14. How would your life be different today if you were doing exactly what God wanted you to do? Does God want us to be completely passive?
15. Read 1 Samuel 2:12-3:18. What was the basic difference between the attitude and actions of Eli’s sons and those of Samuel, the child? Have you ever heard God’s voice speaking to you audibly in the middle of the night? Why doesn’t God do that for us? Is it because we have a hard time listening? Do we even listen to each other?
16. How would you compare the experience of Samuel as a child with that of Abraham as an old man? Both heard voices in the middle of the night. It was hard for Samuel to tell Eli the message which God gave him. But, it involved no real personal sacrifice. Abraham was afraid to tell anyone—especially his wife—and he did not even tell Isaac until three days later! But Abraham’s mission involved a terrible “sacrifice.” Have you ever had either of those types of experiences?
17. We have often suggested that Eve’s sin was doubting God’s word. Why did she do that? Was it because she believed that she was smart enough and wise enough to look after herself? How often do we do that?
18. Read 1 Samuel 13:1-14. What do you think you would have done if you had been in Saul’s place? Did God intentionally delay Samuel? Did Saul have any idea why Samuel was delayed? Did he have any idea when Samuel would arrive? Fearing attack by the Philistines at any moment, was it wrong for Saul to seek God’s blessing on himself and his army?
19. How often have we been frustrated by the delay or incompetence or unwillingness to cooperate from other human beings? Does God use those modalities to test us?
20. In your daily experience, what do you truly rely on? Your own judgment? The counsel of others? The guidance of the Holy Spirit? Read Zechariah 4:6. In the context of the life and mission of Zechariah, what do you think that verse meant? God did not remove the obstacles in the way of completing the building of the temple. But He told Zechariah not to depend on human might or power but rather, to depend on the way the Spirit works. How does the Spirit work? How does the Spirit want to work in our lives?
21. Are we following God’s will for our lives as far as it is known at the present time? Do we need to do that before God gives us further instructions? Is fear of the unknown your biggest barrier to accepting God’s will for your life?

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