



Welcome to Spiritual Formation in Community

“If God would speak to people just like me and work in their lives, he would speak to me and work in my life.”

Check-In



***Describe your emotional
weather...***
(stormy, cloudy, calm, sunny)

***“If God were going to tell you
something, what would it be?”***

Homework Review

God desires a **personal, dynamic, interactive and conversational** relationship with us.

The type of relationship we have with God will determine the quality of our communication.

Homework Review

Personal

Of or belonging to a particular person rather than anyone else, and concerning one's private life, thoughts, and emotions

Dynamic

Characterized by constant change, activity or progress; positive in attitude and full of energy and new ideas

Interactive

Influencing and having an effect on each other; allowing a two-way flow of information between two people; acting and responding

Conversational

Appropriate to a casual conversation; thoughts, feelings and ideas are expressed; questions are asked and answered; news and information is exchanged

Describe a person in your life with whom you share all four characteristics?

What is different about those relationships than all others you may have?

How many of the four characteristics does your relationship with God have?

What would increase the quality of your relationship with God?

Guidance is a process where some person, thing, or sequence of events is brought to follow a definite course

Not guidance as through a **navigation system** with **turn-by-turn directions** or a **crystal ball**

But guidance more like...

- The **train** is guided by the **rails** upon which it runs
- The **driver** guides the **car**
- The **writer** guides the **pen** or **keyboard**
- The **radar** guides the **airplane**
- The **stars** guide the **ship captain**
- The **teacher** guides the **class**
- The **parent** guides the **child**

Guidance

Guidance

Manipulating our thoughts, feelings & will in robotic control

Pharaoh's Heart - Exodus 7:3 - *God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs andn wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you."*

Nehemiah's Inclination - Nehemiah 2:12 - *God put it in Nehemiah's heart to rebuild Jerusalem*

Joseph's Brothers - Genesis 45:5-8 - *Jacob's son, 17 years old; brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"*

Saul on the road to Damascus – Acts 9:1-19 – *blinded by a light from heaven*

Or Guidance could be different...

- **Addressing** us in a **personal, dynamic, interactive** and **conversational** relationship
- **Protecting** our **worth** and **value** as **rational beings** with the **capacity to reason**
- **Growing** us **intellectually, emotionally, physically, relationally,** and **spiritually**
- **Teaching** us to combine **knowledge** with **understanding** to acquire **wisdom**
- **Producing** in our **inner being** a powerful **Kingdom partner** deeply in love with his Circle of Four!

Immersion in the Biblical Experience



We must immerse ourselves in the Biblical Experience

The Bible is not a **novel** with **made-up characters** and a **fantasy story**

The Bible is **actual history** with **real people** just like **us living real lives** just like we live.

Bible characters were **young** and **old**, **tired** and **full of energy**, **single** and **married**, **hungry** and **full**, **disciplined** and **undisciplined**, **nervous** and **courageous**, and mostly **broken** and **not a single one perfect**.

Bible characters were **just like you and me**, so we have to **believe** that **what we read** in the Bible could have **actually happened** to us

- We place ourselves in the story and see it happening to us
- We ask ourselves what it would have been like to be Moses or Joshua or Peter or Paul
- We imagine ourselves in their place

Immersing ourselves in the Biblical Experience helps us believe that if God would speak to people just like us and work in their lives, he would speak to us and work in our lives.

Immersion in the Biblical Experience



“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Mark 4:23

- God will not **compete** for our **attention**
- In most cases He **does not run over us**
- We need to **open our ears** and **seek His voice** by **looking** for it **everywhere**
- We are **searching** for, **listening** for, and **learning** to **recognize** his **voice**

Jeremiah 29:11-14a

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord...

***If we don't believe he would speak to us,
we won't likely do very much searching.***

A Phenomenon Plus a Voice

The Call of Abram

Father of the Jewish nation – smoking firepot and a blazing torch

Genesis 12:1-3 - Genesis 15:1-19

The Call of Moses

Lead Israel out of Slavery – a burning bush that was not consumed

Exodus 3:3-6

The Baptism of Jesus

God's approval of Jesus' ministry – a voice speaking and the Spirit in the form of a dove

Matthew 3:16-17

Jesus' Confrontation with Saul

The beginning of Saul's conversion – a blinding light with a voice but no person to be seen

Acts 9:3-8

A Supernatural Messenger or Angel

The Truth About Angels

Angels are **not human beings**; they are supernatural beings on a divine mission

At times God himself is seen as an angel or accompanying angels

In the dozens of accounts where people were encountering angels, the people all seemed to be in a normal state of mind, and except for fear and an elevated nervous system, they had normal conversations.

Genesis 16:7 - Hagar was running away from Sarai and the Angel of the Lord found her and told her to go back home and have her son; he would be the first of descendants too numerous to count

Genesis 18:1-15 - Abraham and two angels visit Abraham and Sarah, and reveal that within a week Sarah will be pregnant

Dozens and dozens of other mentions of angels as a messenger

Dreams & Visions

- Dreams and visions are not the same thing, but are similar and may have happened coincidentally
- Both involve some degree of trancelike condition with a certain detachment from the person's actual surroundings
- Some dreams are not visions and some visions are not dreams
- Dreams seem to require a little more interpretation; in the Bible visions are more specific and provide more clarity without interpretation

Acts 16:9-10 - At night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia telling him to come over to Macedonia and help them

Acts 9:10-12 - The Lord called to Ananias in a vision; and simultaneously to Saul in a vision as well

An Audible Voice

At times God has addressed human beings as simply a single audible voice.

Genesis 22:1-fff - God spoke to Abraham only as a voice about sacrificing his son, Issac

1 Samuel 3:1-14 - God spoke to Samuel as a boy, calling him to be a prophet, and inviting Samuel into what would develop one of the closest and most intimate conversational relationships with God any human being has ever had

A Human Voice

(These last two ways are most important)

They are **most suited** to God's presence in our lives as a **close personal friend**, and also most appropriate in the **development of our inner person's character**. **No method of communication is used more** in the Bible or the history of the church than the **voice of a definite, individual human being**.

Samuel Shoemaker, *With the Holy Spirit and with Fire*

"Something comes into our own energies and capacities and expands them. We are laid hold of by Something greater than ourselves. We can face things, create things, accomplish things, that in our own strength would have been impossible... The Holy Spirit seems to mix and mingle His power with our own, so that what happens is both a heightening of our own powers, and a gift to us from outside."

Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*

"This was of God speaking through human beings is best suited to God's purposes precisely because it most fully engages the faculties of free, intelligent beings who are socially interacting with agape love in the work of God as His co-laborers and friends."

Sometimes God **puts the words in our mouths**, and other times he simply **uses the words that come out**. Human beings are **not God's robots**.

Biblical References

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - Paul's lack of eloquence and dependence on the Spirit's power

Acts 4:13 - When the religious leaders saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and noted that Jesus was the one who had this effect on them.

Our Own spirit, and the Still Small Voice

God addresses us in our own spirit; our thoughts and feelings, and this is **the primary subjective way God speaks to us**

spirit = unbodily, non-physical, personal force

Our spirit includes our inner person - *identity, will, character, thoughts and feelings; and where the Spirit of God lives within us*

Proverbs 20:27 - the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, and he uses our spirit to search our deepest parts; It is in this place where God's Spirit speaks to and through our inner person

1 Corinthians 2:6-16 - Paul's description of wisdom from the Spirit speaking in and through our inner person (spirit)

(In every believer) **two spirit beings are unified and inhabit each other**

- His **thoughts** become our **thoughts**
- His **emotions** become our **emotions**
- His **laws** become the **foundation** of our **inner person**
- His **love** becomes our **love**
- His **faith** becomes our **faith**
- **Waking up in the Kingdom together**, we together **walk into the world with one mind and one purpose** - the **mind of Christ!**

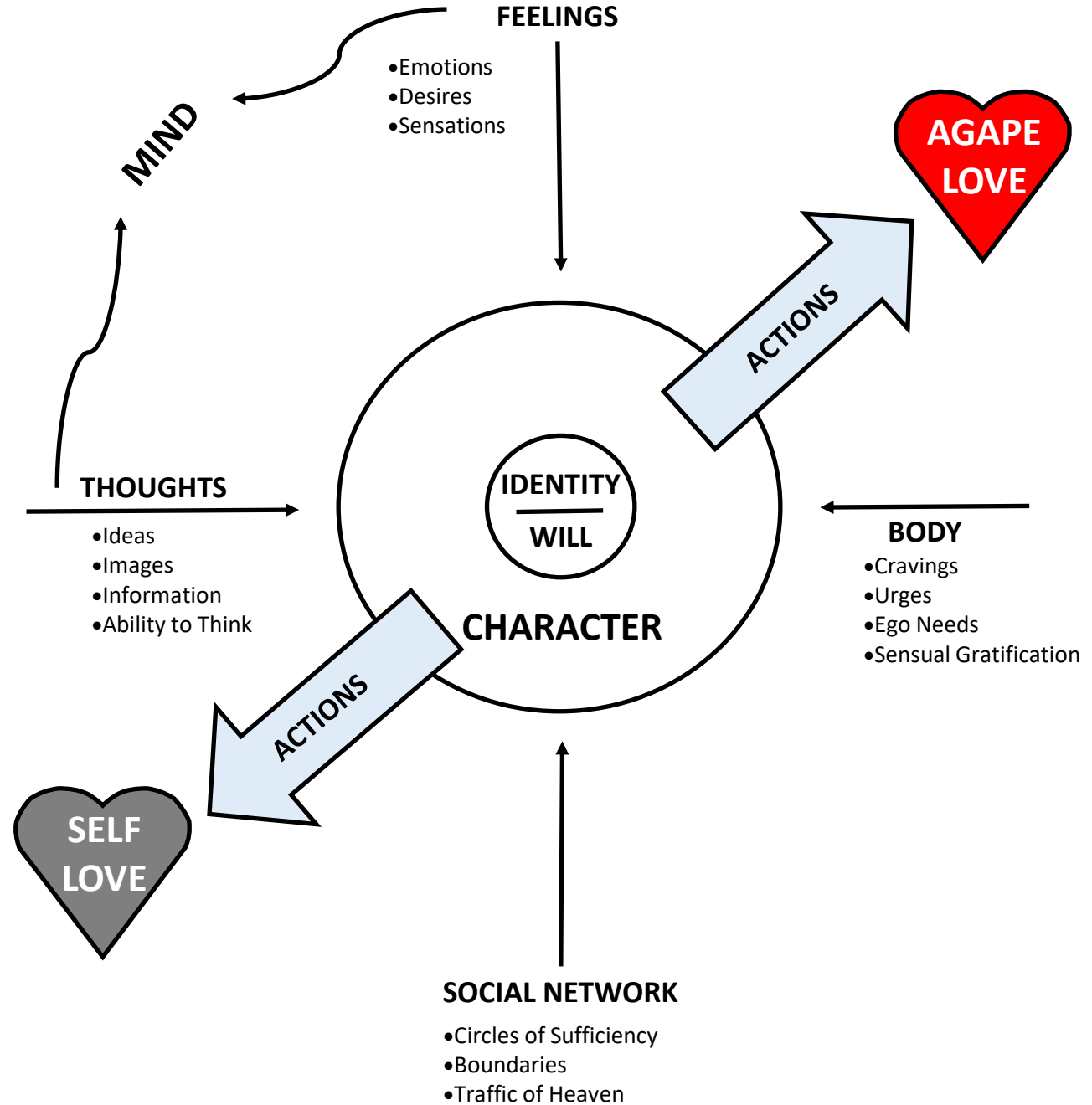
Pay close attention this week to two of the primary ways God speaks today.

- A human voice and your spirit - the still, small voice within
- Ask the Spirit to speak to you as often as you can think of it
- Listen for a response, and be prepared to do what he says
- Journal anything he tells you

Homework

An underwater photograph showing several divers swimming in clear blue water. The divers are silhouetted against the bright light filtering down from the surface. The word 'Homework' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

Spiritual Formation *in the Kingdom of God*



Your daily mantra...

I woke up in the Kingdom this morning

an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe



I breathe Kingdom air (LOVE)
I burn Kingdom fuel (GRACE)
I build Kingdom character
I do Kingdom work



Jesus came to show by example and to teach by principle how to have the best possible life in this physical world and preparation for the life to come at the same time