



Discerning God's Direction: Three Factors to Consider

(adapted from *Hearing From God*, by Phil Largent)

Main Idea: God uses people, events, and our own unique gifts to communicate with us.

Our subject remains hearing from God. I want to give you three spiritual factors to help you understand the ways in which God may direct you. Let us begin by looking at how we can be impacted through spiritual encounters with others. These could be encounters you have had with people who shared the gospel with you. Or perhaps an encounter with an important spiritual person through whom God spoke into your life. For example these encounters could have been with a pastor, youth leader, workmate, parent or grandparent, friend, etc. Let's begin by looking at the transformational encounter an Ethiopian had with the disciple Phillip.

Scripture: Acts 8:25–39

Take a moment and allow time for everyone in your group to read this passage.

Principle 1: *God speaks to us through spiritual encounters with other believers.*

- What did the Ethiopian expect from Phillip?
- How were his expectations met and possibly exceeded?
- How did the Ethiopian respond to Phillip?

Think back in your life. What are the significant spiritual encounters God has brought into your life? Take a moment and write down the names of those people with a one-word description of that encounter. This is important so that you can begin to identify the ways in which God has given you direction in your life.

Principle 2: *God speaks to us through significant events in our lives.*

I am speaking specifically of events wherein God directly impacts us and changes us. Maybe there is a special event where you remember God revealing a truth to you. The circumstance surrounding your initial decision to trust Jesus is a great example. Perhaps like me, God has met you in the wilderness and

demonstrated His great love to you. The birth of a child, a wedding, a graduation, etc., are all examples of possible events that God met and spoke to you in the midst of.

The Israelites had an event that is described in the book of Joshua that became a spiritual and physical marker of God's love and faithfulness.

Scripture: Joshua 4:1–9

(You may want to read chapter 3 to better understand the context.)

- What had God done for the Israelites?
- How were they instructed to respond to this event?
- In verse 7, what was the purpose of the stones?

Those stones became spiritual markers for all to see. They were to help remind current and future generations that God had provided in a personal and specific way.

What are the events, or spiritual markers from your past? How have you commemorated those experiences? How have they informed your direction in life?

Principle 3: *God speaks to us through our unique gifts and talents.*

I am speaking about who we are and what we have. For example, a store manager takes inventory to see what is "in stock" that will help the store be more successful. In the same way, God has placed unique skills, talents and gifts within us to help His Kingdom be more successful in the world.

Scripture: Romans 12:6-8

Have you done an inventory of who you are and what you have? Perhaps you have been given a good education. Or maybe you've acquired particular skills or trades. Maybe you've been given spiritual experiences that have added value to your life. Whatever those things are for you, the idea is not to hold on to them. Rather, can you channel that knowledge, experience, skill, etc., into the lives of others?

- What has God placed in your life that makes you who you are?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your specific skills, talents, and/or abilities?

Now ask yourself, "How can God use who He has created me to be to expand His Kingdom?"

Understanding the people, events, and talents that God has blessed you with should help inform your decision about God's direction for your life. God is not going to lead you off into a direction that is opposed to all He has done up to this point in your life. Your past and present are all about shaping the future God has for you.