

PRACTICAL ISSUES

- Does God place curses on a family or a culture for generations because of ancestral sins? Are we destined to make the same mistakes? Or does the Holy Spirit break any 'curse'?

Exodus 20:5-6 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

This is not “generationally related” but rather directed to two groups – those that hate God and those that love God. It is the GUILTY who bear the penalty of sin.

Exodus 34:6-7 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Ezekiel 18:2-4 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20-21 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

- How do you discern between emotions and real direction from the Holy Ghost?

2 Corinthians 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

1 John 3:18-22 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

- Living close to God is essential to hearing and knowing His voice. Lukewarmness, carnality and worldliness develop a distance between us and God until we cannot recognize Him when He speaks. Since there is a human and a divine will, conquering our will is a must before we can be submissive to God's will.
- God does not need to speak to us directly concerning anything already written in His Word! Although His Spirit may occasionally remind, convict or call us to obedience in these areas, God is not obligated to do so! His written word IS the voice of God! One-time calls can impact an individual for a lifetime. You may receive confirmations, renewals and encouragement, but just knowing God has spoken to you ONCE should motivate you to carry out His commands!
- We are to TRY the spirits, since a spirit of error and a spirit of truth exist simultaneously in the world (1 John 4:1-6). Paul even said that there are many voices in this world (1 Corinthians 14:10). These can come from Satan, others, or even our own mind.
- God leaves many things to common sense – after all, He gave you a brain to think with! Minor and insignificant decisions are best left to our God-given, built-in conscience and judgment. Of course, we always leave room for God to intervene, even in the mundane matters of daily life.
- SO HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?
- THROUGH GOD'S WORD. The Bible is the final authority on any matters that it addresses. Never accept anything if it contradicts the Bible!

- **THROUGH MEN OF GOD.** Men and women of God that you have confidence in because of their godly lives can help you know God's voice. God may also use them to speak directly to you.
- **DIRECTLY TO US.** God uses this method to call people into His service, or to give them specific direction. Haste should be guarded against in this instance! Calls from God don't die, but zeal will fade with time. New converts should become grounded in the truth before attempting to receive "direct orders" from God!
- **THROUGH GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.** Prophecy or tongues and interpretation are to be judged by the hearers. This doesn't mean that we criticize or ignore what is said, but rather that we judge its accuracy according to the Bible. New converts, watch how your Pastor reacts to such an utterance!
- **IN DREAMS AND VISIONS.** Both of these occur in the lives of most people without having any spiritual meaning! So, when relying on a dream as being a directive from God, it is essential for you to be absolutely sure that God is speaking. Again, check it out with the leadership that God has placed over you. If they are not "thrilled," put your dream on the shelf – if it is of God, it will happen without you forcing it!
- **THROUGH ANGELS.** God can send angels, but so can the devil! So, it is important again to be absolutely sure. If you have a deep desire to see an angel, but no corresponding deep desire to obey the plain commands of God's Word, you're already in trouble!
- **BY INNER IMPRESSION.** Certainly not all of our impressions are from God; most are from external cues or from our own mind. So, we must become sensitive in order to distinguish God's prompting. Trial and error will certainly come into play here; that is why **EXPERIENCE** and **CONSISTENCY** are of utmost importance. Compare your impressions to the word of God, and watch spiritual leadership to see how they handle such things.

John 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

If a "voice" is different than the one you are accustomed to following, **FLEE FROM IT!** Stay close to the Shepherd!

- What is demon possession and what allows it to happen?

Demon possession is when a demonic spirit literally controls a human being. It happens when someone completely opens themselves to evil spirits and allows them in. Demon possession is relatively rare in North America, but does happen more frequently in countries where there are superstitions and witch doctors, etc. That is why allowing eastern religions to become prevalent in our country is a dangerous thing.

However, the good news regarding demon possession is: (1) God's Spirit and a demonic spirit cannot occupy the same person simultaneously, so stay filled with the Holy Ghost and you will have no problem, and (2) Christians have been given authority over the devil through Jesus Christ, so demons are subject to us.

Luke 11:20-22 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

- How do you "lose" the Holy Ghost?

Some people believe you can't lose your salvation for any reason (the doctrine of eternal security) – they are absolutely wrong, and that is a dangerous doctrine!

You can't "lose" the Holy Ghost in the sense of suddenly waking up one day and finding it gone; however, you can "leak" the Holy Ghost in the sense of straying from God bit by bit, walking away from His commandments, and backsliding. The end result is the same, but the bottom line is that you can't do it by accident!

Hebrews 6:4-9 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Stay THIRSTY for God and you will have no fear of “losing” the Holy Ghost!

- Is there supposed to be a specific emotion that accompanies speaking in tongues? If you are speaking in tongues because you "decide" to and you don't feel overwhelmed with God's presence, is that wrong?

It is important for us to distinguish between the Holy Ghost (God’s Spirit living in us) and speaking in tongues (the EVIDENCE that we have received His Spirit).

Emotions are just emotions – emotions are illogical, and we can’t prevent them from arising – however, we can prevent ourselves from reacting to them in ways that are harmful to us. It is not good to DEPEND on emotions for our spiritual sense of well being, because our own feelings will lead us astray.

Scripture tells us, for example, that JOY accompanies the Holy Ghost. However, we must note that: (1) joy is not the same as happiness (one is internal, the other external), and (2) we will not always “feel” happy as we encounter life’s circumstances, but we can always have JOY.

Isaiah 12:3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Once you have the Holy Ghost, there are no “parameters” given for how you should “feel” when you engage in speaking in tongues. EVERY experience that humans can have gets “filtered” through our emotional grid. But just like you keep choosing to love your spouse even when you don’t have powerful “feelings,” it is right (and beneficial!) to speak in tongues even without powerful “feelings.”

1 Corinthians 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Jude 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

- A RELATED QUESTION: Is it possible to be punished during a service by not feeling God's presence because you haven't been spending time with Him during the week? What determines whether or not you "feel" the presence of God?

SIN is primarily a SEPARATOR between us and God. There are sins of commission and there are sins of omission, and either kind of sin can put distance in our relationship with God. And we end up feeling a bit guilty, and perhaps even feeling God's conviction about being so slack in our spiritual life. That is WHY we feel "off" when we are in church sometimes. But again, that is just our feelings! It is not so much "punishment from God" as it is "guilt from us."

OUR FEELINGS DETERMINE WHETHER WE FEEL THE PRESENCE OF GOD OR NOT, BUT THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US WHETHER WE FEEL IT OR NOT! OUR FEELINGS NEARLY ALWAYS LIE TO US!

1 John 1:6-10 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- If I have a business, are tithes supposed to be given on profit only or on all income? Should I tithe on my net pay or my gross pay?

Tithes are to be given on our INCREASE, not just our income – because everyone's financial situation is unique. Sometimes the amount on our paycheque is less than the total of what we have been blessed with!

Tithing is the *top financial priority* for every Christian if they want God's blessing on their finances. Why did God ask for ten percent? We don't know, but He *could* have said twenty, fifty or ninety percent; He could have even said "*give it all*" because it's all His anyway.

Deuteronomy 8:18 But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

We need to remind ourselves that everything we have actually belongs to God and He just asks us to *manage* it for Him. That's the idea behind *stewardship*, which is simply the careful, responsible use of possessions entrusted by another (1 Corinthians 4:2). The bottom line? If God says that He wants the first ten percent back, that's His prerogative as God!

If anyone is going to get paid in your household, it should be God! You may be in debt to other people, but make a decision not to be in debt to God. Check this out with a mature Christian, and you'll find that God has been faithful to them over many years as they've put Him first. Furthermore, refusing to tithe robs God's Kingdom of necessary resources and invites a *curse* on our finances and lives.

Malachi 3:8-9 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

God uses money to test your faithfulness as a servant, so how you use your money affects how much God can bless your life. This principle works not only with money but with every area of life. Whatever you want God to bless, put Him first in that area – in your relationships, in your marriage, in your career, in your time, in your finances – because God blesses whatever He is put first in. There are many places in the Bible where God *proves us*, but only one (Malachi 3:10) where He invites us to *prove Him*. God says, "Let's have a giving contest – you give to Me and I'll give to you, and we'll see who wins. Prove Me in this! Put me to the test! I dare you!"

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.