

# 8 How Do I Approach 8 The Future?

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Mr. Robinson's business had suffered reverses; for the first time in years he had actually lost money. The problem was that he really did not know why this was happening. An offer was made to buy the firm from him. Should he sell it for immediate cash, or hold on to it, hoping for future profit? If only he could know the future!

Mr. Robinson did what others have done. He went to a fortune-teller. If he could know the future, he would know how to act. The fortune-teller claimed to "see" a dishonest employee, a trusted person near him, who would soon try to become owner of the business. In fact, said the fortune-teller, this person was responsible for the temporary loss in the business.

Mr. Robinson acted quickly. He fired Mr. Casey, his associate. He had trusted Mr. Casey for years, but he felt that the fortune-teller could not be wrong.

That night Mr. Robinson went to his church. There he was convicted by the Holy Spirit. He repented of going to the fortune-teller and called Mr. Casey to ask forgiveness. To his horror, Mr. Casey had committed suicide! Later, Mr. Casey was proved to have been totally innocent of any wrongdoing.

What is this thing in humans that always wants to know the future? Is it wrong? In this lesson you will discover how God wants you to view the future and what He has revealed about it.

## ***The Plan***

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- A. God's Design for the Future
- B. Why God Limits His Revelation
- C. God's Design for Today

## ***The Goals***

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1. State the purpose for and the content of God's revelation of the future.
2. Explain why God limits His revelation of the future.
3. Describe how you can follow God's design every day.

## **A. GOD'S DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE**

**Goal 1.** State the purpose for and the content of God's revelation of the future.

Man is the only creature that gives any sign of being able to think about the future. Animals act by instinct to gather food for the future, but humans think of the future and even try to control it for their own purposes. Man did not develop his ability to think about the future on his own; it was given to him by God. It is part of his character as a creature made in the image of God.

The danger lies not in people's desire to know the future, but in the fact that sometimes man's knowledge of the future can lead him to unwise actions. There is a difference between praying to know the future and praying to know God's will. We normally want to know the future so we can decide what to do. But when we want to know the will of God it is so we can do what *He* wants us to do.

## Application

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- 1 Which statement expresses a proper attitude towards the future?
- a) I want to know the future so I can decide what actions need to be taken.
  - b) I would like to know God's plan, so I can do what He wants me to do.
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## What God Has Revealed

God has chosen to reveal to us some of the future. Coming events are unfolded as a panorama or series of pictures in the Revelation to John, the last book of the Bible.

Many times John detailed what he saw, yet Bible scholars find it difficult to agree exactly on what is going to take place. Perhaps when God shows the future it is hard to accept because of the present.

How can we imagine the real, personal return of Jesus Christ to earth or a thousand-year reign of righteousness (Revelation 1:7, 20:1–6)? It is no wonder that many of John's descriptions seem so unreal. Because we cannot adjust to seeing events in an unfamiliar setting, we find it hard to interpret his message correctly.

But though there are some problems in interpreting John's message, several things about the future *are* clear. When God's time has come, the world will be changed. Man-made civilization will be destroyed but man will survive. Christ will intervene and will set up a kingdom.

Evil will be judged and the scars it left removed from the earth. Satan, the author of evil, will be eternally cast away and punished.

We will be changed! Our bodies will be glorified, our knowledge perfected. Salvation will be completed. You individually will be perfect. You will also be in the perfect will

of God. As the master builder, Christ will have finished His work on you; His kingdom will be complete.

It is easy to understand why God did not tell us more. We find it hard to imagine what He *did* tell us.

## Application

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- 2** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** John’s descriptions of the future are unfamiliar because they are unreal.
  - b)** The book of Revelation says that Jesus Christ will personally return to earth.
  - c)** Because we might misuse knowledge of the future, God has chosen not to tell us about it.
  - d)** God’s plan for us includes complete perfection.
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## God’s Purpose For Revelation

With the little bit we know of the future we still try to “help” God. If you would like to read an example of this in the Bible, you can find it in Genesis 16—the story of Abraham and Hagar. Our efforts to bring about God’s promise often lead to sorrow, not blessing. God has shared with us a glimpse of the future so we might have hope, not so we would try to devise a method to make future events happen.

Jesus saw the ultimate joy of the plan of the Father for Him.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.  
(Hebrews 12:2)

Satan’s plan was to use the knowledge of the future that Christ possessed (that the kingdoms of the world would become Christ’s) to get Christ to determine an easy way to obtain them. He would get Christ to simply bow down and worship him

(Luke 4:5–8). But Christ refused Satan's offer and followed God's way for Him.

God has shown us the future to help us deal with the difficulties of the present. The very impossibility (in the natural) of reaching the goal He has set for us—of becoming perfect—should cause us to look to Him for daily help. He wants us to draw on His strength and His grace to obey what He has told us to do.

## ***Application***

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**3** Complete the following sentence. God shows us the future so that we will

.....  
 .....



## **B. WHY GOD LIMITS HIS REVELATION**

**Goal 2.** Explain why God limits His revelation of the future.

Why does God not show everything to us before-hand? Can He not trust us? The question is not His trust of us but our trust of Him.

If we saw all the steps needed to arrive at a future goal, we would hurry to take some and try to avoid taking others. The very drawing back we might do would not fit into God's plan for us. We see this pattern of hurry or avoidance in the lives of some men we read about in the Bible.

Joshua had completed the Jericho conquest. Ai was clearly next. He was eager to finish the job, so he hurried to Ai without the direction of the Lord. The result was disastrous (Joshua 7:2–5).

David tried to hurry the ark (the sacred box containing a copy of God's covenant with Israel) back to Jerusalem. The

right goal looked so inviting. He did the efficient thing and put the ark on a cart instead of having it carried as it was designed to be (Exodus 25:12–14; Joshua 3:2–4). Again, the result was not the speedier progress of God’s kingdom but disaster (2 Samuel 6:6–8).

Peter found the sacrifice Jesus would make on the Cross to be an intermediate step he could not accept (Matthew 16:22). He wanted to fight with the sword rather than walk with Christ through that experience (John 18:10–11).

Sometimes what is really meant by saying *I want to know the will of God for me* is this: *I want to know God’s plan so I can decide what is to be done*. We must accept the limits of what God has revealed and be sure that our motives for wanting to know His will are right.

## Application


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**4** The most important reason why God limits His revelation of the future is because

- a) our knowledge of the future will not change it.
- b) we would often try to hurry or avoid taking the intermediate steps.
- c) it is sometimes difficult for us to understand what will happen.

**5** Read 2 Peter 3:10–11. In your notebook, describe how that verse says we should respond to the knowledge that the heavens and earth will be destroyed.

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## C. GOD’S DESIGN FOR TODAY

**Goal 3.** Describe how you can follow God’s design every day.

What is God’s will for your life today? What does He want you to do? There are different kinds of spiritual experiences. Certain kinds of experiences in Christ are meant to be once-

and-for-all or onetime. The new birth is one of these, for God offers eternal salvation.

Other experiences seem to be of a seasonal type. Just as there are cycles in the natural creation, so these experiences reoccur at particular times or periods of our spiritual lives. Revival—a special time of spiritual renewal—is one of these. We do not live in a perpetual state of revival. We seek “rain”—spiritual renewal—in times of rain. God makes the nature of these seasons clear through the ministry of His Word and the Spirit. Usually there are signs that indicate both a need for revival and God’s desire to send one, just as in nature there are signs of the coming seasons.

## ***Application***

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- 6** A spiritual experience that is *seasonal* is one that occurs
- a)** at periodic times.
  - b)** only one time.
  - c)** on a continuous basis.
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But along with once-for-all and seasonal experiences, there are those which are meant to occur on a daily basis. God has placed us in a world into which He has built a daily cycle. Because we live day by day, there are certain spiritual principles He intends us to follow day by day. Doing His will in its most basic form is to do *each day* those things that we know to be His will for that day.

Let us look at what God wants us to do each day and then see what He promises.

When the tabernacle or tent of the Lord’s presence was the center of worship during Old Testament times, there were duties assigned to certain men called priests and Levites. These duties were to be fulfilled daily. Without the practice of that daily obedience, the celebration of the great annual festivals would have been absurd.

It was while Zechariah was doing his daily priestly duties that the angel Gabriel told him he would have a son who would prepare God's people for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:8–17). While Anna the aged prophetess was at her daily prayers in the temple, she was given a great privilege. She witnessed the dedication of Christ himself, the salvation of the world! (Luke 2:36–38).

So, what are we to do daily? After the Day of Pentecost, the church experienced great success (Acts 2:40–41). The behavior of the believers was marked by daily action that caused God's blessing to remain upon them. It was as though they continued by their spiritual worship the daily ceremonial worship practiced by the priests in the Old Testament. What was their pattern? Let us examine it as it is described in Acts 2:44–47.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

*First, they kept their relationships with their brothers right daily.* They were in close fellowship (vv. 44, 46).

Nothing will distort your hearing of God's voice so much as a wrong relationship with one of God's people. Bitterness, resentment, jealousy, or other wrong feelings will surely lessen your ability to be freely responsive to God. It is best to daily check your relationships. The Bible says that if a relationship is spoiled or broken during the course of the day, let the end of the day mark the end of the strife.

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.  
(Ephesians 4:26)



## Application

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**7** In your notebook, make a list of the people who are an important part of your daily life. Are your relationships with each one right? Make it a habit to daily check these relationships and do what is necessary to keep them right.

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Out of the unity described in Acts 2:46, no doubt there flowed encouragement and exhortation. Hebrews 3:13 directly commands us to help and encourage each other.

In principle then, God's Word tells us to make sure every day that our relationships are right. Then out of these right relationships we are to minister, serve, and help each other. With the renewed mind you can have according to Romans 12:1–2, you will see opportunities of doing this.

*Second, they praised God daily* (vv. 46–47). Praise is to be the daily *expression* of the child of God. It may begin as a sacrifice of obedience, but it will end as an expression of gladness for the goodness of God.

*Third, they renewed their consecration daily.* The example given in Acts 2 shows how the believers demonstrated their consecration in action. Christ said that anyone who wanted to follow Him had to “take up his cross daily” (Luke 9:23). By this Christ was saying that each day we need to remind ourselves that we belong to God. Out of that attitude or mind-set everything will be done to the glory of God.

David learned that consecration involved offering to God every day those things he had vowed or promised to do (Psalm 61:8).

*Fourth, no doubt they looked to God for the supply of their needs daily.* This should also be our pattern: “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11).

## Application

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- 8** Circle the letter in front of each description of an action that is part of the *daily* cycle of obedience.
- a)** Fasting for an extended time
  - b)** Giving praise and thanks to God
  - c)** Consecrating ourselves to God
  - d)** Keeping our relationships with others right
  - e)** Experiencing the new birth
  - f)** Trusting God for our daily needs
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God's will, then, is *not* hard. We find confusion when we cloud the air with other issues. In our *daily* obedience He will guide our life-changing decisions.

What has He promised? He has said He will daily renew His benefits of grace and help to us (Psalm 68:19). We do not exhaust His supply for tomorrow by totally enjoying His provision for today.

This is the daily cycle—God has established it. It was there with Adam, the first man. It was there in the worship ceremonies of the nation of Israel. It was there in the New Testament church. And in that daily cycle, God guides us.

## Application

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- 9** Perhaps you have realized that you need to begin obeying God daily in one or more of the four ways described in this part of the lesson. In your notebook, complete each of the following sentences about these areas of daily obedience.
- a)** (Refer to study question 7.) I need to daily check my relationships with these people:
  - b)** One of the ways I can take time to praise God daily is to . . .
  - c)** Renewing my consecration to God each day means that I must . . .
  - d)** I need to trust God to supply my daily needs of . . .
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## Check Your Answers

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- 5** We should live holy lives dedicated to the Lord.  
(Your answer should be similar.)
- 1 b)** I would like to know God's plan so I can do what He wants me to do.
- 6 a)** at periodic times.
- 2 a)** False  
**b)** True  
**c)** False  
**d)** True
- 7** Your answer. Is there someone you should forgive? Should you ask someone to forgive you? Ask the Lord to help you see what needs to be done if you have any relationships that are broken.
- 3** Your answer. I would say so that we will have joy and know how to respond to the present.
- 8 b)** Giving praise and thanks to God  
**c)** Consecrating ourselves to God  
**d)** Keeping our relationships with others right  
**f)** Trusting God for our daily needs
- 4 b)** we would often try to hurry or avoid taking the intermediate steps.
- 9** Your answers. I hope you have described practical ways you can follow each of these principles in your life.

### CONGRATULATIONS

You have finished this course. We hope that it has been a great help to you. Remember to complete the second Unit Evaluation and return the answer sheet to your instructor.