

Lesson  
8

## How Do I Approach the Future?

. . . I want to know what to do.

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 the Holy Spirit convicted him. 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 humankind 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.

### **In this lesson you will study . . .**

God's Design for the Future  
Why God Limits His Revelation  
God's Design for Today

### **This lesson will help you . . .**

- View the future with the proper attitude.
- Explain why God shows us some things about the future and not others.
- Follow God's daily plan for your life.

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## GOD'S DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE

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

It is important to understand that humankind 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 humanity thinks of the future and even tries to control it for his own purposes. Humankind did not develop the ability to think about the future on his own; it was given to individuals by God. It is part of human character as a creature made in the image of God.

The danger lies not in people's desire to know the future. The danger lies in the fact that sometimes human knowledge of the future can lead him to unwise rather than wise 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.



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### For You To Do

- 1 Which statement expresses a proper attitude toward 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.

### 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 described what he saw in detail. Yet in spite of what he wrote, 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. Human civilization will be destroyed, but humanity will survive. Christ will intervene and will set up a kingdom.

Evil will be judged, and the scars it left will be 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.



**For You To Do**

- 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.

**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 o 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. This joy that was set before Him caused Him to endure the cross and even despise its shame (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 Jesus to determine an easy way to obtain them. He would get Christ to simply bow down and worship him (Luke 4:5-8). But Jesus 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.



**For You To Do**

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

**WHY GOD LIMITS HIS REVELATION**

**Objective 2.** Choose explanations of why God limits His revelation of the future.

Why does God not show everything to us beforehand? 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 people we read about in the Bible.

Joshua had completed the Jericho conquest. Ai was clearly next. He was eager to finish the job (who doesn't enjoy winning victories?), and so he hurried to Ai without the direction of the Lord. The result was disaster (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.



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#### For You To Do

- 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 this passage says we should respond to the knowledge that the heavens and earth will be destroyed.

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### GOD'S DESIGN FOR TODAY

**Objective 3.** *Describe ways in which 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 certain 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.

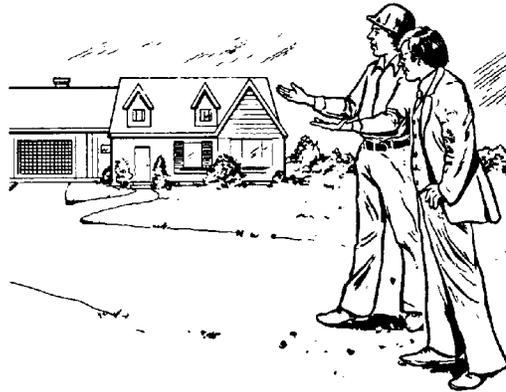


### For You To Do

6 A spiritual experience that is *seasonal* is one which occurs

- a) at periodic times.
- b) only one time.
- c) on a continuous basis.

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. To do 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). It was while Anna the aged prophetess was at her daily prayers in the temple that she was given a great privilege. She witnessed the dedication of Christ himself, the salvation of the world (Luke 2:36-38)!

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 on them. It was as though they continued by their spiritual worship the daily ceremonial worship practiced by the priests in Old Testament times. What was their pattern? Let us examine it as it is described in Acts 2:44-47.

First, they kept their relationships with their fellow believers 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 (Ephesians 4:26).



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### For You To Do

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.

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.

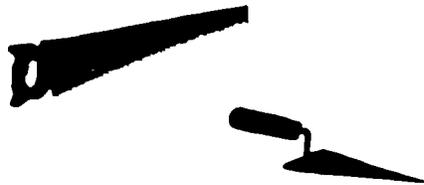
In principle then, God's Word tells us to make sure every day that our relationships are right. Then out of these right relationships, we are to minister, serve, and help each other. With the renewed mind you can have according to Romans 12:1-2, you will see opportunities of doing this.

*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 everyday" (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 mindset, 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 the food we need," we are told to pray (Matthew 6:11).





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**For You To Do**

**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

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.



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**For You To Do**

**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 . . .

You have finished your study of *God's Design—Your Choice*. I hope these lessons have helped you understand God's will and design for your life. May God bless you as you choose each day to follow His plan and put into practice the things you have learned about it.

<p>Now that you have completed the second unit, you are ready to answer the questions in your <i>Student Report for Unit Two</i>. Review the previous lessons, then follow the instructions in your student report. Send your answer sheet to the address given on the copyright page of your study guide and ask about another course of study.</p>
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## Check Your Answers

- 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** Statements **b** and **d** are 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.

## One Final Word

This is a special kind of book because it was written by people who care about you. These are happy people who have found good answers to many of the questions and problems that trouble almost everyone in the world. They believe that God wants them to share with others the answers they have found. They believe that you need some important information to answer your own questions and problems and find the way of life that is best for you.

They have prepared this book in order to give you this information. You will find this book based on these fundamental truths:

1. You need a Savior. Read Romans 3:23; Ezekiel 18:20.
2. You cannot save yourself. Read 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6.
3. God desires that the world should be saved. Read John 3:16-17.
4. God sent Jesus who gave His life to save all those who believe in Him. Read Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Peter 3:18.
5. The Bible shows us the way of salvation and teaches us how to grow in the Christian life. Read John 15:5; John 10:10; 2 Peter 3:18.
6. You decide your eternal destiny. Read Luke 13:1-5; Matthew 10:32-33; John 3:35-36.

This book tells you how to decide your destiny, and it gives you opportunities to express your decision. Also, the book is different from others because it gives you a chance to contact people who prepared it. If you want to ask questions or explain your needs and feelings, you may write to them.

In the back of the book, you should find a card called *Decision Report and Request Card*. When you have made a decision, fill out the card and mail it as indicated. Then you will receive more help. You may use the card to ask questions or make requests for prayer or information.

If there is no card in this copy of the book, write to your ICI instructor and you will receive a personal answer.