



DEAN WELCH - TEACHER

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**"TAKE TIME FOR A GPS READING"**

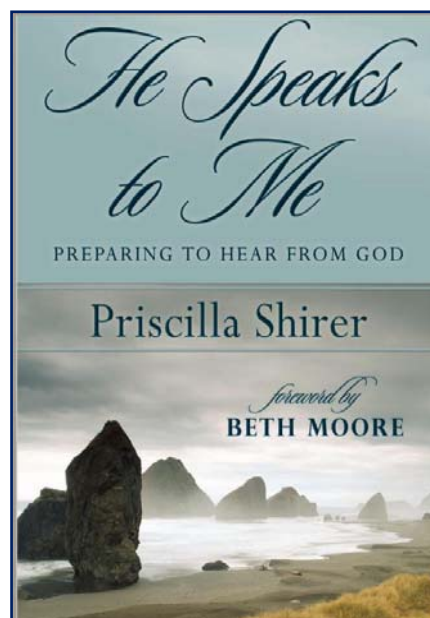
[A SET-APART HOLINESS – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]

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# WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

AUGUST 10, 2008

LESSON #3 FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



## “TAKING TIME FOR A GPS READING”

[A SET-APART HOLINESS – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]

A few years ago, my name was in the sports section of the newspaper. You had to search to find it, but it was there. Four pages into a mid-week edition, midway down the sheet at the end of an article about a local golf tournament, there was my name. All nine letters' worth. It was a first for me. My name has appeared in other parts of the paper for a variety of reasons, some of which I'm proud and some of which I'm not. But this was my first time in the sports section. It took fifty-plus years, but I finally made it.

Here is what happened. My brother David is with the state Fellowship of Christian Athletes and is in charge of the annual FCA Charity Golf Tournament here at the beach. Several years ago, David called and asked me to play with him and my other two brothers in the annual tournament at Prestwick. I thought about it for three seconds and accepted. Now, just so you know, I am the oldest in my family, but did not get any of the athleticism or sports ability—my other brothers got it all. The FCA tournament has a simple format. Each team has four players and it's what is known as a *captain's choice*. That means the low score from each of the players on each hole is recorded, so, even on the holes where I stunk, if one of my brothers did well, I did well. And that is exactly what happened on, oh let me count, one, two, three, four ... seventeen out of eighteen holes. One big rule is that each player has to use his score on at least **one** of the holes. I remember getting down to Hole #17 and none of my scores were even close to using. The other three players tried to help me along on that par three hole—and I seem to remember doing at least well enough to use my score.

Imagine the joy of such a game. Let's take a typical par four hole where I score an eight, but Jody or one of my other brothers scores a three—a birdie. Guess which score is recorded? **The three!** Dean's eight is forgotten and Jody's birdie is remembered.

A person could get used to this! I get credit for the good work of someone else simply by virtue of being on his team.

Hasn't Christ done that same for you? What my golf team did for me, your Lord does for you every day of the week. Because of His performance, you close your daily round with a perfect score. Doesn't matter if you sprayed a few into the woods or shanked one into the water. What matters is that you showed up to play and joined the right foursome. In this case your foursome is pretty strong; it's you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A better team doesn't exist.

This week you spent five days in Bible study about the third characteristic essential for hearing from God. Let's begin with the second sentence of our foundational Scripture in **1 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV)**: *"...The word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation."* As we learned this week, the third characteristic that positioned Samuel to hear from God was a set-apart holiness. Believers in Jehovah God were not hearing much from Him in Samuel's day. So, if Samuel was one of the chosen few who heard from God, it must mean that he somehow stood out from the crowd. While people around him were tolerating sin, Samuel was determined to live a life that was holy before God.

Turn to **1 PETER 2:11 (NIV)** and follow along as I read how WE ARE supposed to act in this world today: *Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens and strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.* Did you hear that? The Bible says that we're supposed to be **aliens** and **strangers** in this world. We're supposed to be a very special people, set apart to God. In Scripture, to be "set apart" is to be *sanctified* and *holy*.

**When was the last time anybody saw something holy about your life? What does holiness look like if it's going to be on display in my life?** The title on the board about taking time for a GPS reading zeros in on a great way to help us with the question: **Where are you now**—i.e., relationally with God? At the end of each chapter in Priscilla Shirer's book she asks the reader to pause



for a moment and take a GPS reading. You're all familiar with the Global Positioning System. It's a satellite system that not only helps you determine your precise location but also helps get you where you're going. It's free, anyone can use it, and nowadays it's in cars, boats, planes, laptop computers and even in cell phones. Soon it will be as universal as the telephone.

There's another GPS that been around a lot longer than the Global Positioning System and Priscilla Shirer calls it "*God's Positioning System*," and you can find it in the Bible. It's also free, already universal and you don't need a complex system of satellites to use it. It'll tell you where you are, how to get where you're going and how much progress you've made so far. We Christians know it as the Holy Spirit and it's within us from the day of our profession in Jesus Christ as our Savior. So, where are YOU now in your walk? Are you letting others see Jesus in you?

Let's look at a few things that we can do to show others that we **ARE** different. There are some things we need to put to death and others that make us alive. Turn to **COLOSSIANS 3:5-14 (NLT)** and see what Paul tells the Christians in Colosse, and in turns, is telling us in August of 2008: *<sup>5</sup>So **put to death** the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. <sup>6</sup>Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. <sup>7</sup>You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. <sup>8</sup>But now is the time to **get rid** of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. <sup>9</sup>Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. <sup>10</sup>Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. <sup>11</sup>In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. <sup>12</sup>Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember,*

*the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.*

What are we to put to death? Name just a few we read about—along with any others you can think of. Next, what are we to be made alive for? How are we to put to death the things that Scripture tells us to put to death and be made alive to the things that we are to be made alive to?

On Day One this week, Priscilla Shirer tells the story of Grandfather. In 1956, a little band of missionaries in Ecuador hoped to share the gospel with the Auca Indian tribe. They had established a good relationship with the tribe, but one day when Jim Elliott and four other missionaries went to visit them, the Indians speared all five men to death. One of the men who participated in the killing went by the name of Grandfather. Priscilla Shirer said she had heard the story all of her life, but one day she actually heard Grandfather speak and what he said changed her life forever.

Grandfather told the audience that Christ was now his Savior and that he and his tribesmen were serving Him. They had taken their place as sons and daughters of the King, and they were living lives that demonstrated their new identity in the Lord. He said that he was shocked at how Christians in America seem to so closely resemble the rest of secular society, and he was dismayed that they weren't living in a way that clearly showed they served a different God.

Listen to the words of Paul in **2 Corinthians 7:1** about perfecting this calling of holiness: *"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."* In thinking about the statement of Paul as well as what Grandfather said to that audience and Priscilla Shirer, Christ's life in us should make a difference! We are no longer supposed to act like pagans. How can we expect God to speak to us when we act

the same as we did before we knew Him? Just like Grandfather's tribe, we must choose to live sanctified lives that set us apart from the world. We know that sanctified simply means that we are to be set apart and be holy.

That's what we see in the life of little Samuel, don't we? The second half of 1 Samuel 3:1 that we read initially tells us that *"the word of the LORD was rare."* Neither the children of Israel nor their leaders were hearing God speak, not even those who said they believed in Yahweh and followed Him. It bothers me that the Jewish people, who claimed to have a relationship with Yahweh, weren't hearing His voice. It kind of sounds like the body of Christ today, doesn't it? We Christians aren't used to hearing God. Case in point: Aren't we sometimes taken aback when believers boldly claim they've heard the voice of God speak. But we're not, and neither was the nation of Israel in Samuel's day. The children of Israel had heard God's Word, but they had chosen not to listen and so God finally quit speaking to them.

Paul explains what happens to people who have a HEAD KNOWLEDGE of God but refuse to honor Him with their lives by obeying Him. Listen to his words from **ROMANS 1:21-22 (NIV)**:  
*<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.*

One thing we mentioned early in our study about maybe why God didn't speak to Eli, the high priest, was that Eli's two sons were wicked. They certainly knew God—Eli would have seen to that—but they did not revere Him. In fact, they were so wicked that Eli feared them more than he revered the Lord. Part of the message that God gave Samuel was that Eli's sons would die because of their sins. Likewise, Christians who don't hear from God should be on the lookout for unconfessed sin and rebellion in their lives. While Eli was tolerating sin, Samuel was determined to live a life that was righteous before God. While Eli and his sons

were busy sinning, Samuel was busy obeying God. This is what set him apart to God and opened his ears to hear His voice.

Turn to **1 PETER 1: 14-15 (NIV)**, <sup>14</sup>*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.* <sup>15</sup>*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;* <sup>16</sup>*for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

*"Be holy, because I am holy"*—what does that mean? I can't be God, obviously, but the text says, "Be ye holy in like manner to the way that I am holy." We have learned—haven't we—that His holiness is that He is completely **OTHER** from the fallen domain. Suddenly, lights come on all over the place for me. In a pursuit that I thought would be impossible for me, I suddenly realize that all He is doing is calling me to share in His **OTHERNESS** from the fallenness of this world in which we live. It's against the backdrop of this that He has called you, and He has called me, to demonstrate His **OTHERNESS** in reference to the fallenness of my world.

That means that in a world that is lost in its own greed, I get a grip on the generosity of God and I live out the otherness of generosity in the face of greed in a world that in its self-centeredness would consume everything upon itself and everyone upon itself. The otherness of God is servanthood, giving, sharing, touching. In a world where hate and revenge thrive, forgiveness and love make me a part of the otherness of God. And in a world where we're even willing to go to the extent of death for our own happiness, life is the otherness of God. In a world where power is used to manipulate and to even hurt others for personal gain, the otherness of God is about using, as He has, power to bless and to help and to touch those who are in need. In a world in the grip of deep, sensual, out-of-bounds, extreme perversion, the moral purity of God is the otherness lived out through my life and your life.

Having said that, however, I must admit that I don't think we're doing all that well in this day and age, do you? In a recent study

by George Barna on Christians in America, the results were shocking. More Christians than non-Christians read and rely on horoscopes. That doesn't sound very other to me. Twelve percent of non-Christians give money to the homeless. Thirteen percent of Christians give money to the homeless—even. More Christians than non-Christians purchase lottery tickets. I don't want to make that the chief issue of holiness in our lives, but I just thought that was an interesting observation. About the same amount of non-Christians and followers of Jesus donate money to nonprofit organizations. Listen to this: 51 percent of followers of Christ and 54 percent of non-Christians feel money is the main symbol of success in life. The divorce rate is flat even. Thirty-three percent of non-Christians live together before marriage, 25 percent of followers. And it seems to me that if you look at our lives, and if you look at the followers of Christ, we're not doing a very good job of escaping the gravity of the domain of the fallen place in which we live to soar into the otherness of our God. Yet that is what He calls us to do.

Recall with me the words from **2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8 (NIV)**, *"I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of salvation."* We cannot lose sight of our goal in this race we call LIFE. To win the race of the Christian life, we have to get serious about holiness and that means getting rid of the baggage. For some, this means not watching certain television shows or movies and not reading certain books. It may mean getting out of certain relationships. Some friendships with good people may have to go because they are moving you toward the finish line by spurring you on in your relationship with Christ. When you're just warming up or having fun, you can take the baggage. But when you're running for a prize, when you want to cross that finish line and hear *"well done,"* you simple have to get rid of everything that weighs you down and keep your eye on the prize.



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