



How Does God Touch Your Heart?

John 6:44: (NASB) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Special Guest: Todd Alexander



We all would like to think that we are special in some way before God. We want to be sure of His love for us and His guiding hand in our lives. For most of us, being special translates into a feeling - an emotional response that produces a sense of security. But is that all there is to being special? For the Christian at least there is much more to it. We know that everyone is not called to follow Jesus and we also know that according to the Bible, God does specifically call some to follow. How does this work? How does God get your attention and touch your heart and mind? What makes us want to respond to God and what might make us shy away from

responding to Him? Is it easy to recognize when God is seeking us out and trying to touch our hearts?

(Commentary has been edited for brevity and clarity. Todd's comments are shown in purple.)



Before we get started, Todd, who are you, where did you come from, and why are we talking about this?

I live in Columbus, Ohio. I am an advertising agency salesperson, but my real interest is in reading the Bible, talking about the Scriptures and the love God has for us.

And you have been with us several times before.

About four or five.

You are suggesting a five-step process that the Father uses to draw us to Him:

John 6:44-45: (NASB) *⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to me.*

Do you see the process? It says Jesus does not come into our life right away, that there is a work God does before He sends Jesus to us. And Jesus is calling it a "drawing" process. He is pointing back to the prophets, saying *they shall all be taught of God. Everybody who has both heard and learned from the Father comes to me.* So, we see an implied process that at some point God begins drawing us. He sends Jesus to us, and then it just gets exciting from there.

You labeled this as five different specific steps.

I am following the spiritual senses. Please see the CQ episode from May 3, 2015, "So, How Does Jesus Get You Going?" These five steps follow those five spiritual senses the Apostle Paul talks about in Hebrews 5:14.



We are going to get into these five steps in just a moment, but first, your notes mentioned there are four motivations that people have to seek God: curiosity, fear, despair and awakening.

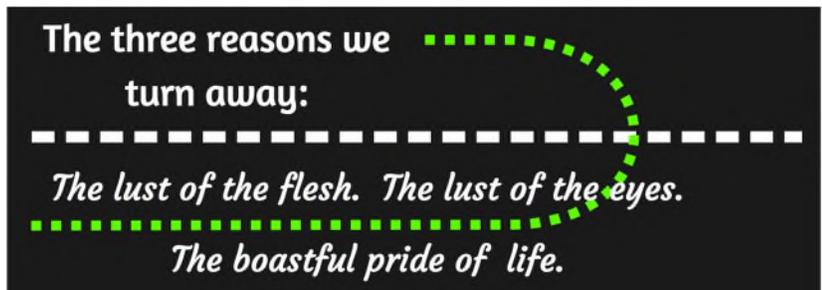


We see lots of these examples in the Scriptures where people have a curiosity. They might have seen Jesus perform a miracle. They might have fear, like how Peter feared when he rejected Jesus. There might be despair when people are going through an emotional breakdown. Finally, we see many times in the Scriptures where people have an awakening when they come to Jesus, for instance, the blind man who had his eyes opened.

We are going to keep coming back to these four things with each one of the steps, but you also mentioned there are three reasons why we can potentially turn away from God drawing us to Him.

The three reasons we turn away:

1 John 2:16: (NASB) *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*



These are three pieces of advice that the Apostle John gave when he was around 90 years old, so it was very fatherly advice. He had a lot of experiences that he could put into those three categories:

The lust of the flesh - our fleshly desire to grab things. *The lust of the eyes* - the things we see. *The pride of life* - taking a prideful position in our stature before mankind.

These three things can derail the five-step process. The four motivations can enhance the process. So, what is the process?

The first step is a perceiving of the truth. It is a knowledge of God, His sovereignty, His handiwork and His attributes. We see that from looking at His creative work not only in the world but also in our own bodies.

What does it mean to perceive truth?

Hebrews 11:6: (NASB) *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*



When we look at the beautiful creative work in the world, what story do we tell about that work? Is it the story that this beautiful home that is ours was created by a loving, just, powerful Creator? Or do we make up some other absurd story that is far-fetched? So, do we believe in God? If we are going to come to God, we have to believe that He is and that He will actually reward our efforts of finding Him.



Perceiving truth is the first step.

With our eyes.

So, you are seeing something or observing something that catches your attention. It may not fully sink in yet.

It could be the birth of a baby, for example. When our babies were born, it was a marvelous experience. How could you not see a wonderful, just, loving, powerful God at the birth of your child?

Romans 1:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

This is a beautiful argument from the Apostle Paul. He is saying, "Hey, the whole world of mankind can see this beautiful, creative work that God gave us. It is called the earth, and the world of mankind should come to the conclusion a just and loving God created it." But what did they do? They were *futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened*. They could not perceive God because they came up with a different story about the facts. They told themselves the wrong story about the facts.

It is interesting because those who doubt God always go to the argument of science. When you think about it, science supports a belief in God in a very big way. To not have God behind science is to say that science is all a result of random activity. If you ever did the math to try to calculate the random activity, the numbers are so big you cannot even begin to fathom taking time to fathom the numbers.



It is amazing because the Apostle Paul is really connecting the dots between the physical world and the spiritual world, and I think that is the idea behind this process.

Perceiving truth, then, can start with the very basics that any human being can look at and say, "Wow, there is more to it than this."

Matthew 13:16-17: (NASB) *¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

The disciples were asking Jesus why he spoke in parables back in verse 10. He said the disciples' eyes and ears were blessed because they could both see and hear, and that the disciples had a more powerful experience with the word of God than the holy, righteous men of old. They desired to see Jesus' day but could not fast forward to see it.

In explaining why he teaches in parables, Jesus says, "I am giving the people an obstacle to their ability to perceive truth." Is that not right?

Yes, because *it is the glory of a king to conceal a matter. It is the honor of man to seek it out.* Proverbs 25:2.

Nature is laid out before you. Perceiving truth, however, is more difficult. If you want to get into more specifics, there are some things you have to look through and look around and try to sit down and get yourself focused on to be able to really see them.

Yes, exactly. And the next Scripture tells us where we have to begin...

Proverbs 23:26: (NASB) *Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.*

Do you see that sense of perception? What God is saying through the wise man is, number one, we have to give God our heart. Number two, we have to have our eyes focused on God's work, as that is the basis for our faith. If we do not give God our heart, then we will come up with foolish imaginations because we will be lifted up in our pride.

Let your eyes delight in my ways - If you see a work of art before you that is just magnificent, you stand there, you perceive it with awe and you look at it, trying to "open up to" that work of art.

It interests you. You want to pull into it and understand what the artist's meaning was behind that artwork.

Right. And so perceiving truth is like perceiving art in a slightly different way. It is something you want to open up your mind to. To perceive truth is to say, "Hey, there is something here. I need to pay more attention."

And you remember what Andrew said to his brother Peter. He said, *Come and see. We have found the Messiah.* He used his spiritual sense of sight. That meant Andrew and Peter were searching for the Messiah.

Come and see. Come and perceive with us.

Exactly. And they gave God their hearts so that God could work with them.



Romans 10:1-4: (NASB) ¹*Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.* ²*For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.* ³*For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.* ⁴*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

But not in accordance with knowledge - The summary for this first stage would be a knowledge of God, His sovereignty, handiwork and attributes. This was a group of people who were still living under the Law Covenant. Because of this, they had a roadblock and could not move forward. Why? Because they had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge.

The first step is to perceive. This means to be able to see and to say, "There is something that is appealing, there is something that is attractive, there is something that needs following up on." That perception captures you and now you are going to have to do something about it.

It is a beginning of your faith.

The first step is to perceive truth.

The second step is to understand truth. What is the difference?

When you think about perceiving spiritual truth about God and His plan, it is an enormous development as the average person will not take the time or have the interest in doing so. This first step can really indicate to us that God is working - drawing - awakening us to higher things. While this can lead to truly changing us we cannot progress without understanding.



Understand truth -

*An understanding of the basic elements of
God's Divine Plan and one's need for salvation.*

The first step in the drawing of God is the perception of the truth. The second step, understanding the truth, requires a more mature thought. It is an understanding of the basic elements of God's divine plan and one's need for salvation. It goes beyond just seeing the handiwork of God and attributing it to an Intelligent Creator.

You perceive that work of art. Understanding wants to go beyond just admiring its beauty. It wants to see how that work of art came to be. It wants to get underneath the surface, so to speak. It wants to appreciate the details that you are not going to appreciate at a glance. It makes you think of the



question, why. Why? I want to ask why did the artist do this? Why, God, did You design it this way?

I think curiosity is one of the four motivations that plays very strongly in this part of the process.

CURIOSITY, FEAR, DESPAIR, AWAKENING

Mark 10:17: (NASB) ¹⁷As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, *Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

The rich young ruler approached Jesus. He was in goodly apparel, and he asked Jesus this fateful question, *Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* At this point, that rich young ruler recognized Jesus as the Messiah. He said *good teacher*, and he also wanted instruction for what he would need to do to get eternal life. What did Jesus tell him? He went through the Ten Commandments and then said, one more thing, *give all of your possessions to the poor. Only then will you be able to follow me.* What did that rich young ruler do? He was very sorry. He was very sad. His curiosity got him to Jesus, but his pride of life turned him away. He just could not conceptualize a suffering Messiah, and he could not conceptualize his part in suffering with Jesus.

The Mark account says Jesus saw him and he loved him. It says Jesus appreciated what this young man was all about and saw that he was sincere. This young man was looking for true understanding, and when Jesus gives him something that is too big, something gets in the way.

Yes. That is interesting that the author of the book of Mark said that Jesus loved him. They probably noticed Jesus' body language.

Interesting. I never would have thought of it that way. It gives you a sense that Jesus was keyed in and knew the young man had a perception, he perceived truth.

The rich young ruler was on his way to the third level, but he could not grasp the suffering Messiah. Contrast this with Peter. Peter was at this same stage, but the suffering and the disappointments he had in life kept him following Jesus. An interesting statistic about this rich young man - he lost all of his possessions within 20 years anyway because of the Roman invasion. When we try to grasp hold of things instead of following Jesus when we have the opportunity, we lose.

You are right - the Roman invasion would have destroyed everything. I had never thought about that before. The young man is trying to understand after perceiving and he comes to a roadblock, and that happens to a lot of us. We hold onto what we have or what we are or what we have accomplished, and sometimes this takes us away from being able to understand something that could actually be so much better for us in the long run.



Do not neglect the power of fear and despair in your life to drive you to need God in your life. If this rich young man would have had either of these two things, it surely would have tilted him towards following Jesus.

It is interesting - you are using fear and despair in a very positive sense, using them to drive us to Jesus and wanting to understand. So, fear and despair can actually be good things if you channel them, so you can find something to feed you as a result.

Amen. We have heard countless stories of people who have come to God and looked for Jesus after they have lost a loved one.

Right. That can be a life-changing experience if they stay with the process.

Matthew 7:24-27: (NASB) ²⁴Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell - and great was its fall.



Jesus uses this powerful metaphor to close his Sermon on the Mount. What is he doing? Well, he is summarizing all of the 27 points of Christian living he just gave in the previous three chapters. He uses the metaphor of building your house on a solid rock *that everybody who hears these words of mine and then acts on them will be strong*. The first step in our faith is the seeing of God. The second step in our faith is the hearing of the truth of God. It is the beginning of our understanding of our need for Jesus and our need for salvation. And that is what you get when you build your house on that rock.

Am I on the right track? You perceive truth and you are in awe. There is wonder and excitement and all that. Understanding says, "Okay, I have to do something with that." That is why you are using this picture of building your house on a rock, because you can take what you have *perceived* and build it on the sand of your normal, everyday life, but inevitably what you build cannot stand. It cannot stay together. It is going to collapse.

We see this every day when we see families building their "houses" on greed and dishonesty. Inevitably, their families fall apart.

We started with the premise that God does the drawing, as explained to us by Jesus. He gives us the ability to perceive, but the ability to understand takes a little bit more work. Perceiving seems like it can happen any day under any circumstance. You open up your eyes and say, "Wow, look at that! I never noticed that before!" Understanding, though, is where you have to start to go to work.



God uses rainbows in our life to remind us of His covenant, to remind us of His sovereignty. But we have to take those rainbows and internalize the promises of God and see the beauty He is fashioning for us in our life.

You see a rainbow, you perceive. You *use* the rainbow, you understand.

...as leverage. You look into the Scriptures to try to find Jesus.

The process to come to God has specific, clear steps, and if we will follow them, we can get closer to God. That is an amazing thought!

I caution you - the sequence is fixed but the timing is variable. Remember the jailer where Paul was in prison? God miraculously opened all the doors of the jail, yet Paul did not leave that prison. I always wondered why Paul did not leave. It was obvious in the continuing story that he had a work to do. Paul noticed something with the jailer and was able to be a good witness. The jailer and all his household were baptized within the next three hours. They sped through the process to get to the point where they wanted to sacrifice their lives to follow Jesus. So, sometimes this process can take years; sometimes it can take hours.

For most of us it probably takes some time.

I worked with a man who said it took him 30 years of learning until he came to the point where he gave his life to Jesus.

The process is custom made for us, and we follow it as best as we are capable.

Focusing on the crowd - did they understand?

John 6:5-6,14: (NASB) ⁵Therefore Jesus, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to him, said to Philip, where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat? ⁶This he was saying to test him, for he himself knew what he was intending to do... ¹⁴Therefore when the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, this is truly the prophet who is to come into the world.

I think they did understand. They came to Jesus with their faith. They knew about the prophecies of the Messiah. They saw Jesus actually doing the work, the miracles of the Messiah. They did not have to read the Scriptures, because they already knew the Scriptures and the promise of the Messiah. But now they saw the miracle and that was enough. They wanted to make him king as it says in the next verse.

Why did Jesus ask Philip where they would buy bread so everyone could eat? I will tell you in a little bit.

The crowd had an understanding, because they wanted to make him king. There was a grasping for truth. In a similar way, perhaps the rich young ruler may have had a level of understanding, but it scared him away.

Yes, absolutely. That is a great insight.

Understanding can be a two-edged sword, then.



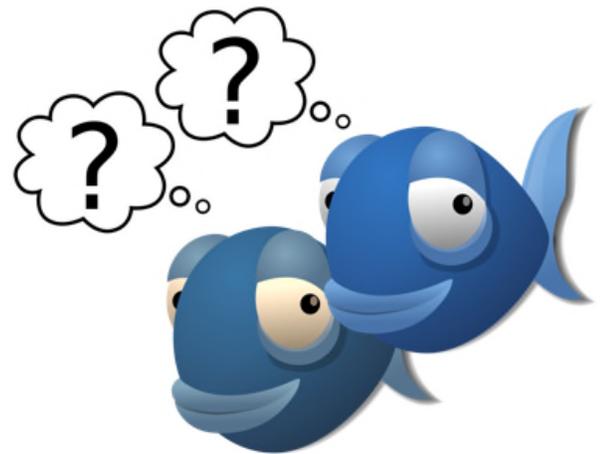
Well, the rich young ruler was turned away because he had the pride of life. These people following Jesus were so poor they did not even bring food with them.

That is another interesting point about the understanding. The context of our life can either feed our understanding to a positive end, or it can derail our understanding to a negative end, depending on what it is we are trying to hang onto while we are looking for the understanding.

Exactly. And if we look at the work of God in our life with our flesh, we will remember the Scripture that says, *though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.* (Job 13:15)

To recap perception versus understanding so far, we first see God with our eyes, then we hear Him with our ears. How do we hear God? By reading the Scriptures. Why did we read the Scriptures? Because our eyes pointed us to those Scriptures - same as these people who saw the miracle of the feeding. Why did they come to this time with Jesus where he was able to give them the miracle? Because they saw Jesus as the potential Messiah, and they wanted to see with their eyes and hear with their ears through the performance of that miracle. They did not expect the miracle, but they certainly believed him to the point where they wanted to make him king.

There is an important concept here. It reminds me of a story about two little fish swimming in a lake. An older, wiser fish was coming at them straight on and passed them. While that older, wiser fish was passing them, he said to the two little fish, "Hey, how's the water?" The older, wiser fish swam off, but the two little fish looked at each other in perplexity and asked, "What's 'water'?"



I think that is how we can get with our faith. If we do not see those rainbows in our life, if we do not attribute them to the handiwork of God, then we are going to look at that faith as being commonplace, and we are going to bump out of this funnel of God's drawing. But if we realize that everything we have in life is a blessing from God in heaven, we are going to realize the power of our spiritual eyes and our ears, just like Jesus said, *Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.* Those were the beginning, the germ of faith that Jesus praised in his disciples.

You called it a funnel. What is happening is the funnel gets smaller and smaller and smaller and more concentrated. Perception is the widest end of the funnel. Understanding is the next step. Without understanding, perception is just an emotional experience. It is a wonderful, exciting thing



but not transformative. To get to the level of transformation, you need to put understanding on top of it. But that is not where it stops...

**We perceive and understand truth. Next is discerning truth.
There seems to be a lot of similarity here - what are the differences?**

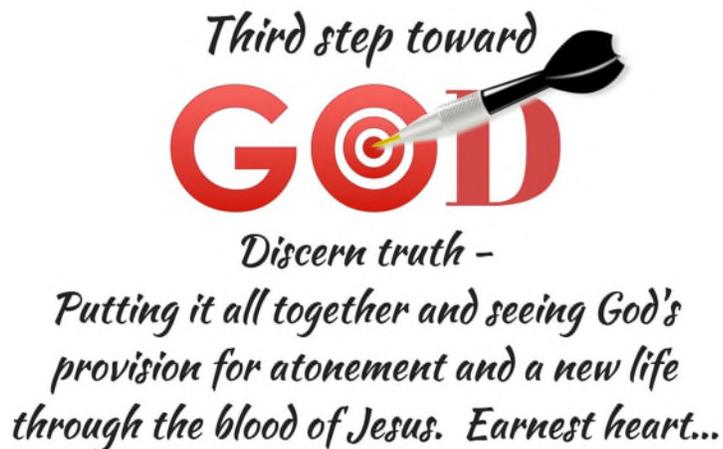
This next step towards God brings us up to a different level of life. As God has drawn us we have so far begun noticing things differently and have begun to pay attention to what those differences are. Our noticing and appreciating has led us to a measure of understanding which now puts us in a position to begin discerning truth.

Todd, in your notes you speak of this level of discerning truth as "being handed to Jesus." What do you mean by that?

We know that God is the one who selects us. We know that from [John 17:6](#) where Jesus, in his prayer to God, said, *I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world.*

God is the one who selects us. This third step out of five in our drawing towards God is the opportunity - the point where we put all of these things together that we have both seen and heard, and we see God's provision for atonement and the opportunity for a new life through the blood of Jesus. This requires an earnest heart.

Discerning truth is very different than understanding truth.



Yes. It is the next step up. Let's use the metaphor of eating our lunch. We see this beautiful food prepared for us, but then we smell it with our nose. Most of us smell our food before we eat it. In fact, we eat our food with all five of our senses, not just our taste. And if it does not smell right, we do not put it in our mouth. This is the next step of our faith. Isn't that powerful?

You see with your eyes, that is "perceive." You hear, that is "understand." You "discern;" now you are smelling. And when you smell it out (such as "I smell a rat!"), you get that sense of, okay, I am "seeing" under the surface. I am seeing something bigger, something different.



Of these four motivations - curiosity, fear, despair or awakening - which ones do you think play the biggest part in this, or does it not matter?

I think they all play different parts, so it depends. Some of us might come across this stage at different points in our lives. But I will tell you a quick story of a man who lost his father. His father spent 20 years teaching him about Jesus Christ, but he really did not discern the truth until he had the fear and despair of losing his father, and only then did he have an awakening. We can see all three of those playing a part in this man's revival of faith. And I think that is the way it is. We go through these cycles, but every cycle gets us closer to God and closer to a full appreciation of the faith that is working in our hearts.

You get a sense that it does not matter. Curiosity, fear, despair or awakening - all of those can play a part, not necessarily one over another. Of course the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the pride of life can get in the way.



Remember:

MOTIVATION
CURIOSITY, FEAR, DESPAIR, AWAKENING

I think Jesus is gracious, and he will give us signs along the way. He will give us helps along the way, experiences in the development of our faith. If he sees that we have an earnest heart toward him, he will give us opportunities like rungs on a ladder we can hold onto and climb up.

Let's go back to Philip:

John 6:5,6,15: (NASB) ⁵Therefore Jesus, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to him, said to Philip, where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat? ⁶This he was saying to test him, for he himself knew what he was intending to do. ¹⁴Therefore when the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, this is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.

This is after the miracle of the feeding. All the people were following Jesus, and later on in this chapter he tells them they would have to (metaphorically) *eat my flesh and drink my blood* if they really wanted to follow him.

Disgusted, the whole crowd of people left except his disciples. Why did his disciples not leave? *Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat* - We think Philip stayed with Jesus because Jesus asked him this question and then performed the miracle afterwards. This created a question in Philip's mind, "Why did Jesus ask me that question if he was going to do this miracle anyway?" The answer is, he was buying the benefit of the doubt in Philip's heart, because he was going to need it in about 40 more verses when Jesus would say to follow him they would have to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Philip said to himself, "Well, you know what? I am going to give Jesus the benefit of the doubt here because I know he is the Messiah." With that original question, Jesus bought that benefit of the doubt.



Discernment comes into play when there is a doubt, when the potential for turning off or turning away is really great, discernment helps you "smell" your way to the right answer. Jesus gave Philip that little bit extra to work with so when he made the dramatic statement, *eat my flesh and drink my blood* (that was not literal), Philip had something to go on. He would be able to smell genuine spirituality rather than a ridiculous statement.

He knew how to discern the truth from fiction. That is the point.

Discernment is built upon understanding because understanding is getting beneath the surface, and discernment is now putting things into places where they belong.

And this is what the rich young ruler could not do. He could not get to this level.

God draws us by perception, by understanding, and then by discernment.

I would like to read just a quick summary of this step. It is putting it all together and seeing God's provision for atonement and a new life through the blood of Jesus. It requires an earnest heart. Do you see the next step in our faith?

It requires an earnest heart, so discernment is not going to happen unless your heart is in the right place.

There is a struggle. Remember what the Apostle Paul said in Hebrews - he said *you must diligently seek Him*. God will reward you.



A great example of an earnest heart:

Matthew 16:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

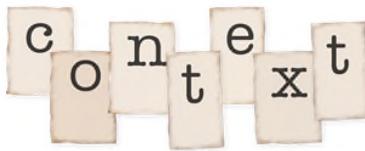
At this stage, Peter made a very forceful, declarative statement about Jesus as being the Messiah. Peter discerned the truth of Jesus. This kept him from leaving Jesus during that fateful time when Jesus made that very provocative statement. Peter had a fully-formed faith, and this was the vision of faith that Philip lacked when he was interacting with Jesus before the feeding.



Jesus earned the benefit of the doubt from the disciples, and this was a missing piece of the puzzle in the development of their faith. This was a missing piece of the puzzle in the people that were believing in the Law Covenant. They could not get away from the Law Covenant to recognize Jesus.

Discernment plays this huge role, especially for the Jewish individual looking to follow Jesus, because there were some things you were going to have to leave behind that were very clear and important to you. You would have needed to be able to discern in order to make that leap, like you say, to buy the benefit of the doubt. He did that through his miracles and teachings.

Let's go to the context of the statement about Jesus in effect chasing away his followers.



This set of verses on discernment will be in sharp contrast to the next verses:

John 6:60-66: (NASB) ⁶⁰Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this said, this is a difficult statement; who can listen to it? ⁶¹But Jesus, conscious that his disciples grumbled at this, said to them, does this cause you to stumble? ⁶²What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he was saying, for this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father. ⁶⁶As a result of this many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore.

Now compare this response:

John 6:66-69: (NASB) ⁶⁶As a result of this many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, you do not want to go away also, do you? ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God.

Let's pause right there. Todd, what happened to the crowds as a result of this statement, and how do we fit it into our conversation on discernment?

Quite simply, the crowd was looking at Jesus through fleshly eyes. They did not make that leap to discern Jesus as the atonement and the opportunity for a new life through his blood. The disciples did. Peter recognized him as the Messiah. Philip gave him the benefit of the doubt, and the other disciples followed suit.

It is interesting that Jesus made this provocative statement. We might ask why Jesus did not just invite everybody with open arms? I think this is a perfect example of how he was turning people away. Why? Because they did not come to him with the right heart attitude. They did not come to him in the proper discernment of the truth that he was the Messiah. When Jesus says to his disciples, "Hey, are you going to leave, too?" Simon, the impetuous one, the one that took initiative, said, "Where are we going to go? You have the words of eternal life." There is a prophecy that talks about this in the Old Testament pointing to Jesus where the Messiah would be the one who has the words of eternal life. This very statement is a prophetic marker that Peter was discerning Jesus as the Messiah.



This experience was a test to make sure their discernment was on target, that they could smell genuine truth, that they could smell spirituality so they knew it would be good for them.

All of us who are mature Christians realize that our faith has been tested through lots of different struggles. Joseph in prison showed us through exercising the principles of righteousness through extreme injustice in a difficult experience that victory would only come through struggle using righteous principles in a worldly atmosphere. That is what we need to learn in our life.

Do you think this is where a lot of people who may be drawn by God get sidetracked - going from understanding to discernment? Do you think this is a bigger area of difficulty, or are some things even bigger than that?

No, I do think that this is a place where a lot of people opt out. They do not look at it with spiritual eyes. It is important to realize that this is the time when Jesus is sent to us from God so that we can "opt in" to him as the atonement.

There has to be a response of "I am following this and not letting this go."

Acts 17:32-34: (NASB) ³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, we shall hear you again concerning this. ³³So Paul went out of their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

This is a beautiful experience the Apostle Paul had much later after Jesus died. He went to Mars Hill and saw the idols to all of their gods. They were a polytheistic society. He saw one idol that said *to the unknown God*. Paul said to the group, *Him whom ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you*. He went off and peeled off the whole plan of God right in front of them. Two people believed, Dionysius and Damaris. They were able to speed through the first three steps. The point for us is that these two people were living in a culture just like we have today. They lived in a culture of Rome where pleasure was the end goal. Paul began speaking about the very purpose of life. This testimony from Paul provided a rich contrast. It is the same as our culture today. We should take from this the opportunity to use rich, declarative statements in all of our witness opportunities.

Does discernment open the door to contentment?

Absolutely. Because we have to *labor to enter into his rest*. ([Hebrews 4:11](#)) Remember that Scripture? What is that *rest*? It is the rest of our understanding of the truth of God and His prophetic workings in our world today. Yes, discernment leads us to rest.

Contentment is that emotional response you can really build upon and have something valuable through this discernment. It is clear that God wants us to know, and He draws us to Him with truth.



**Perceiving, understanding and discerning truth are big steps.
What kind of action do these steps provoke us to take?**

Being in Jesus' hands and learning to discern truth has been a "from the outside in" experience, and we are now beginning to see the brightness of the Gospel light. Being drawn to God by this warm and powerful light can trigger a significant change in us and the next step on our journey towards God is a "from the inside out" step. What is the fourth step and why is it different?

The Scriptures indicate that this is where our emotions come in. There is an emotional component here, where the first three steps were really rational components. This fourth step is our intent with desire to serve and please God.



*Desire to Serve God -
Intent with desire to serve and please God.
Repentance and faith in Jesus' blood. One's rational
and emotional response to God's love and blessing.*

It has co-mingled both a rational and an emotional component. It includes repentance and our faith in the blood of Jesus. Quite simply, it is our rational and emotional response to God's love and blessing in our life.

The desire to serve God is not merely a thought process where you come to a logical conclusion, but if you have a true desire to serve God, that conclusion must be thoroughly accepted and supported by your heart as well.

The heart comes into play. It is a powerful thing, because remember, the Scripture says, *My son, give me thine heart.* (Proverbs 23:26) God makes Himself available to us through our perception, our understanding and our discernment of the truth.

Perception is sight. Understanding is hearing. Discernment is smell.

Exactly. And now we can reach out and grab the truth with desire! Remember what the Apostle Paul said? He said, *lay hold on salvation.* (1 Timothy 6:12) Bring it close to you. He said, *the love of Christ constraineth us.* (2 Corinthians 5:14) It reaches out and holds us close in the loving arms of Jesus.

So, that is "touch." You touch the truth, and it touches you. And it touches you not just in your head but in your heart as well.



That is the title of this podcast, "How Does God Touch Your Heart?"

For God to touch your heart, you have to go through all those previous steps or otherwise your heart is not ready, right?

Right. There are both components (rational and emotional) here, and they work equally strong.

This sounds to me like one of the four motivations - the one that jumps out at me is the awakening. There is this awakening that says, "I have to have myself intertwined with this. I have to touch it. I have to have it touch me."

This came in my life, Rick, when I was about 34 years old and came right between the eyes when I had to do some real hard struggling with the power of the Holy Spirit and God's work in my life. That is where this desire to serve God really gained momentum in my personal experience.

And your experience after that was very different than your experience before that, wasn't it?

It really was. It was an anchor to my faith that I just cannot do without.

Hebrews 1:9: (NASB) *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.*

...loved righteousness and hated lawlessness - Did you notice the emotional component here? Those two things are required for repentance and the proper following of Jesus. He said, if any man follow me, he needs to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. (Matthew 16:24) It requires both.

With this desire to serve God, you love and you hate. You love the right things; you hate the bad things. Because you are emotionally engaged based on your mind being drawn from perception to understanding to discernment, now you are a full being, able to move forward. You say, "I owe something back for what I have been given, what I have been able to see, hear and smell. I can now touch it, and I owe something."

The wisdom of the evangelist that you are, Rick, is you can use this as leverage in your ministry. If a person really does not understand the truth, then they are never going to get to this point. So, do not try to feed their desire when they do not have it. They need to learn the truth before they can go to this point.

That is an important factor here. If the horse is not ready to drink water, you can lead them all you want, but he is not going to drink.

Psalms 23:2: (KJV) *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* It does not say, "He makes me drink from still waters."

And it does not say, "He sticks my head in the water and says, 'Drink.'"

Acts 3:2-9: (NASB) ²And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. ⁴But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, Look at us! ⁵And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive



something from them. ⁶But Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk! ⁷And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. ⁸With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

Do you see “touch” in these texts? What did Peter do? Number one, he said *in the name of Jesus Christ*. Peter did not use his own name. He seized the man by the right hand, and that man grabbed Peter’s right hand and stood up. The significance of this is a picture of the healing of the world of mankind. How does it happen? It happens through touch. It happens through the name of Jesus Christ, and we are able to walk and rise up in faith, not in the lust of the flesh, not in the pride of life, not in the lust of our eyes. We are able to rise up and our anchors will be strong. We can stand before God in the blood of Jesus and begin to walk in His light.

We have this addition of touch, the desire to serve God. We talked about discernment as being a place where a lot of individuals end up not following through. We talked about these five steps as being a funnel, and you can definitely see how it gets more and more narrow as we go through this. We are now at a point where a desire to serve God implies that I am leaving other things behind that were once important, and I want to change the way my life works. This is a tough step to take.

It really focuses and congeals our intent and desire. It takes the rational and emotional component and brings them together. It results in our repentance. It is our rational and emotional response to God’s love and blessing.

Maybe in your life, you are feeling drawn to God and maybe you are going through the process that we are talking about. But it is not just emotion. A lot of Christian organizations are built purely on this emotional, fanatical sense of euphoria. And Todd, what you are saying here is nothing remotely close to that.

No, it is not. There might have been euphoria in the early stages of peoples’ faith when they saw the miracles of Jesus, but he brought them further based upon their willingness to participate in his suffering.

John 5:12-15: (NASB) ¹²They asked him, who is the man who said to you, pick up your pallet and walk? ¹³But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. ¹⁴Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you. ¹⁵The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Did you see where Jesus found this man? In the temple. What does that mean? Well, this man was healed by Jesus, but he did not know who healed him. What did he do? He desired God. He went to the temple, and that is where Jesus found him. That is what happens when we are healed by Jesus. We want to go to the “temple.”

Let’s look at another experience. Remember when Peter denied Jesus and realized his sin? What did he do? He went back to the fishing business, and the other disciples followed him. Why did he go back to the fishing business? Well, he could not go to the temple and ask for forgiveness because he would have



been thrown in the jail and beheaded. He went back to the fishing business until Jesus told him, *Meet me in Jerusalem*. As we have desire for God, we go to Him and Jesus and learn. "What is the next step? What do you want me to do?"

That desire to serve God comes as a result of God drawing us. Remember, He starts this process with perception, then understanding, next discernment and now touch, which means having that rational and emotional response that says, "This is so, so good. This is so much bigger than my life ever could have been before. I need to do something about this."

The man healed by Peter and John was looking for healing at the temple. But was Jesus there? No. But Jesus' representatives were there. I think that is a big idea, that when God sends Jesus to people, sometimes it is in the form of one of Jesus' representatives.

It does not diminish the process at all - it enhances the process because now you know that God can work through all kinds of different ways.

We have a work to do.

Right. That discernment can really feed this desire.

Let's go to another very dramatic desire to see:

Acts 16:27-34: (NASB) ²⁷When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, do not harm yourself, for we are all here! ²⁹And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰and after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. ³⁴And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Do you see the emotional desire to kill himself and then his emotional inflection point to follow Jesus through the words of the Apostle Paul? Why did Paul not escape from prison? Because he saw something important in this jailer - he saw faith that he could nurture.

Paul decided to deny his flesh to do the work of the ministry. He was going to deny his flesh and not leave any one of us. I would have left that prison! I would not have had the insight the Apostle Paul did.

We see the amazing power of the Apostle Paul, his desire to serve God, his desire to be Jesus' representative in the life of this jailer and this jailer's family. Why did he like this jailer so much? I think it was because the Apostle Paul could see himself as that guy who imprisoned the Jews when he was the Saul of Tarsus. I think this is a template for countless possibilities where we can pull people closer to God through their desire to serve and please our Heavenly Father.

One of the things about the jailer that impresses me was how you said earlier that Paul noticed something about him. Paul saw him discerning a little bit more than the average person. Paul saw him "smelling out" the truth. When



this great miracle happened and everyone could run away and he was despairing for his very life, Paul was there to take on that despair and say, “Do not worry. We are still here. Go ahead.”

It is important we can see this transition. If we can see this transition of faith in peoples’ minds - this transition between the intellectual point of their faith and a desire to serve Jesus - I think this is what the Apostle Paul noted in this jailer. It is what happened with Lydia when she went to the place where prayer was want to be made. When the Apostle Paul sought her out, what happened? The same thing. She was baptized, and her whole household was baptized. We reach out just like that man who was healed reached out to God through Jesus with desire and went to the temple. It was the only thing he could do. They were seeking Jesus even though they did not know him. It is beautiful to see how God is revealing Himself to helping people along their spiritual path.

Again, I want to use that illustration of a funnel and how all of these steps work together. **Please see the Bonus Material for the funnel handout.**

It is a powerful tool when you get to the point of desire and look at your circumstances and weigh it all out and think, “There is nothing else I can do.” For the jailer it was, “Baptize me now, me and my family.”

Yes, same thing with Philip and the eunuch. Philip said, “*How readest thou?*” The eunuch said, “*How do I know what I'm reading till somebody explains to me?*”

God drawing us and touching our hearts and minds is such a profound experience.

**God has drawn us with knowledge and desire.
Where is He drawing us to? What does He really want?**

The first three steps were from the “outside in.” We are given truth to perceive, to understand and to discern. Then we went on to a “from the inside out” step of personal desire to give back, to serve God, to serve His plan.

Now this last step contains both approaches, as we sacrifice our wills, a “from the inside out” experience and receive from the “outside in” transformation. Todd, what does this look like? What is this last step, and why is it the last step?



*consecrating one's life to God,
receiving the holy spirit – guiding one into all truth.
Living in the light of salvation and sanctification.*

This is the opportunity for us to sacrifice our lives to God through the blood of Jesus Christ and *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, ([Romans 12:2](#)) the renewing of our character. It is the point in our Christian experience where we enjoy the blood of forgiveness, we consecrate or devote our life to God and we receive the Holy Spirit, which guides us into all truth. We truly have the opportunity to live in the light of salvation, and we have the opportunity to be sanctified by the finger of God, which means being set apart for a holy purpose.

Wait. I want to get some clarification. At this fifth stage you are talking about God's Spirit coming and resting upon us. In a lot of Christian circles, there is a sense that God's Spirit comes right away. You acknowledge Jesus and God's Spirit is there. You are saying that it takes a whole lot more to get God's Spirit to dwell within you.

I think Peter is a perfect example of that. He did not have the Holy Spirit until Pentecost, and he had been following Jesus for three-and-a-half years. But even after Jesus died and paid the ransom sacrifice, he did not get the Holy Spirit until Pentecost 50 days later. That is when he started his fabulous ministry, converting people towards the Lord.

So, this is a process. And like you said, it is a defined process, but the timing on the process is up for grabs depending on the circumstances and the person's individual background, circumstances and their openness. I have known some Christians who have come to Christ in a big way but were on their way for years and years.

Jesus' parable said some seeds fell on the good ground, some on the side of the road and were burned up in the light of the sun. We need to make sure that we not only have the good ground for that seed to grow and flourish, but that we look for that good ground in our targets for faith.



The process can begin at a very young age when their hearts are touched from God. This is what happened for me (Rick). My heart was touched when I was very young, and it developed over time over several years. People's experiences are important, because you want to help them perceive and understand and come to some level of discernment so they can say, "Wow, God is important for my life." Now, as a child, there is not a whole lot necessarily to do at that point. You have to grow up and become mature. But still to plant those seeds is such an incredibly important part of life.

Sacrifice and transformation:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) *¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The Apostle Paul knew better than anybody that this was a reasonable service - giving his life to God. That was the rational component. He was a wonderful logician. But he also understood the "living sacrifice" component. That is the emotional component, where we go through an opportunity to sacrifice things that are pleasing to our flesh but are not helpful to the development of our new creature.

The Apostle Paul spent a couple of years in the Arabian Desert. What was he doing there? I think he was coming to grips with his sin of persecuting the church. I think he was going through great despair. I think he was experiencing deep regret. And I think he was developing that liability of his sin into an asset for his great faith and his powerful ministry.

What is the lesson for us? We can learn that even if we have great sin in our past, it can definitely lead to despair. It can lead to fear. But repentance leads to our awakening. Repentance led to the Apostle Paul's awakening, and repentance led him to emphasize the body of Christ in his ministry, which he persecuted as Saul of Tarsus.

He would not have gotten to the point of that repentance had he not had the fear, had he not had the despair, had he not been given the time to work through it. That is a very important part of this. The Apostle Paul did not establish all the churches the day after he was converted. He spent time, like you said, working on becoming ready for that transformation to put it in practice on a daily basis.

Just like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, our awakening will result in a clear vision of Jesus, and that will revitalize our life IF we let it - IF we keep the lust of the flesh out, IF we keep the lust of our eyes out, IF we do not frame our faith through the pride of life.

What sense is related to this fifth step?

It is the sense of taste. Remember what David said? He said, *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.* (Psalms 34:8) It is that taste. It is that experience. It



is that rich indwelling of the Holy Spirit that results in sacrifice and transformation.

Taste is the most committed of all those senses because you are ingesting everything else. You have seen it. You have heard it. You have smelled it. You have touched it. But when you taste it, it is becoming a part of you. That is a great analogy for putting things in perspective, *taste that the Lord is good*. Commit yourself to making His word literally the energy for your life.

That tasting also has to do with energizing your faith through the miracles of Jesus in your life. Because those miracles, at least in my life, will come fast, and I cannot take them for granted.

We are talking about the way that God works in our lives. He gives us tools to work with. He gives us the ability to cope with all the things that come our way.

2 Peter 1:4: (NASB) *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

Do we claim these promises in our prayers enough? When we look back on the experiences of the men and women of faith in the Old Testament, do we look at their lives and see how God led them and took care of them, how He intervened in their life in a miraculous way? Do we claim those promises, for instance, where God says, *I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest?* (**Joshua 1:9**) These promises are given to secure our faith, and we must claim them in prayer and expect God to fulfill them in our life.

To claim the promises means to “taste” them, to make them a part of you. If they are just simply an intellectual, “Yes, I see that God will take care of me,” it is not going to change you. This step is about sacrifice and transformation. Transformation is a change that cannot change back. When the butterfly becomes a butterfly, it cannot go back to being a caterpillar. You are changed, and you are now absolutely, positively different. Transformation.

This is the bottom of the funnel. All along the way there have been those who gave up on the process or could not follow through on the process or did not feel strong enough or are distracted or whatever it is. But here is where you are in for life.

Absolutely. We do have the warnings about our adversary:

1 Peter 5:8: (KJV) *your adversary the devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour.*

We have to be careful that we keep our faith fixed on the heavenly vision, and as we go through that transformation process we are fully committed emotionally as a living sacrifice, walking in the light of the gospel.

Even when we get to this point of transformation and sacrifice, we still have to beware.

We have to be vigilant because there are opportunities for struggle and victory, just like Joseph in prison. He had all kinds of opportunities for struggle where



he applied the principles of righteousness. He taught us that victory only comes through struggle.

And struggle only comes as a result of perceiving, understanding, discerning and the desire to serve God and then bringing to us this point of sacrifice and transformation.

God has drawn us this whole way. It is His plan that if we can follow through on it, He is going to support us.

Now, let's go to another Scripture that gives us the clarity of that support:

Romans 8:28: (NASB) *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

Make sure we trust God and Jesus to solve all our problems. You remember when Jesus asked Philip that question. Philip said, "I do not have enough money." No, I think we need to trust God to solve all our problems. Let's watch Jesus do that miraculous feeding in our life. Let's follow the direction of the Apostle Paul and give ourselves as a living sacrifice but also make sure that we ingest the truth so we are transformed through the sanctifying power of God.

Our Christian growth must result in a mature faith that, at the end of our life, like the Apostle Peter, like the Apostle John, we can reflect back and put the emphasis on the right points of faith for those who have followed Jesus.

Saying, "Let's watch and let God draw us through our issues," does not mean we sit back and do nothing. We still have to do our work and do our part and put our efforts out. But it is in relation to putting our efforts out, using Jesus as a template where when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane he said, *Nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done.* (Luke 22:42) That is transformation. That is sacrifice. That is how we can see the mighty hand of God overruling in our life.

Let's not forget the only way the disciples were able to discern that Jesus was the Messiah was by watching him do the work and then measuring it against the prophetic promises of the Messiah. We must do the same thing in following Jesus' footsteps.

2 Peter 1:8-10: (NASB) *⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;*

This is a wonderful bookend to our lesson today. It uses that word *diligent* again. Remember, *if we diligently seek Him* (Hebrews 11:6), we will find Him and he will reward our efforts.

This happens to be a beautiful pastoral promise from the Apostle Peter. Earlier in Peter's life, we think of him as bumbling through his relationship with Jesus. But if we look closely, we can see his faith was developed in custom-fitted opportunities for difficulties and struggles. Jesus promised him that he gave him a new name meaning "little stone." He also gave him the keys to the



kingdom, which is salvation to the Jews and to the Gentiles. He gave him rich experiences in the vision on the rooftop. He gave him the opportunity to go to Cornelius' house against all his doubts and questions. And Peter performed. Peter jumped! He did the work. He stayed under the sanctifying power of God, and we can, too.

What are the benefits of knowing the process of God's drawing? Well, number one, we can feel secure in our faith. But number two, we can know the necessary steps for our children to get to the point where God calls them. We cannot infuse desire for God into their hearts until we teach them the truth. That is what the lesson of perception and understanding does for us. That is what they do for our children. So, what is the advice for children? Learn as much as you can. Remember the fifth commandment, which is *honor your father and your mother*. Remember to love God. Remember that your love for God will be shown through your love for your brothers. Be obedient. Always speak the truth. And look at our families and look at our lives.

Todd, thank you for being with us. This is a very important, powerful message of the five steps God uses to draw us to Him. Each of those steps builds something bigger and stronger and it becomes not only intellectual, but it becomes emotional. The two work together to bring us to a point of sacrifice and transformation.

*So, how does God touch your heart?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
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Drawn by the Father

How God appeals to our mind and touches our heart

*“No man can come to me, except **the Father** which hath sent me **draw him**: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And **they shall be all taught of God**. Every man therefore that hath **heard**, and hath **learned of the Father**, cometh unto me.” (John 6:44-45)*

