

Good Morning,

To begin our message this morning I would like to begin with another humorous story. You see, for the past several weeks I've been telling a humorous story in each of our messages. But in order for a humorous to make it into our message it has to be tested out. So, I've been telling the stories to Jan's family members who come to coffee at her mom's apartment several times a week. But last week Jan's sister Elaine was kind enough to bring me a story to possibly use in our messages. So thanks to Elaine here is today's story, ***"On the outskirts of a small town, there was a big, old pecan tree just inside the cemetery fence. One day, two boys filled up a bucketful of nuts and sat down by the tree, out of sight, and began dividing the nuts. 'One for you, one for me, one for you, one for me,' said one boy. Several dropped and rolled down toward the fence. □□Another boy came riding along the road on his bicycle. As he passed, he thought he heard voices from inside the cemetery. He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he heard, 'One for you, one for me, one for you, □□One for me...' □□He just knew what it was. He jumped back on his bike and rode off. Just around the bend he met an old man with a cane, hobbling along. □□'Come here quick,' said the boy, 'you won't believe what I heard! Satan and the Lord are down at the cemetery dividing up the souls!' □□The man said, 'Beat it kid, can't you see it's hard for me to walk.' When the boy insisted though, the man hobbled slowly to the cemetery. □□Standing by the fence they heard, 'One for you, one for me. One for you, One for me.' □□The old man whispered, 'Boy, you've been tellin' me the truth. Let's see if we can see the Lord...□□Shaking with fear, they peered through the fence, yet were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of the Lord. □□At last they heard, 'One for you, one for me. That's all.. Now let's go get those nuts by the fence and we'll be done.... □□They say the old man had the lead for a good half-mile before the kid on the bike passed him."*** You know, what I find interesting about this story is how easy it is for us to sometimes misunderstand a conversation that we've maybe overheard. Just like the old man and the young boy in our story we sometimes don't get the story right and take away from the conversation the wrong information. Now last week we learned in part one of our message series that the Bible is a place where we have the opportunity to read and hear God's voice in our hearts. Remember we used our phones to illustrate how we may communicate with each other and that the Bible is just like our phones because the Bible is where we may communicate with God. You see the Bible is book where we can open it up,

and give God a call about something we would like to share. You know we can even think about the verse numbers in the bible in the same way as we may think about the phone numbers that we use to dial our phones. So from last week's message we looked at the question, **"How do we, as Christians, use the Bible in our lives?"** And we also determined that one good way to use the Bible is to think of it as a place where we may enter into a conversation with God. So now that we understand how we may find ourselves using the Bible let's take a look at this question for today's message, **"How do we as Christians Study the Bible in our lives?"** You know we may want to think about this question as sort of like being the contents of our conversation with God. And it is the contents of our conversation where we may learn what it is that God wants us to know in our hearts. Remember from last weeks message where we talked about the Holy Spirit sitting right beside us when we read the Bible. So now with the Holy Spirit sitting right next to us, we may sort of begin to understand that when we read the words of the Bible the Holy Spirit is guiding those words along with God's message into our thoughts. We can think of it like a language translator who gives counseling along with their translation. You see in my reading of the Bible I have always wondered why when I read 10 words of the bible I get those words and many more in my thoughts. Let's try this out, I am going to read a verse from the bible and as you hear these words see if your thoughts think about more than just the words you hear. **"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."** Now for myself when I read the beginning of Psalm 23 my thoughts generally go to something that I am afraid and by reading this Psalm I begin to see the perspective of a fear that I maybe facing. Then I begin to realize that God is taking care of me and what ever it is that I'm afraid of I no longer need to fear because God is with me and I'm not alone. And for some wonderful reason a sense of comfort and calming comes over me and helps to take away my fear of the moment. Well, I hope our exercise in trying to hear God's word or message in our hearts by reading the start of Psalm 23 helped just a bit in receiving a glimpse of how we can hear God's voice in our lives. So for the next part of our message today, I would like to present an article from Max Lucado's writings that I came across this week in my reading. I would like to present his article to us but the entire article is too long to include in today's message so I have decided to select from his article

those points that most lend itself to today's message. Max starts out his article by describing some thoughts on the bible's history, ***"Some of its writings date back five thousand years. It's too bizarre. The book speaks of incredible floods, fires, earthquakes, and people with supernatural abilities. It's too radical. The Bible calls for undying devotion to a carpenter who called himself God's Son. Logic says this book shouldn't survive. Too old, too bizarre, too radical. The Bible has been banned, burned, scoffed, and ridiculed. Scholars have mocked it as foolish. Kings have branded it as illegal. It's the single most popular book in all of history. It has been the best-selling book in the world for years! There is no way on earth to explain it. Which perhaps is the only explanation. The answer? The Bible's durability is not found on earth; it is found in heaven. For the millions who have tested its claims and claimed its promises, there is but one answer: the Bible is God's book and God's voice. That is the reason this book has endured through the centuries. It dares to tackle the toughest questions about life: Where do I go after I die? Is there a God? What do I do with my fears?"*** Next we find in Max's article his discussion on how to begin to understand the bible in our daily lives. ***"The first step in understanding the Bible is asking God to help us. We should read prayerfully. If anyone understands God's Word, it is because of God and not the reader. But the Helper will teach you everything and will cause you to remember all that I told you. The Helper is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name. Before reading the Bible, pray. Invite God to speak to you. Don't go to Scripture looking for your idea; go searching for his. Not only should we read the Bible prayerfully; we should read it carefully. Search and you will find is the pledge. To understand the Bible you don't have to be brilliant, but you must be willing to roll up your sleeves and search. Be a worker who is not ashamed and who uses the true teaching in the right way. Another step in understanding the Bible is to know that after the asking and seeking comes the knocking. After you ask and search, then knock. Knock, and the door will open for you. To knock is to stand at God's door; to make yourself available. To climb the steps, cross the porch, stand at the doorway, and volunteer. Knocking goes beyond the realm of thinking and into the realm of acting. To knock is to ask, What can I do? How can I obey? Where can I go? It's one thing to know what to do. It's another to do it. But for those who do it, those who choose to obey, a special reward awaits them. The truly happy are those who carefully study God's perfect law that makes people free, and they continue to study it. They do not forget what they heard, but they obey what God's teaching says. Those who do this will be made happy. What a promise.***

***Happiness comes to those who do what they read! It's the same with medicine. If you only read the label but ignore the pills, it won't help. It's the same with food. If you only read the recipe but never cook, you won't be fed. And it's the same with the Bible. If you only read the words but never obey, you'll never know the joy God has promised. Ask. Search. Knock. Simple, isn't it? Why don't you give it a try? If you do, you'll see why you are holding the most remarkable book in history.***

So what have we learned from Max Lucado this morning about understanding and studying the Bible. First we learned that the Bible is a very old book and by all rights it should not have survived over the past several thousand years since it was written. We learned that the Bible survived because it's a book not found on earth but is a book found in heaven. After all, the Bible is God's Book and God's voice. Next we learned that a key point in understanding the Bible is to ask God to help us. We should read it prayerfully and understand that what we learn is God's message brought to us by the Holy Spirit. And most of all when we read and learn from the Bible that we should remember that we are reading it not to find out what we want to hear but to read it and find out what God want us to hear. Next, we learned that after we ask and seek to hear God's voice that we need open our hearts and make ourselves available to His message that we hear. After all what good is hearing God's voice if we are not going to listen to what he is telling us. Sort of like hearing your phone ring and seeing who's calling but not answering it. But you know something wonderful about God's love and grace for us is that He's always leaving his voice mail on our hearts. So as you Ask, and Search, and Knock on the Bible's door make sure that the door to your heart is open and willing to hear God's voice; a voice that brings comfort and healing to our everyday lives. Amen

Joshua 1:7-9

Mathew 7:24-29

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

Matthew 7

## Ask, Search, Knock

7 “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:24-29

## Hearers and Doers

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and

does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand.  
27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

28 Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.