

## Help is Here, Max Lucado and Wendy Blight, Week 2

**WB = Wendy Blight**

**ML = Max Lucado**

**Wendy Blight:** Hi Friends! Wendy Blight, back here with you again for week two of our *Help Is Here* online study. And guess what we're here for? We're here to gain more wisdom from our author-teacher. But most of all, my favorite title for you, is our dearest OBS friend. We love having you. So, I'm going to come to you with question number two. Are you ready, Max?

**Max Lucado:** I'm ready. Make it easy, please.

**WB:** OK, I'll try. I think you're an expert. So, I think any question I ask you will be easy. Alright. This one is about hearing from the Holy Spirit. So, how can we seek to hear from the Holy Spirit on the questions we're asking and the prayers we're praying? And when we do hear, how can we know that it's the Holy Spirit that we're hearing? Alright, take it away.

**ML:** Yeah. You know, the Scripture that comes to my mind on that question, which is a great question, by the way, is from Romans Chapter 12. "*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person, by changing the way you think, then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect*" (Romans 12:2). It's really wonderful to understand that God has a will for you that is good, that's pleasing, and that is perfect. But to know it, you must not, Paul says, "*copy the behavior and the customs of the world.*" In other words, His voice must outrank the voices of society. God wants us to be different. Not odd, not peculiar. Our aim is not to blend in, however, but to look up. There's a passage in the Old Testament where God told the Hebrew people, "*Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong*" (Exodus 23:2). You know, if you follow the crowd, I mean, you can go over the cliff. You can. Ask the Turkish shepherds about this, who watched 1,500 sheep go over the cliff. For some undetermined reason, a single sheep jumped over the edge. The first was followed by a second, then a dozen, then several dozen, and pandemonium ensued. And there was nothing the shepherds could do. Over 1,500 animals jumped. Over 450 died, and the others would have perished as well, except that they landed on the bodies of the first jumpers.

**WB:** Oh. wow.

**ML:** Those sheep weren't thinking.

**WB:** [Laughter.]

**ML:** If they were, they were saying to themselves: “*Well, the jumpers look dumb, but a few hundred sheep cannot be wrong. Right?*”

**WB:** Right.

**ML:** Well, yes, they can. Yes, they can. And so can people. So, “*don't copy the behavior and the customs of this world.*” You cannot hear Him if you're listening to them. You can't soar like an eagle if you're running with dumb sheep. If you want to hear from God — this is really important — if you want to hear from God, you've got to ask the right question. The first question is not “What should I do?” but “Whom will I hear?” Who has authority? Who calls the shots in my life? If the answer is “people,” you will not discern God's direction. If the answer is “television personalities,” you will not discern God's will for your life. Add to that list: horoscopes, palm readers, and tarot cards. If you're following the stars, you aren't following the Son.

**WB:** Oh, that's good.

**ML:** “The true children of God are those who let God's Spirit lead them.” That's Romans 8 verse 14. So, stop following a culture that doesn't follow God, and start listening for the Spirit who speaks on behalf of God. So, how do we sense the direction of the Spirit? Well, during the wilderness wanderings in the Old Testament, there came a wonderful moment. The position of the fiery and cloudy pillars changed. God had instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, in which He would dwell, and once the project was complete, the majestic cloud, which had hovered above them, descended from on high and entered the holy place. This is all in Exodus 40. “*The cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (Exodus 40:34). The presence of God stooped from the skies and settled between the cherubim and the seraphim on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. And from then on, God was not at a distance. He was among His people. Now, my imagination conjures up the sight of the cloud and the fire, intertwining and then descending like a cyclone, ever spinning until the motion stopped directly over the tabernacle. And from that moment on, every child of Israel could point to the tabernacle and say, “*God is in there.*” Now, with that image in mind, I ask you to gesture to your heart and say, “*God is in here.*”

**WB:** Wow.

**ML:** You see, on the day you decided to follow Jesus, an unseen miracle occurred. The Holy Spirit descended from the heavens, like a cyclone perhaps, ever spinning until the moment the motion stopped directly over your body, and He took up residence within you. And believe it or not, you became His dwelling place. This was the promise of Jesus. He said, “*The Spirit of truth lives with you, and will be in you. And anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them*” (John 14:17 and 23). In other words, He turned your heart into His tabernacle. Paul said, “*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells*

*in your midst?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16). So, the Spirit of God dwells within you, and the Spirit of God moves within us to lead us. He does this with two tools. First the verse and then the voice. The verse and the voice. The verse, *"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17). So, the primary communication tool of the Holy Spirit is the Bible. He speaks to us through Scripture. His will is found in His Word. *"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path"* (Psalm 1:19). So, we have to choose: are we going to follow the word of society or the Word of God? The crowd says: Your value depends on your net worth. The Scripture says: You matter because God made you. The crowd says: Do what you want. It won't hurt. The Bible says: *"Now there is a way that seems right but at the end thereof is death."* The crowd says: If there's a God, He doesn't care about us. But Scripture says: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His Son"* (John 3:16). So, we turn first to the verse, and then we go to the voice. This voice might be your inner sense – the knowing – that results from Scripture interacting with your spirit. The voice might be wise counsel, might be a dream, might be a vision. And there was an occasion in which the apostle Paul attempted to enter a city, *"but the Spirit did not permit him."* That's in Acts 16 and verse 7. Soon thereafter, *"a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood up and pleaded with him saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"* So Paul obeyed, and a woman named Lydia was baptized and Europe had her first convert. So, sometimes God speaks to us through a voice, a dream, or a vision. There was an occasion in which the leaders of the church in Antioch, were seeking God's will. *"They were all worshiping the Lord, they were fasting for a certain time. And during this time, the Holy Spirit said to them, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do a special work for which I have chosen them.' So after they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them out."* That's in Acts 13, verses 2 and 3. Now, I would love to know the answer to the question you're thinking, "In what manner did they hear the voice of the Spirit?" I don't know.

**WB:** You don't know — Yeah.

**ML:** Was the voice an audible one? I do not know. Did the Spirit speak through one leader to the others? I can't tell you. Did the clouds in the sky form the shape of letters and spell out a word? I don't know that either. What I do know is this: The Spirit spoke, and He still does. So, talk to Him. Ask Him to guide you. Seek His will. And then listen. Wait for a response. As we follow Him, we learn – we begin to discern – His voice. For me, I've noticed that He often speaks to me through my own thoughts. We should not think this is surprising. He owns my mind. My body is His temple. I should not be surprised that His answer to my question would come in a form that I can understand.

**WB:** That's good.

**ML:** Isn't the phrase, "led by the Spirit of God" such a happy one? The Spirit of God does not drive us like cowboys drive cattle. He gently leads us as a shepherd would lead a flock of sheep. By the way, Scripture refers to God as our Shepherd over 200 times. He is more committed to leading us than we are to following Him. So, relax. He's not going to play games with you. He's not going to play hard to get or

hard to understand. If you don't sense His guidance, just ask Him again. “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5). He is completely able and capable to lead you where He wants you to go. What's He going to use? Well, He might use a nudge. He might use a prick of the conscience. He might use the reminder of Scripture. The Spirit speaks first through the verse, and He may complement the verse with a voice. Then again, the verse may be enough. But always go back to the beginning and say, “Lord, you have authority over my life. I'm listening to you.”

**WB:** Amen.

**ML:** Don't make the mistake that the fella made with the bakery. He told his wife that he was going to discontinue his daily stop for doughnuts. And she was surprised when he came home later that day with a freshly baked dozen. She said, “I thought you weren't going to stop at the bakery.” He said, “I wasn't, but as I drove past, I felt the nudge to go in. So I prayed, ‘Lord, should I buy some doughnuts? I will circle the bakery. If I'm supposed to buy donuts, let there be an open parking place.’ Well, honey,” he continued, “There was an open place. I had to circle the bakery ten times, but I found an open place.”

**WB:** [Laughter.] Oh, that's funny.

**ML:** Don't manipulate circumstances until they say what you want to hear.

**WB:** Wow.

**ML:** Go first to the verse. His will never contradicts His Word. Are you seeking direction? Open your Bible. Are you in need of guidance? Open your Bible. Are you at a crossroads in life? Open your Bible. When you open your Bible, God opens His mouth. The verse and the voice. The Spirit uses both to lead us to the promised land.

**WB:** OK, that's so good. I have so many things I want to talk about, and I know we don't have — but I just want to say two things that meant a lot, and then tell you a little story. So, open the Bible and God opens His mouth — that is so good to remember and keep in our hearts as we just— Lord, speak to me. Every time you open the Bible, pray that prayer. And then His will will never contradict His word. That's so good, so thank you for that.

**ML:** You're welcome.

**WB:** I wanted to tell you, I never thought about it this way. I didn't think of it as the Holy Spirit speaking, but when I drove my kids from North Carolina back to Texas for a visit, because we moved after 11 years of living in Texas, I asked for the Lord's protection and too, affirmation to know He was with us along the way. And this is no joke! For a two-day drive, almost every several 100 miles, we either would see a white, little cloud somewhere tucked in trees, no other clouds in the sky, or we would

see those crosses along the road for the entire drive, and my kids were young. And I remember it became a game. I said, “God promised He would watch us along the way.” That really was the Holy Spirit, wasn't it, just with us every step of the way? And I have chills thinking. I just thought God was faithful, which He was, but I'm now knowing that really was almost — you said, it's you know, the verse and the voice. I feel like that was the voice in activity, right before our eyes.

**ML:** Our heavenly Father wants to lead us as much as a good father or mother wants to guide their own children. How much more does God want to lead us? He owns the universe. Can He not direct the clouds? Can He not create circumstances to affirm what He's saying? Or to lead us away from where we're going? And so, I believe if we can lead a life that seeks to be submitted to Him and just trust Him ... Trust the verse ... Trust the voice and follow. I believe He loves us too much to leave us confused and disoriented.

**WB:** Wow, thank you again for another, I mean, the word I use is rich. You just really take us deep into the Word and give us rich teaching. So, thank you so much for that.

**ML:** Well, thank you.

**WB:** Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father. Oh, this week, Father, we specifically ask, in Jesus' name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, in very specific, personal, intimate ways. Father, we ask that You would speak to your children that are going through this study. Lord, speak Your Word. Whatever that looks like Father — through the verse or through the voice. We are boldly asking for very specific instances of confirmation, direction, conviction, encouragement, love, whatever it is that we are asking for, Lord, let Your Holy Spirit come alive and just fall like fire, like tongues of fire into the hearts and lives of our women listening, Lord, and we just ask, in the name of Jesus, that You would do mighty works this week — through Max's word and Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**ML:** Amen.

**WB:** And Father, we thank you for our saying that we love to use here all the time at Proverbs 31. And it's so important for what we're talking about today, that when we know the truth and live the truth – and when we say *the* truth, we're talking about the Truth is the Bible. The Truth is God's Word. That's the only Truth so, when we know the truth and live the truth, it changes everything.