

Interruptions, Could It Be God?

How is your life going today? Are you busy? Do you feel like you are never going to get it done?

Do you feel like too many things and too little time? Do you feel rushed? Most people in America would say unbelievably. Sometimes when I travel and people say, "Oh I would love to live in America. It is the land of prosperity." I think, "I wonder if you have any idea how hard people in America work? They work longer hours. It has even been documented that they take less and less vacations; that their employer is really getting a lot of free time because they are not paying them.

They work overtime and do not get paid for it." Busy, busy, busy, is what you could say about Americans. How about you people that are in other countries watching this show? Is your life really busy? Is it hectic? Do you feel like, "I do not want to live like this? I cannot get everything done and then I have all of these interruptions." I am teaching a four-part series on leadership skills for the 21st century. You can get this series if you want to through GLC.

The one we are talking about today is, interruptions, can they really be God? Oh yes, it is going to be exciting to learn about this. If you are busy and you are doing one thing and God lets you know I need you to do this over here. What do you do? Do you stop and say, "Okay Lord I will do it. You know I need to get this done but if You say it, I will." Or do you say, "Sorry God, I am busy. I have a plan and this is not going according to my plan so I am sorry but come back again." As leaders in your business, in your ministry, in your church, in your family, there is always time for interruptions. Do you let interruptions manage your life? No, because you have to stay on task. You have to develop a sensitivity to God's spirit, to the Holy Spirit nudging you saying do this. He will even tell you, do not let you stop you. That is an interruption sent from the devil to stop you, to waylay you, to get you off track. You really have to learn how. As it says in Daniel, I think it is about Daniel 7, in the last days Satan will come to wear out the saints. I see it everywhere. People are tired and yet here come these interruptions from God. Did Jesus have them? Most of the exciting stories that we have read about Jesus occurred when an interruption took place. If you start looking at all of the stories of Jesus in the Gospels, when you start reading them, just start noticing, is this what He set out to do or did this happen on the way to where He was setting out to do something. Was He speaking and He got interrupted by some big crisis. Just watch it and you will be amazed. I was just amazed at the stories that get told. Actually, think about your big stories that you love to tell people about. How many of them come from an interruption? How many come from a time that it did not go the way you planned?

(Look at this first picture. You may not know it from looking at it but it is a Russian business man who is looking up. If you have never been to Russia, you may think is that what they look like? Yes, they look just like anybody else. Busy too. Look at this second picture. Does that look familiar? If you live in a major city like Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, you are going to see these kinds of traffic jams, just back to back.) In fact, let me ask you something. When you are in that car, if you live in a place that you have a really long commute to your work and then back home, have you ever stopped to think that could be some of the most valuable time you could ever have and God has set it aside for you? Maybe you thought, "Oh, I do not know. I am just stuck in this traffic." You know you could learn a language. I have done that before. I taught myself a little bit of Russian because I had a commute of 20 minutes one time. Those of you that live in a big city will go, "That is not a commute." It is in a smaller town. I just thought I am not going to waste this time so I tried to learn Russian. I did enough to be able to speak to people a little bit. You could do something like that. What else could you do? You are on your way home and maybe there is a big traffic accident, maybe there is a big pileup and here you go, another interruption. What are you going to do? You are going to look around and say, "Lord, what am I supposed to do?" Maybe He says pray for everybody involved in this situation, maybe He says just take some time and talk to Me.

Look at this Scripture. It is Proverbs 16:9. We can make our plans but the Lord determines our steps. Does that mean God does not want you to make plans? As a leader you have to make plans. In fact, here is a little saying. A man with a plan cannot be stopped by a man without a plan. You have to have a plan. Here is another little saying. Plan your work, then work your plan. That is how you really get things done. You have to learn to be flexible. No matter how great your plan is, you know the best laid plans of mice and men can all go astray, right? That is what He is talking about in Proverbs 16:19. We can make our plans but the Lord determines our steps. When we look

at the life of Jesus we definitely can see that. You see you set your goals in concrete and your plans in sand. They can change. They can shift. They can move. You need to be able to be like that. You need to be flexible. As a leader, being flexible is a wise way to be.

Look at Jesus with Gyrus' daughter. If you had the church against you, all of these leaders, and there was this famous well-known church leader that said my daughter has died. Come help, please. If you did not have a God-type mentality, you could have done that the wrong way. You could have just said to that woman with the issue of blood, "Not now. Come back tomorrow." Jesus had learned to operate on God's time. He had learned to look at interruptions and listen. "God, is this You?" Look what happened to that woman.

Is God in control of your life totally or are you? Get real honest. I just met somebody recently that is a very dynamic Christian woman, known for being a Bible study leader. She had such an encounter with God recently that she said for the first time I realized in all my life I realized I have been kind of thinking I picked and chose what I wanted God involved in in my life and what I wanted to be in charge of. She said, "It has been the greatest awakening for me that I am not supposed to be in charge of any of it." How about you? Are you like that? Can God bring an interruption into your life as a leader, as the head of a family, as a person who has been given an assignment? God has a way of making sure your assignment gets done but go ahead and stop and deal with this.

How do you know when the interruption is from God and when the interruption is from Satan? Jesus said, "I only say what I hear the Father saying. I only do what I see the Father doing." What is he talking about? In His mind, in His ear, in His Spirit, God is speaking to Him. When do you know if it is the devil? Because it will have an ill of ease with it; it will have an unrest; it may cause you to become very anxious and sharp and get you out of sorts. You just feel like it is just pulling at you, pulling at you, pulling at you in a negative way. That is some of the ways you can realize it. What do you do if you look back on your life right now and you realize, "Oh my goodness, there have been times and I can name them that God said stop and minister to this person and I said no." There is no telling what would have happened in that person's life. What do you do about that? You repent. That is all you do. You just say, "Lord, I am so sorry. I really have just tried to be captain of my ship and it has not worked that great anyway. I am not doing what I really think I ought to be doing. It is not working as well as I think it ought to be working. Lord I repent. You are the captain of this ship, I am not. You tell me where You want me to go and I will do it. If there is someone You want me to stop and help, I will do it." Think about the story of the Good Samaritan. Three men walked past a man who had been terribly beaten. Two of them were religious leaders, if there was anybody that should have been kind and compassionate and stopped and helped, it should have been them. Instead, they walked on the other side. They did not want to be involved. The Good Samaritan was on business too. He had a place he had to be. I have learned that when these God interruptions occur, it is almost like God is testing you or something, if I do this will you stop, will you help? It is important. That Good Samaritan did. Just think, for all of these 2000 years, people know who the Good Samaritan is. They know his story because he stopped when the interruption occurred. Sometimes those interruptions cost you something. They cost you time. In his case they cost time and money, then they take followup to be sure everything worked out. For all you know, the real thing in your life was the interruption. Where you thought you were going was not even it at all.

Let us look at some interruptions in the Bible. One, Jesus was walking with the disciples and he looks up and he sees a funeral procession going on. He sees a widow crying because her child has died. He stops; he goes and raises the child from the dead. People are being raised from the dead today. You can get on the internet, you can get on Christian web sites and it is unusual, yes, but it is happening. Another thing that happened to Jesus was with the woman at the well. They were going a certain way to Jerusalem and Jesus said I need to go through Samaria. If you understand the background, Jews would go out of their way to keep from going into Samaria, even if it was the closest way to get where they were going, they would still walk way around because they did not want anything to do with these half-breeds, which is basically what they would have called them. Jesus said to His disciples, "I need to go through Samaria." Why? Because God had either spoken it in His Spirit or He had seen His encounter with a woman at a well and had seen it in His Spirit. Whatever it was, He knew He needed to do something and He did it. I can tell you another one. This is when Philip was preaching in Samaria. You remember Philip's background. This Philip is preaching in power, doing amazing signs, wonders, casting out demons, paralyzed people, and lame people, all of them being healed. Jesus does heal today too. You know that. He has not quit healing people. This is the same Philip that said "I will believe if I could see." If I can see the scars, if I could see Him, I will believe." That is the same Philip that Jesus came to and said, "Philip, blessed are those that believe and they have never seen." Philip had a life transformation that occurred to him after Jesus was raised from the dead and this is the proof of it. He was out there preaching, many salvations, wonderful things happening. In the middle of that, and who would want to quit something like that I mean just to make a man who has that type of just like Christianity that anybody

something like that - mean just rock 'em sock 'em robots; that was just like Christianity that anybody want to be around all of that. Anybody would want to be doing that. Anybody would want to be leading that. If you are a leader in the ministry, of course you would want to be involved in that. What happened?

Look at this Scripture. In Acts 8:26, "As for Philip an angel of the Lord said to him, Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." He got started. Remember, he had to drop everything. As a leader, when you have an interruption, you know you cannot just disappear. You have to make sure things are taken care of; you have to make sure people are in charge, that people know what to do next. You do not just run off and leave a mess and say you guys figure it out. I am out of here. No. He started out. He met a man on the road coming along and in this carriage thing that he was in, he saw this man reading the Bible out loud. This guy turned out to be a very prominent, important man in Ethiopia. He was a eunuch. We all called him the Ethiopian eunuch. You know what a eunuch is. That is a person that does not have sexual characteristics anymore. They have been operated on. Why did they do that? To keep them away from the women and cause any kind of problems with that.

I am going to tell you something. I did a lot of research on the internet to understand about Ethiopia, this man's job, why it was so important. If you understand that the woman's name looks like it was Candace, you are missing it. I have missed it all of these years. Candace (kan' da say) was the correct pronunciation and it was a title, like Pharaoh. Candace is a title like Pharaoh or President. In the Bible, when the Bible talks about Pharaoh it can be any one of a number of Pharaohs that the Bible is talking about. You have to figure out which one it is. At this time Ethiopia was not the Ethiopia that we know today. The Ethiopia in modern times is a country in the continent of Africa.

During this time Ethiopia was considered all of Africa. It was a commerce site. It was a center, like a road or travel, between African and south of Asia. There was a lot of commerce going on there.

When they talk about what this Ethiopian eunuch was doing and his important position, he could easily have been the treasurer of the kingdom of all of this money. All we know is he was a man of great authority. Another thing is he obviously had spirituality because it says he went to Jerusalem to worship. Why would a person from Africa go to Israel to worship unless he was a believer? So he was a believer in as much knowledge as he had been given. Some of you are like that that are watching this show. You have a certain amount of knowledge but God is wanting to increase it. This man was seated in his carriage. He was reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. Do you know what he was reading? Philip ran along beside this man, only obeying what he had heard and felt in his spirit that the angel of the Lord said to do. He ran over. That is when he heard the man reading and all of sudden he knew what to do. That is how it is with interruptions, you can sense God is telling you to go do something and you go do it. You are thinking, "Now Lord you better tell me what to do when I get there. You better tell me how to handle this." God is so faithful. He is faithful. He was faithful to Philip. All of a sudden Philip knew what to do. He said, "Do you understand what you are reading." The man said, "How can I unless somebody explains it, somebody instructs me." As a leader, it is your responsibility to instruct these people that are great leaders themselves but they still need what you know. He urged Philip to come up in the carriage with him and sit with him and this is what he was reading out loud. It is out of Isaiah. "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb is silent before the shearers he did not open his mouth. He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants for his life was taken from the earth." He only had the Old Testament. He had not heard about Jesus. The eunuch said to Philip, "Tell me. Was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?"

As a leader there is an anointing on you. People can tell when you know things that they want to know. This eunuch, this powerful man from this huge area, recognized the leadership, the authority that God had put in Philip. He recognized it because he said, "Was he talking about himself or was he talking about somebody else." Then the Scripture said, "So, beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the good news about Jesus." You need to know the scriptures. You need to know the prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus. You could lead somebody to the Lord from the Old Testament only and then talk about that Jesus is alive. I know because I have experienced Him.

That is exactly what happened with this Ethiopian eunuch. He began to show all of the prophecies about Jesus and then saying, "I know Him and I myself have seen Him alive from the dead and I doubted. God said here are the scars. Blessed are those who believe who have never seen." Do you not think he used his testimony to say something like that to that Ethiopian eunuch? He must have talked also about baptism. He must have said you need to be baptized in the name because He is the one who gives forgiveness of sin. He is the one. The eunuch said, "Look, there is some water. Why can I not be baptized?" He ordered the carriage to stop and they both went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, now I know some people sprinkle and do other things but if you were going to be baptized the way it is in the Bible, the baptism is going down in the water and coming back up because it represents your dying to your life.

You are dying to your sins. You have been forgiven. When you come up out of the water then you

are a new creature and everything is new. Can you imagine this? Think about the Ethiopian eunuch. This guy has been talking to him. He has been hearing it all and when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but he went on rejoicing. That is somebody I look forward to talking to in heaven and asking "What did you think when you came up out of the water and all of a sudden he was gone?" God translated Philip. That means He moved him through the Spirit from one place to another. He still does that today.

What about Philip? Another interruption? No. God put him right back going to do the same thing he had been called to do but he was a little bit further down the road. Somebody took care of straightening everything out where Philip had been preaching. He continued on with the call of God on his life. Meanwhile, Philip found himself further north at the city of Azotus. He preached the good news there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea. God prizes faithfulness more than almost anything.

Something I really admire, because I have been walking with the Lord a long time (37 years), is the people that I met in the very beginning and maybe they have moved away or I have moved away. You talk to them and you discover they are serving God as hot hearted as they ever have. They have never let up a lick. They have moved wherever God said to move, whatever God told them to do. Can you not imagine what a treasure they are to God in Heaven? He can look down on them and 40 years later, 50 years later, 60 years later, 70 years later, 80 years later, they are still serving God. They are just right in there going and doing whatever it was that God needed them to do. You never retire from serving God and God never quits giving you interruptions.

Why is it so important to be obedient to the interruption? You do not know what God has in mind when He sends you there. He has something in mind. There is some kind of a plan. I have heard it said that Ethiopia now has the Ark of the Covenant out on an island. I do not know if that is true or not but I have seen documentaries on it on the National Geographic Channel. I know a man, Bob Cornuke, who has searched for it. You can go to his web site and learn about that. Here is the main thing. A man of influence got truth, the actual truth about Jesus, and he was able to go back and give that truth to the queen. She would listen to him. As a leader you need to realize you may not be the one speaking to somebody, but what you say to a person has so much influence they can reach the people they reach. You are God's servant. Jesus had major interruptions all of the time. Think about the time He was preaching and they cracked open the roof and let a sick man down.

Be willing to accept interruptions from God. I know you want to get your job done and you are busy. God knows it too but God has special times for you to work for Him. Open up and do them!

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. What does Proverbs 16:9 about God's influence on our plans
2. What should you do when you have an interruption?
3. How did Jesus deal with interruptions?
4. Why is it important to give attention to interruptions?

To watch the video on INTERRUPTIONS COULD IT BE GOD, Pillar Six, Leadership Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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