

Devotion 3:

Our Father Knows What To Say and When To Say It

Genesis 12—50

I realize that this selection of Scripture is a pretty big chunk. Let me reiterate that my approach is twofold: 1) read quickly for the big picture overview and 2) concentrate on God's role—what He does, when He does it, how He does it, and why He does it. I believe there is a time and a place to read Scripture in smaller pieces; there is certainly value in taking great time and care to dissect a passage as might happen in a group Bible study. But that is not our approach in this devotional book.

In these chapters there are many observations that can be made about our Father. See how many of these you caught. Did I miss anything? Here is a quick list that caught my eye:

1. Our Father knows the future. 12:1-3; 15:12; 17:6; 17:19
2. Our Father doesn't hurry or move on man's timetable. 16:2
3. Our Father knows everything going on in us and in our lives. 16:13
4. Our Father appears and disappears in people's lives. 17:22
5. Our Father expects and requires followers to obey Him. 17:9
6. Our Father can do anything; nothing is too difficult for Him. 18:14
7. Our Father hears the outcry of hurting people. 18:21
8. Our Father is willing to spare the lives of wicked people for the sake of one righteous person. 18:26-32
9. Our Father is merciful. 19:16; 19:29
10. Our Father is just and fair. 20:6
11. Our Father is gracious. 21:1
12. Our Father tests His children. 22:2; 22:12; James 2:21-22
13. Our Father blesses people whom He chooses to bless. 24:40; 25:11; 26:12; Rom. 9:16-21
14. Our Father answers prayers. 24:12-15; 30:17; 30:22
15. Our Father wrestles with His children. 32:28
16. Our Father protects His children. 35:5
17. Our Father kills and takes life justly. 38:7, 10
18. Our Father gives us whatever success we have. 39:3, 21, 23

Now there is, I believe, great value in slowly reading the above list, perhaps pausing to pray, praise, and give thanks on several if not all of them separately. But throughout these 38 chapters there is another observation that can be made about our Father that happens repeatedly—at least 11 times by my count: God speaks to His children with just the right words at just the right time.

At first glance that might not appear to be very important, especially in comparison with the above list of 18 qualities. But let's think about it. How many times do you find

yourself confused about what to say in a situation? Or how you should say it? Or if you should say anything at all? How many times do you catch yourself saying the wrong thing? At the wrong time? In the wrong way?

Saying the right thing at the right time and in just the right manner is no small feat. But our Father does it. Let's consider what His Word says about His Word:

“Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Deut. 8:3; Mt. 4:4

“The word of the Lord is flawless.” II Sam. 22:31

“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” Prov. 25:11

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” Mt. 24:35

“And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” Rev. 22:19

Even the apostle Paul, when considering the gifts of the Spirit, put great value on speaking: *“I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.”* (I Cor. 14:19)

And our Father seemed to do just that with His chosen children in Genesis from a respectful distance. He didn't speak daily, and sometimes He was silent for years, but He always spoke at the right time with the right words of comfort or counsel. Consider the following list and perhaps check out the references to see the context in which God came to man and spoke:

1. 13:14 God speaks to Abraham after Lot has selected his land and parted company.
2. 15:1-21 God speaks to Abraham when he is childless.
3. 17:1-2 God speaks to Abraham 24 years after he has waited for a son.
4. 21:12 God speaks to Abraham after Sarah wants Ishmael sent away.
5. 25:23 God speaks to Rebekah when she asked him why two babies were jostling inside her womb.
6. 26:1-2 God speaks to Isaac when there was a famine in the land.
7. 26:24 God speaks to Isaac when he moves repeatedly after gaining so much wealth that neighbors envied him.
8. 28:13 God speaks to Jacob when he leaves home to find a wife.
9. 31:3 God speaks to Jacob when Laban and his sons become disgruntled with him.
10. 35:1 God speaks to Jacob after his sons kill male Canaanites and Perizzites.

11. 46:2 God speaks to Israel (Jacob) when he is 130 years old and tells him to move to Egypt to survive a famine.

There is in the church a common misperception that God was “closer” to His children in Old Testament times than He is today in the end times. I do not believe that is true. God still says the right word of comfort, conviction, or counsel at the right time. How many times can you recall hearing a sermon that was so appropriate for your life at the time? How many times have you read words from our Father in His Book that spoke to your exact circumstances? How many times has a brother or sister in Christ spoken God’s Word to you at the fitting moment and in the most palatable manner?

Let’s take a step back, though, and see the ultimate Word from our Father:

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Heb. 1:1-2)

Our Father’s ultimate Word to us is Jesus:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (Jn. 1:1-2, 14)

Contrary to Old Testament times, we don’t have to wait years for the next revelation. We can go to our Father’s side today. We can open and read His book. We can call a believer and talk. We can worship in His house this Sunday. And if we listen carefully and if the Spirit chooses to open our mind and heart, we just might see yet again that our Father knows what to say and when to say it.