

Applying Your Hearts to Understanding

Applying Your Hearts to Understanding (Preparing Our Families to Discern the Times)

By Kim Butts

When our Lord is up to extraordinary things in His world, is your family aware of it? Are you alert enough to be drawn into the deeper things of God as He creatively and sovereignly moves toward bringing the story of man to a close? Is your family preparing for the return of Jesus by paying attention to the signs of the times in which you live? Is your spirit in tune with the Holy Spirit so that you can hear His voice as He instructs you in the way you should live? These are some heavy-duty, but important questions, as we are, by virtue of the promises of Scripture, living in the last days: *"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray"* (1 Peter 4:7). God calls us to have understanding of the times in which we live, and to be obedient in seeking wisdom from Him (Proverbs 2:1-6).

Our families cannot afford to be spiritually lacking when so many people still live in darkness. It is not a time to rest or to be comfortable. It is a time for strengthening, for joyful expectation, and for determination to impact as many

lives for His kingdom as we possibly can. It is a time to die to ourselves and live fully for Jesus Christ. It is a time to shake off self-indulgence and laziness and purposefully turn our focus upon God's plans and purposes. It is, as Scripture clearly states, a time to be clear minded and self-controlled so that we can pray. Prayer is God's way of accomplishing His will on this earth. When we are fervently engaged in intercession for those things upon the Father's heart, *He will act!*

The Holy Spirit must be actively engaged in our family life so that we can be characterized by wisdom, discernment and maturity. It is vital that we have visibly defined, resolute purpose in our lives. Everything we do and say should be in the character of Jesus Christ, lived out in the power of the Spirit. Our lifestyles should be focused upon things of eternal significance and consequence.

In Acts 2:17-18, Luke quotes the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29): *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."* God promised to bestow His Holy Spirit on everyone – irrespective of gender or age: *"...I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants"* (Isaiah 44:3). In this passage, the outpouring of God's Spirit results in abundance of blessing.

If God has chosen to pour out His Spirit on us, and has told us what He intends to do in the last days, we must not be complacent. We must be *active!* He cannot pour the wine of His power into unprepared or old wineskins. In order to be alert to the working of the Lord, we must learn and teach the discernment of our times with all urgency...and we must pray! If you, as a parent, grandparent or single person have not yet grasped the importance of understanding the times in which we

live, it is time to diligently study the matter. God is moving all things toward a close. Each day we draw closer to the end of days. We should never be so presumptuous as to believe that His return will not happen in our lifetime. For the sake of the kingdom, it is critical that we teach our children to fully understand the times in which we live so that 1) they are able to live to the fullest potential of God's plans and purposes for their lives, and 2) they can intercede for the things on God's heart.

There is no time to waste, yet the enemy would distract our families with entertainment and idleness that have no eternal purpose. I am not saying that there should never be any leisure time – of course there should; however, it is imperative that we are always in tune with the Holy Spirit so that we are ready to move with the heartbeat of the Father when He calls for our obedient action. What an exciting time in which to live! God is doing amazing things before our eyes and in our lives! We should be living in joyous expectancy of His return as we pray for the Bride of Christ to be restored to complete beauty in preparation – revive us, Lord! We should be earnestly praying for Jesus to receive His inheritance – the ends of the earth! Everything that is needed to complete the task of world evangelization is in place – we have all of the money, all of the people, all of the technology and all of the Spirit. All that is needed is for the Bride to wake up from her long nap and get the job done. We, the Beloved of the Lord, must understand the times in which we live and respond to the beat of our Bridegroom's heart.

Here are some specific ways that we, as families, can discern the times in which we live, being completely obedient to the will of God:

Pray.

Ask God to give your family wisdom and discernment. Philippians 1:9-10 says: *"And this is my prayer:*

that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ."

As a family, ask God to give Jesus His inheritance – the nations (Psalm 2:8).

As He reveals His heart to you, pray for His will to be accomplished upon this earth through your lives and ministries and in the lives and ministries of others. Here are some powerful ways to pray: *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:3-6). *"Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground"* (Psalm 143:10). Pray 1 Timothy 2:1-4 daily. *"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Our prayers should be Kingdom-focused: *"Lord, what do YOU want? Reveal these things to our hearts so that we might intercede with passion and fervency for the advancement of Your Kingdom on this earth!"* Pray Psalm 67 back to the Lord: *"Father, please be gracious to us and bless us and make Your face shine upon us – that Your ways may be known on earth and Your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You. Then the land will yield its harvest, and You, our God, will bless us. You will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear You."*

Pay attention to the news, to nature, and to the nations.

"Jesus answered: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will

deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand” (Matthew 24:4-15).

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to understand what God is doing! It is imperative that your family stays current with what is happening all over the globe. Hook up with Christian news that will give you biblical perspective on all that you see and hear. Pray that the devil will not deceive you through false reporting or bias. Check out sources and get clear confirmation about what is happening. Be watching to see what is happening in nature. Lately, we’ve had many “natural” disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, etc. Never “assume” that something such as a hurricane or earthquake is or isn’t a judgment of God – ask the Father to reveal this to you if it is for you to know. Ask Him to show you how your family should respond to the needs created by such events.

Watch carefully to see what is going on in and around the world, especially in the nation of Israel.

Study the prophecies in the Bible that talk about the last days. For example, read the book of Daniel and spend time talking about how the prophecies apply to our day.

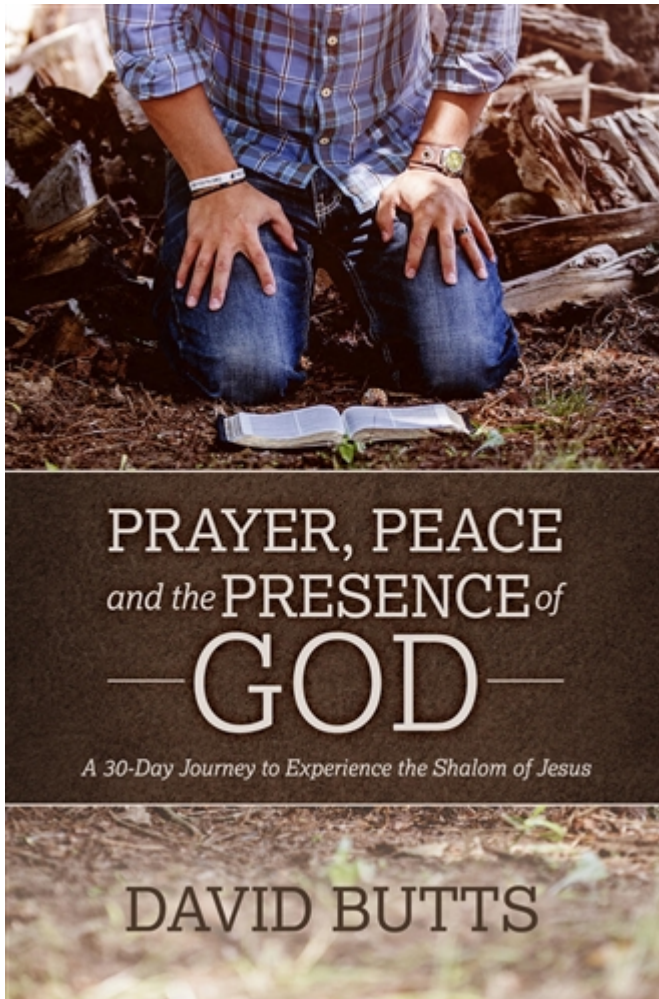
Act obediently in response to the understanding God has given you.

Know what God wants to do in and through your family in these last days through the power of the Holy Spirit, and respond. After you have prayed and paid attention to the news, nature and the nations, it is vital that our families learn to discern the voice of God through the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit so that we will know how to respond in these times: *"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"* (John 14:25-26). *"...but knowledge comes easily to the discerning"* (Proverbs 14:6b). *"Wisdom reposes in the heart of the discerning..."* (Proverbs 14:33a). He wants us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: *"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose"* (Philippians 2:12-13). The Father wants us to finish well, expressing our salvation in reverence and the ongoing process of spiritual growth and development. *"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..."* (Philippians 2:14-16a). He wants us to love Him passionately, to love others, to care for the poor and needy, to promote unity in the body of Christ, and to share Jesus with the lost. Are we willing to act as we discern the times?

Be prepared for your sons and daughters to prophesy. God is uniquely preparing the next generation of youth and children for His purposes in these last days. Be diligent in their

spiritual training!

What are we waiting for? Our Lord could return at any moment and our families should be ready to welcome Him with shouts of joy and gladness, standing alongside those whose lives have been impacted by the Lord Jesus in us!



PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

The author, David Butts (1953-2022), started writing this book and 10 days into it he got word that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God allowed him to live in a greater

way for five additional years of full-strength ministry. Dave has challenged readers in *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* to seek after His best life, no matter what it holds.

His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you that you, too, can experience and walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what circumstances you are walking through.

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