

Siri, I Need Directions...
Jeremiah 29:13 (AFBC 4/17/16)

"Siri, I need directions..." I don't know about you, but I find it to be an amazing advancement in technology that we can push a button on our phones and say that we need directions to just about anywhere—near or far --and in moments, Siri begins to tell us which direction to head, where to turn, and then how far to go before she tells us to turn again!

Siri's very bright! However, I did discover that she's not much help if you're trying to find your way to God. I was curious how she'd respond, so I pushed her button and said, "Siri, I need directions to God."

She replied, "Which God do you want?" On the screen, there were five Church of Gods within 1.6 miles of our church office. While that's not a bad start, I was really hoping for something more.

One of the most important things we as Christians believe about God is that *He can be found*; that, in fact, God wants to be found, and invites us to come to Him and know Him and enter into a personal, life-changing relationship with Him.

This is spelled out clearly for us in the New Testament. Jesus points to Himself as the way to find God. "I am the Way..." He tells us.

But even back in the Old Testament, it's clear that God wants everyone to know that He can be found. Our text this morning is **Jeremiah 29:13**. God says: **"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."**

All of us need to understand what goes into this search for God so we'll have the opportunity to find Him personally and then be ready to also help a brother or sister in their search for God.

That's not to say that all our searches will be the same. If we shared our testimonies this morning about how we found our way to God, there would be some similarities, I'm sure; but there would be lots of differences as well.

There are some basic steps, though, that all of us must take on this journey, and the first step can be called A SENSE OF NEED. We don't begin our search for God without a sense of need.

Hopefully, you are here today because you recognize that you need to be. It's both sad and spiritually dangerous to reach a point in our lives where we no longer feel any need.

Perhaps we're here because we're Christians and, as such, we recognize our need to worship God, study His Word, grow in our faith, minister to others, while sharing in fellowship with people who understand that they're needy people, too. Most of us are likely here today due to one or more of these reasons.

There was a time when some people would come to church because of social pressures—in other words, respectable people needed to be seen in church.

I don't think that's the case any longer; and it never was the right motivation for being in church. It did get a few more folks here, though.

Times have changed. So, what prompted us to be here today likely goes deeper than mere appearances.

Sometimes a person who's not been part of a church will start showing up because they sense a need for something more in their lives. Or, instead of attending church themselves, they may try to get closer to someone who does in an effort to learn more.

They may not know they have a need for God, but they know they have a need for something. This is why being sensitive to others is so important. God may choose to reach out to them through us.

So, the first step in finding God is **realizing our need**. No one can be helped until first admitting that he or she needs help.

Every counselor knows this. Whether trying to help someone trapped in drug dependency, or out of control spending, or a bad relationship—whatever—"the need" must be recognized first.

It's the same when it comes to our need for God: self-satisfaction (complacency, pride) can shut God out of our lives. In the story Jesus told concerning the Pharisee and the tax collector, it was the outwardly religious man who actually felt no need for God.

The tax collector was overwhelmed by his need and demonstrated this when he prayed, "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner." This confession of his need opened the door for him to find his way to God. We do not come to God without admitting our need.

Two things can help us recognize this need. First we **look** closely **at ourselves**.

It was a wise philosopher who said, "Know thyself." We need to examine our lives--and not just the outward places that are visible to all--but also the hidden places to which only we and God have access.

When was the last time you were so honest with yourself that you were offended by your own self-assessment? Not everyone can do this, but it would seem better to offend ourselves over some fault we have than to wait for someone else to feel compelled to do so! Do you follow that?

For this look at ourselves to do us any good, though, it must be coupled with **a look at Jesus**.

It's in Jesus Christ that we find our way to God. It's when we look at Jesus that we begin to see ourselves as we really are; and it's then that we come to understand what truly needy people we are. Again, recognizing our need is the first step in finding God.

Once we've acknowledged our need, we're ready to take a second step toward God. It's called REPENTANCE.

No man, woman, or young person can get to God while sin stands in the way. The Bible is clear that sin separates us from God, and it will continue to do so until our sin is dealt with.

The way to deal with sin is repentance, and repentance is first of all **confession**. Confession is our means of "owning up" to our sin. Instead of denying its reality, we admit that sin has a grip on our lives. We decide that we will tolerate this bondage no longer.

After an area goes through a devastating natural disaster (flood, earthquake, tornado), residents are told to boil the water before drinking it. There's a danger of contamination, and the germs have to be destroyed before the water is consumed. Failure to do this could lead to sickness or even death.

Scripture tells us we need to take a similar action when it comes to the contaminant of sin. It must be removed from our lives lest it destroy us. Confessing our sins serves to "boil the poison" out. It rids us of those contaminating influences that lead to death.

Repentance is more than mere confession, however. It's an actual turning away from the sin. It would do no good to boil dirty water only to then reintroduce the same impurities back into it. Nothing would be accomplished.

And yet, that's how we often attempt to deal with sin. We confess it, and then repeat it--wondering why we cannot seem to move any closer to God. True repentance involves a complete separation from the sin that's plagued our lives. This is the nature of repentance that leads us to God.

The first step is a sense of need. The second is repentance; and this opens the way to the third step, called CONSECRATION.

Jesus Christ gave his life as a sacrifice for our sin. Think of repentance as laying all that's bad in our lives at the foot of the cross. Consecration follows repentance. Think of consecration as laying all things at the foot of the Savior's cross.

During the Christmas season, we're reminded that the wise men brought to the Christ-child their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. You've no doubt heard that gold was the gift for a king, frankincense the gift for a priest, and myrrh the gift for one who is to die.

But you can also think of these gifts in this way. Gold represents material possessions. Frankincense is a symbol of our deepest longings and aspirations.

And myrrh points to all of life, including death. Thought of in this way, the wise men brought not only their possessions, but everything they were and ever hoped to be--and they placed it all at the feet of Jesus.

How many people miss the blessings of Christian joy and peace because there's some area of their lives that's not been yielded to the Lord. It may have to do with their family or vocation.

It may involve an attitude of the heart or a harmful habit. Whatever it is it represents an unyielded portion of one's life, and it stands as a roadblock impeding our journey toward God.

The third step in coming to God is consecration, placing all that we are and everything we have in His loving hands.

All of this leads to the fourth and final step on the way to a right relationship with God, and this is the step of deep, abiding **faith**—a faith that truly transforms all of life--a saving faith.

I'm speaking here of a faith that trusts God to do as He's promised. To the person who's felt the need for God, who's sincerely repented of sin, who's fully committed his or her life to the Lord, our God brings His gift of salvation, complete with abundant and eternal life.

We must know, beyond all doubt, that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, which includes us all. It's not enough to repent of sin, as important as this is.

It's not enough to consecrate our lives to God, as noble as this is. We must accept by faith what Jesus Christ has done for us, knowing beyond all doubting that there's no way we could've done this for ourselves.

The story is told of an elderly couple who lived alone in a modest cottage on a tiny island. Friends who had known them over the years worried about their well-being, secluded as they were on that island. They decided that something had to be done.

The decision was made to invite the old couple to come and live with another couple who had a large home over on the mainland. After summoning their courage, they went to see the couple and told them the purpose of their visit. They extended the invitation.

The old couple patiently listened as their friends made their case. When they finished, the old man turned to his wife and said, "Of course, we can't accept the invitation, can we dear?"

The friends began to insist. They restated their case; but the old man held up his hand for silence. "You simply don't understand," he said. "Come, and we'll show you."

With that, the old couple, arm in arm, led their friends out of the house, through the yard, and along a winding pathway that led through the forest until, at last, they came to a small clearing.

It had a carpet of green grass and a border of beautiful flowers. In the center of this little clearing was a tiny mound with a snow-white cross at its head.

The old man put his arm around his wife and then very quietly said, "We can't leave our island home, for you see, we lost a son here."

In a similar, yet far more profound sense, the heavenly Father will not leave this floating island on the sea of His universe—this Earth which He made. Because...He lost a Son here.

In loving us so much that He allowed His only Son to die on a cross for us, God made His grandest statement of all that He could be trusted--that HE should be trusted—and worshipped and served as well!

We can come to God, friends, because He has first come to us in the person of His dear Son, Jesus Christ the Savior. He invites us to come by first of all recognizing our need for God--our need for the forgiveness, hope, and peace, which only He can give.

He invites us to come in repentance, confessing our sin and turning away from a life that is dominated by sin. He invites us to consecrate our lives to Him, to yield all of life to His control.

He invites us to trust Him completely to do for us what we could never do for ourselves, and to provide for us fullness of life that we could never achieve on our own.

This is how we find God, and He invites all of us to do so. There's no technology to help us with this. It's just us and God's Spirit, and the old, old story of Jesus and His love. Trust Him. Follow Him; and find your way to God.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Siri, I Need Directions...

*You will seek me and find me
when you seek me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:13*

“Siri, I need directions...” / “Which God do you want?”

The first step: A SENSE OF NEED

Times have changed. What motivates us to be here today likely goes deeper than mere appearances.

Self-satisfaction (pride) can shut God out of our lives.

In recognizing our need, we must look closely at ourselves.

This look at ourselves must include a look at Jesus.

The second step: REPENTANCE

Confession

Turning away from sin

The third step: CONSECRATION

Repentance as laying all that's bad at the foot of the cross.
Consecration is laying all things at the foot of cross.

Gold
Frankincense
Myrrh

The fourth step: FAITH

“For God so loved the world...”

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