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### **FIVE STEPS FOR INTERPRETING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES**

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity ... through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Although Jesus tore down the middle wall of separation when He died on the cross for the sin of mankind, it never even occurred to the Jews that this included the Gentiles. In Acts chapters ten and eleven, Peter is on a journey that in concept will revolutionize the world. His journey crossed over the middle wall of separation and entered into the Kingdom—five steps that changed the course of mankind.

The Jews heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God. They were upset because the gift of God was for the Jews—not the Gentiles. *Those of the circumcision contended with Peter saying, "You went into the uncircumcised and ate with them!"* According to Jewish laws the Gentiles were unclean and unholy—so how could they have had communion together? In answering their question he lays out a profound step-by-step approach to interpreting spiritual phenomenon.

**Step One—Pivotal Insight:** The vision was the first step of Peter's journey to cross over from the law into the new world of grace. He begins with the fact that he was in prayer and saw a vision of a linen tablecloth with clean and unclean animals on it. God commanded him to partake of the sacrificial offering, saying *"Rise, kill and eat."* Peter responds, *"Not so Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth."* Prejudices momentarily blind Peter and he passionately rejects the command, citing his faithful obedience to the law. God is not questioning his integrity—He is correcting what Peter took for granted as true saying, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common (unclean or unholy)."*

We all have many preconceptions—its part of training to respond righteously in every situation. This obviously makes life simpler as Proverbs attests, *Train up a child in the way he*

*should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* If every factor had to be determined as though seeing it for the first time, we wouldn't get much accomplished in a day—accumulative knowledge becomes the moral fiber of our decisions.

Peter's vision was a mind altering experience through the effective use of surprise. Unless he is shocked into thinking differently—he will never see the Gentiles saved. He was startled by the vision—and while questioning what he saw, the Spirit spoke to him, “*Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.*” He obeys the voice of the Spirit and goes with them—giving God the benefit of his doubt. God does not want him to interpret his vision. A prejudiced interpretation of the vision would drastically limit him from understanding future revelation—causing him to reject any information contrary to his false conception.

‘Pivotal Insight’ is the first step in a new direction—changing the course of our thoughts and eventually our lives. It becomes our guiding light providing the motivation for change. It remains our inspiration “breathing life into” our continued search for meaning—influencing the purpose for each additional piece of information.

**Step Two—Gathering Information:** The second step is arranging the information in sequential order. In an amazing collection of perceptual understanding, confirmations and testimonies, Peter assembles an outstanding example of the New Testament Church in operation—unveiling the outworking of the Tabernacle. Everyone has some portion of the whole work, some piece to add that manifests collectively as the Body of Christ.

Peter's ‘Gathered Information’: (1) Pivotal Insight: the important details of the vision but not its interpretation ... (2) Question: What is this and is it of God? ... (3) Prophecy: the Spirit told him there were three men down stairs and that he should go with them ... (4) Confirmation: it happened exactly as predicted ... (5) Witnesses: six men witness ... (6) Testimony of a righteous man: Cornelius cites his vision, word of knowledge and the prophetic word ... (7) Scripture: *God shows no partiality. Jesus Christ—He is the Lord of all... Judge of the living and the dead* ... (8) Interpretation: After considering all the information says, “*God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean*” and preaches his perception to the Gentiles ... (9) Sign: the Gentiles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit ... (10) Question: What does all this mean? Where do the Gentiles *fit* in the salvation plan of God?

If we are a prophetic people, then we communicate what we perceive using a spiritual vocabulary. *Those skilled in the Word of truth have their senses exercised to discern* what is of God. Discernment is a synonym of insight—broadening in definition to include what is detected with our spiritual senses through awareness. All information is perceptual intelligence that is accessed through at least one of our senses. Sensory apprehension is fundamentally non-verbal, such as sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching and is the core of experiential knowledge.

We already understand many languages; the language of sound conveyed in music ... the language of movement expressed in dance ... the language of abstract symbolic thought interpreted in mathematics and science ... and the language of nature deciphered in our genetic code, etc. Once we realize that we subconsciously interpret these languages, we also see how easy it is to communicate in the language of the Spirit. The fact that we know parts of the

spiritual language already, even if we are not aware that we know—makes the transition to the spiritual vocabulary easier.

**Step Three—Meditation:** Once we have ‘Gathered Information’ we are ready to assimilate it. ‘Meditation’ is the gestation of prayerful consideration—saturating our thoughts with vast amounts of scripture, experiential knowledge, and perceptual data—all the time searching for patterns as we seek to connect bits and pieces into a congruent whole. We name, analyze, categorize and ultimately converge on a comprehensive theme that defines the revelation by attempting to *fit* together as many puzzle pieces as possible. In ‘Meditation’ there is always the sense that if we can just look closely enough, or see deeply enough—that some enigma will be revealed and everything finally makes sense.

Linking visual images or experiences to a Scripture activates a spiritual transition and we change the way we see things—as Peter illustrated. If we use Scripture as our filtering system for interpreting our ‘Gathered Information,’ we uncover God’s embedded meaning while building on a foundation. God’s creative Word made His thoughts visible. Our minds are made in the image of God—we hold God in our minds. His creativity influences us to decipher and interpret the ‘Gathered Information’ until we see what He is saying. Even in its dimness or vagueness, we know something is there—we are not quite sure what it is, but we know it is out there.

In our search for spiritual understanding we should ask ourselves two important questions: “What is it?” and “Where does it fit?” Questions create an opportunity for looking at the ‘Gathered Information’ differently. We ask ourselves a question and in our search for the answer we open our mind to see what else is out there to be seen. Meditating on the ‘Gathered Information’ means a complete saturation of the facts.

‘Meditation’ is as much categorizing and identifying the ‘Gathered Information’ available as it is defining what is not known. The contrast of newly seen information against what is already known provides a way to compare relative differences of thought—to see things in relationship to a heavenly pattern. Oftentimes, meditating is very effective when we are busy with another task. Einstein said that he learned to shave very slowly because meditating on other things often resulted in cuts at the moment of discovery. Peter meditated while traveling to Caesarea. As he walked He contemplated how every piece *fit* together.

His message to the Gentiles reveals that he discovered a theme of possibility—the ‘Gathered Information’ *fitly framed together* opened a door to the Gentiles. In the accumulation of new information, he looked for the best *fit*, attempting to form coherent patterns even if parts of the puzzle were still missing. He tried to see the whole picture by filling in the blank spaces to form a functioning interpretation—if all the parts *fit* in right relationship to each other and to the whole, it becomes the practical application of spiritual truth.

**Step Four—Divine Infusion:** The fourth step is an ‘a-ha’ moment of illumination. No longer are there separate or conflicting thoughts—we truly are infused with overwhelming comprehension and our knower-knows exactly what God is saying. ‘Meditation’ on all the ‘Gathered Information’ allowed for a supernatural infusion of Light, and in a single spectacular moment—our thoughts instantaneously became one with His purpose. Suddenly all the parts fall into place, everything *fits*, and the configuration looks right—the “Gathered Information” meshes together and satisfies any constraints we had. His Light shines brightly and we see.

Everything is in focus and a sense of certainty prevails—the moment of ‘Divine Infusion’ is absolutely exhilarating!

All at once Peter knew the answer—saw it, heard it ... he understood something in a new light. He defines the moment of his ‘Divine Infusion’ saying, “*then I remembered the word of the Lord.*” Peter remembers something Jesus said, that **all** who **believed** would be **baptized** with the **Holy Spirit**. In that illustrious moment all the pieces of ‘Gathered Information’ came together and he knew the Gentiles *fit* into the plan of God.

‘Divine Infusion’ is the ability to attain perfect knowledge through supernatural means and you understand the finished work. The ambiguity that shrouded the unknown aspects was replaced with iridescent light filling the void with profound meaning—empty spaces that were full of nothing become full of explicit purpose, shadowy places where patterns once were incomplete or obscured are filled in. The Spirit fills the gaps and spaces in the ‘Gathered Information’ and we experience ‘Divine Infusion.’ We see the whole picture because Light seeped into the deep crevices and changed our perception.

Our ability to interpret unknown areas depends on our ability to see known areas accurately without distorted perceptions or prejudices—such as the improper use of ‘constants and variables’ in scripture. Peter thought his view of the Gentiles was a ‘constant’ truth that would never be altered. (Dr. Hanby has an intriguing message that documents his revelation of “Constants and Variables.” It is an excellent resource for interpreting scriptural direction or a proceeding word.)

God does a quick work and suddenly we see the whole picture and not just its unique parts. We couldn’t interpret it before because the individual parts didn’t even make sense—not until we saw it all at once as a finished work. Something happens when we shift our thinking to the empty spaces, the unknown ... we shift our thinking from looking at something one way to consciously perceiving it in a new light and it changes the way we view everything else in life. In one infused moment the core of our existence changed—and the memory of that moment lingers on in extraordinary radiance!

**Step Five—Documentation:** The last step is the confirmation of evidence. The ‘Divine Infusion’ must be put into a practical application that makes it usable for others. It is writing the ‘Pivotal Insight’ and the assimilation of the ‘Gathered Information’—including all the steps that led to its brilliant conclusion. It may be writing the book ... composing the work of art ... designing the blueprints ... or testing the mathematical formula. It is executing a step-by-step ‘Documentation’ of your revelation, making thought visible through form. You are the caretaker of that revelation—each step from the Pivotal Insight through its Documentation. You don’t shrink back out of fear of disagreement or disapproval. After all, this may be the beginning of your life’s work—your purpose finding its creative expression.

Peter traveled into the spiritual dimension of possibility and found the uncharted space that opened to the supernatural. He documented each of his steps—and the ultimate conclusion to the whole matter was; “*If God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?*” They all agreed with Peter’s ‘Documentation’ of the event—they knew it was of God, and they knew where the Gentiles *fit*, saying, “*Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.*”

Peter's journey crossed over the middle wall of separation to be divinely infused with God's purpose for His Church. He discovered five steps that ultimately changed the course of history—revealing not only an open door for the Gentiles but also the steps to the finished works of Christ. The 'separateness' of individual skills and perceptions so evident during the gathering of information somehow loses personal uniqueness as it becomes melded and integrated—and completely disappears as the Body of Christ becomes one with Him in purpose.

It was an extraordinary moment! Peter found a key that forever unlocked the fate of the Gentiles. And in the Documentation of his revelation, we also discover a universal key for effectively interpreting the spiritual language of the Kingdom. With this key we likewise cross over the great divide of dark shadows and dim perceptions to enter a space lit from within—infused with His purpose, we speak His language.

Contact MHM office for more information about Dr. Hanby's resource materials. "Constants and Variables" and "The Like/As Principle" are found in **Chapel Time #3**.

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