Have you ever thought to yourself "Is it ok to ask God for signs?" "Is my faith unreal if I ask God for signs?" "I want to trust God but how do I know?" and other various takes on the same theme. If you've asked yourself the same question before, I believe today's sharing is for you, and may it help you and bless you in your walk with Him.

We are going to start with Moses in Exodus 33. Moses is talking to God about leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. He is weary, frustrated, confused, and fearful. God is angry with the people for their disobedience and refuses to go with them. Moses has already pleaded for God to spare the people whom He has already threatened to wipe out, but he wants more. He wants God’s presence. He wants to see God. He wants to know that God will go with them.

The Lord replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. 20 But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.”

Moses asks for a sign, and God delivers and there is a lesson here for us. Sometimes when we ask for a sign from God, God does not just give it to us easily. Sometimes God gives us instructions that we are expected to follow in order to receive the sign. And when we know those instructions we must follow them to get what we are looking for.

Now lets turn to Gideon, I'm going to share from the story of Gideon - you can read Gideon's story in Judges 6 to 8. When he first met the Lord, Gideon was a scared fellow - he was so fearful he was threshing wheat indoors (wheat needs to be threshed outdoors so the wind can take the chaff away). This despite his name, which means "Mighty Warrior"; and this is further proved when Gideon kept asking, "Really? I'm like, the weakest dude in the weakest clan of the one of the smaller tribes. Really?" And I'm sure we've all felt the same way - why would the Lord speak to us? It must be the flesh talking! It must be our imagination!

So Gideon, as would many of us, asked the Lord for a sign. Many focus on the signs of the fleece, but in fact Gideon asked for signs THREE times - the first was when he first met the Lord (v17). He prepared a goat and some bread, and basically laid it out to get some proof that this dude talking to him was really God. We all know what happened - the Lord's fire consumed the sacrifices wholly, and like the strong man he was, Gideon was convinced he was going to die.

But note - even after the Lord assured him, Gideon still didn't really trust God. He went to demolish his father's altar to Baal in the nighttime, and then asked for 2 more signs. The first sign was that the fleece was to be wet and the ground dry; and the second that the fleece would be dry while the ground wet. Both happened as he asked, and then Gideon went into battle.

Interestingly enough - and I want to highlight this - the Lord gave Gideon signs after all that. In Judges 7:10-11, the Lord tells Gideon, "If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." The Lord knew that Gideon was still worried, and gave Gideon a sign without being asked. We know the story - Gideon was emboldened, and is remembered as the man who led the Lord's charge against the Midianites.

How does this translate to our daily lives? Allow me to draw an analogy first - When guys and girls start dating, in the early stages of a relationship, we're not so sure what the other party likes, and we need also to let the other party know what we like. We sometimes look for reassurance to show that the other party has affection towards us, and I think we also tend to show more upfront how exactly we love the other person so as to reassure. But the longer you've been together, it becomes strange and slightly concerning if your partner asks you, "I don't know if you love me, I need a gift to know that you do." The best relationships, I think, are those where each party knows the other loves them, and that every gift / sign is precious and to be enjoyed - but that the gifts and signs don't get mistaken as love, and the lack of those gifts and signs does not mean an absence of love.

In the same way, in the early stages of our walk with God, God understands that we need some reassurance - and often time it comes by a strange inner peace that we'd never experienced before. In that time we know without a doubt God is alive and has come alive in our hearts. And that's ok - when you first meet someone, you need to know more about them, and God understands that. He didn't come because we had a heart for the things of His Kingdom, He came down as a man because He loved us.

He also gives us that reassurance when we are unsure of what next steps to take. God will open doors and close them, and the Spirit who burns within us will tell us what we need to know. It may take something a little more obvious for some of us, but the point is the Lord give us signs to affirm our walk, to tell us that "Yes, this is what I have planned for you." Personally, I have asked God before if Alice is the girl for me - and the Lord has opened doors so undeniable that even the most duh parts of me could not miss. So don't think that signs are all bad.

Remember in our Gospel reading. Thomas was not there with the other disciples when Jesus showed up and so when he states Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” That to me is like Thomas saying Lord give me a sign that you are risen. And again as we saw in the OT, God is okay sending us signs. What I would do though when asking for a sign is three things.

When we go to God, humbly and honestly, requesting a sign of His presence, His favor, His love, or His protection, we must consider 3 things:

**1) OUR MOTIVE**

**2) OUR MISSION**

**3) OUR MANNER**

**1)  MOTIVE**

In looking at both Moses and David’s words, we can see their hearts and their motives. Why did they go to God and ask for a sign? What were they seeking?

Moses desperately wanted the presence of the LORD to go with him and the people. He knew that he could not make it or do what God had called him to do without God literally walking beside him every step of the way. He was not asking for power or strength or success…but for more of God. David pours out his heart to God, praising Him for His love, faithfulness, and mercy. David tells God there is none like Him and that all he wants is to follow, honor, and give God glory. David’s motives are also God-focused and not self-focused.

So what about our motives when we go to God asking for a sign? Is it about Him or about us? Do we want a sign to draw closer to God and follow His will, or do we want a sign to have God put His stamp of approval on our self-made plans? Our motives when we seek God’s intervention should be to see more of God and allow Him to show us who He is. If we are coming with self-serving motives, we may not get the answer we seek.

**2) MISSION**

Moses and David, called by God specifically, wanted to follow and obey God’s plan.   They knew the mission God had given them and were seeking signs to help them do what God wanted them to do.   Moses says, “*let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully*,” and David cries out, “*Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth!  Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you*.”   What they both are expressing is acknowledgment of who they are and who God is.  They know their mission is to bring God glory and have their lives point to Him.   Moses and David sought “signs” to help them understand fully and follow God closely.

What is our mission when we come to God, begging for a sign? Have we decided we want a promotion, a new relationship, or more time and money? Are we looking for God to smile down on us so that our lives will be stress, trouble, and worry-free? Does getting a sign from God include recognition, success, or praise for ourselves? If so, I do not believe God is in the business of giving out those kinds of signs! God invites us to join His mission to bring love, hope, and peace to a world full of hate, fear, and strife. He has called us to be His hands and feet, which may include suffering and pain. He never promised the journey would be easy, but He does promise (like He did with Moses and David) that He will never leave us nor forsake us.  If we are looking for a sign to know if we are doing God’s will, we can be assured God will let us know and lead the way.

**3) MANNER**

I know this sounds crazy, but have you ever prayed something so silly and insignificant as, “Lord, if you give me a parking space, I know you are with me today.” The kids are unexpectedly compliant, the item you have wanted to purchase goes on sale, your boss gives you a day off, or it doesn’t rain on the day of your big party…we can all “interpret” these as signs from God, right?  And I am sure we all have. Maybe they are…perhaps they aren’t.

But in my experience, prayer does not work like a slot machine. We cannot just drop in our token requests, pull the lever, and hope we hit the jackpot.

When we come to God asking for a sign, it is okay to be bold and confident. I think the Bible shows us that both Moses and David approached God in that way.  However, their boldness and confidence did not come from themselves, but rather from the God whom they were asking. Moses acknowledges God as the only reason for the Israelites being set apart. It was not what they did, how they prayed, or the fact that Moses was their chosen leader.**It was God and God alone.** Likewise, David tells God, “You are my God…none can do what you do…you alone are God.”

The manner (the attitude we have, the posture we take) in which we come to God, seeking His face, asking Him to show us a sign, is so very essential. We cannot demand or pout, stomping our feet or throwing a temper tantrum when God does not reveal Himself in the way that we want.

We cannot presume to make deals with God:

If you show me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, then I will do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Again, this is the God of the universe, not some genie in a bottle. We need to approach God with the reverence and respect He deserves.