

## Asking God for a Sign

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### **Question: What does it mean to ask God for a Sign?**

**Answer:** Asking for a sign means to ask God to do something in a highly unusual way to confirm His will. Moses, Hezekiah, Gideon, and others in the Bible all received miraculous signs of affirmation. Sometimes God initiated the sign, while at other times people asked God for them.

When Saul's son Jonathan was preparing to fight the Philistines, he looked for a sign that God would be with him. He told his armor bearer, "If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you' then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hands, and *this shall be the sign to us*" (1 Sam. 14:9-10). God revealed this sign to him so that he would know how to respond to bring victory.

A sign can be as simple as a door of opportunity opening, or as complex as a set of circumstances miraculously coming together. Keep in mind that asking for a sign should not be your primary way of discovering God's will. Many times the fulfillment of a sign is accompanied with a difficult task, such as Gideon going into battle severely outnumbered.

### **Gideon asked for a wet fleece as a sign.**

Perhaps the most familiar "sign story" in the Bible is Gideon putting out a fleece of wool so he would know God's will. He was beating out wheat in the wine press when suddenly an angel appeared to give him a message—the Lord had chosen him to lead Israel to defeat the Midianites (see Judges 6).

Even though Gideon knew he was talking to an angel, he was not so sure that he wanted to lead the charge into battle. To make certain that God had sent the message, he asked for a miraculous sign. The angel granted his request. He caused fire to come from a rock, which consumed some meat and bread, and then the angel disappeared.

You would think that would have been enough proof, but apparently Gideon was still not convinced. He wanted further proof from God. Gideon put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor and asked the Lord to send dew on the fleece, but let the ground around it remain dry. If God would just make that happen, Gideon said, "Then I will know that you will deliver Israel through me" (Judges 6:37).

The next morning, the fleece was wet and the ground dry. Gideon probably thought, *This is what normally happens. Naturally, the fleece would hold the water.* So Gideon asked another sign, requesting that God would do just the opposite. He wanted the fleece to be dry and the ground wet.

Again, the next morning the Lord granted his request by making the fleece dry. God had now given Gideon four signs. He had sent an angel to miraculously appear, fire from a rock, and two fleece tests. Gideon was finally convinced the Lord would lead him to victory in battle.

### **Signs are often followed by a severe testing of our faith.**

Although it may be assuring to have solid proof like these confirmations, signs are often followed by a severe testing of faith. Gideon had to go fight the mighty Midianites with his army whittled down to just three hundred men. If you are planning to ask God for a sign of confirmation, be prepared to have your faith tested.

### **Abraham's servant asked for a camel-watering sign.**

Abraham sent his servant out to find a wife for his son Isaac. The servant took ten camels with him and traveled hundreds of miles to Mesopotamia. He realized the importance of his responsibility and could not afford to make a mistake, so he asked God for a sign to confirm His will (see Gen. 24).

But what kind of sign should he ask for? It needed to be something extremely difficult; an act that would require divine intervention. The servant decided to ask that Isaac's appointed spouse would offer to water his camels for him.

He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw

water; now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master." (Gen. 24:12-14)

For those of us who drive cars, that sign does not sound too miraculous. But if you had lived back then, you would have understood how ridiculous that request was. Abraham's servant brought ten camels with him, and each camel could drink up to thirty gallons of water. That meant whoever volunteered for the chore would have to draw *three hundred gallons* from the well to water his camels. It would be an exhausting task, requiring a tremendous amount of energy. What sort of person would be so gracious as to sacrifice several hours to do such grueling work for a stranger?

After the very moment he asked for the sign, the Lord led Rebekah to come to the well and offer to water his camels. She even said the exact words that the servant had requested from God as a sign, proving she was the wife appointed for Isaac.

Abraham's servant had asked for a highly unusual sign and the Lord answered by bringing the right woman to him. If God can arrange a divine appointment like this for marriage, He can certainly do it for anyone else as well.

### **"Warning Signs" About Signs**

There is a huge difference between humbly asking God for a sign to confirm His will, and putting God to a test by demanding He meet your expectations. Scripture warns, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Luke 4:12). It is not wrong to occasionally ask God for a sign, but be careful to not violate scriptural principles or force God to do something against His will. Here are some "warning signs" about signs.

#### **The danger of becoming sign-dependent**

King Herod wanted Jesus to perform a miraculous sign for him, but He would not give in to the king's wishes just to satisfy his curiosity (see Luke 23:8). Some of the religious leaders told Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." Jesus replied, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matt. 12:38-39). He had already performed miracles right before their own eyes, which they had refused to believe. Yet, they asked Him for even more signs. Since they did not repent after seeing indisputable evidence that He was the Messiah, why should Jesus give them more proof?

Some people think they should ask God for a sign about every decision they need to make. They are sign-dependent, which is dangerous because they will always need to see proof before they will trust God.

#### **The danger of seeing a sign that is not a sign**

Some people interpret everything they see as a sign from God. They think He is speaking to them through the oddest of ways. While watching a movie, they will hear an actor quote a line from his script and believe that it is a message from the Lord about a decision they need to make. Although the Lord can speak to you in any way He desires, it is unlikely that He will give you individual guidance through a shooting star, a song on the radio, or a billboard on the highway.

#### **The danger of misinterpreting a sign**

We have all known people who think they have received a message from God, like the farmer who saw "G P" in the clouds. He interpreted it to leave the farm and "Go preach." After he preached his first sermon, the congregation told him the sign was actually telling him to "Go plow."

While the apostle Peter was staying in Joppa, he saw a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven with animals inside it that Jews were forbidden to eat. The vision was repeated three times, and then a voice said, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter told God, "By no means Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." The voice answered, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." (Acts 10:13-15).

Immediately after the message had been given, three Gentile men showed up at the door of the house. If Peter had not correctly interpreted the vision, he would have killed and eaten the three Gentiles!

Instead, the Lord wanted Peter to know that non-Jews, who at that time were considered unacceptable by Jews, would also be included in God's family. Be sure to interpret the signs correctly or you will misunderstand God's intended application for your life.

No sign by itself should be taken as absolute proof of God's confirmation, but should be affirmed with other ways such as Biblical truth and wise counsel. As you continue to seek the Lord with an open and willing heart, He will guide you down the correct path.

**For more information about how to know God's will:** [\*The Sure Cure for Worry\*](#) by Kent Crockett, chapter 12 "Pay Attention to the Signs" (Chosen Books 2013).

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