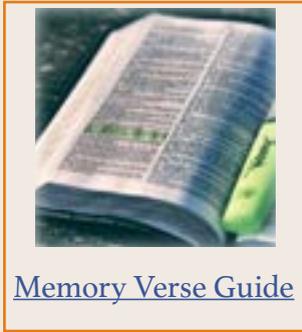


Start the new year right

WITH ONE OF KEN'S
BIBLE READING/STUDY PLANS



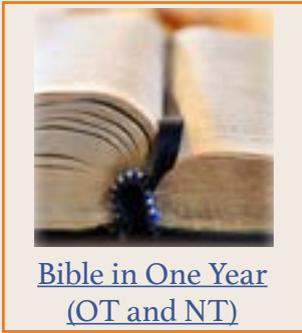
4-Card Cycle



Memory Verse Guide



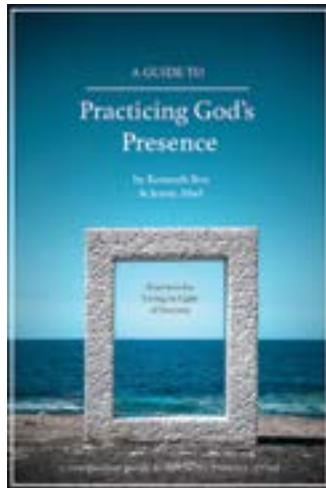
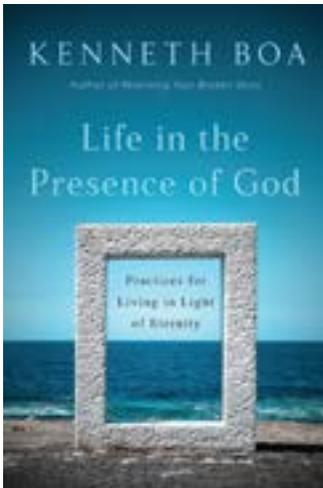
New Testament
in a Year



Bible in One Year
(OT and NT)

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THE LATEST FROM KEN BOA



A print version of *A Guide to Practicing God's Presence* is forthcoming in 2018. Your gift (using the enclosed envelope) can help make this resource available more quickly.

THE PROMISES OF GOD

WEALTHY IN WISDOM—PROVERBS 2:1–11

Travel today to the Sinai Peninsula and you will see where King Solomon and others braved the sun, snakes, and scorpions of the desert to extract copper, gold, and silver from the craggy landscape. Centuries later, in the 16th century AD, Spain and Portugal risked life and limb at sea in an attempt to control the newly discovered gold of South America and Mexico. Northern California was transformed by the accidental discovery of gold in 1848. Within seven years, more than 300,000 prospectors and fortune seekers from all over the world had descended on the region. Similar stampedes were repeated in Australia in 1851, Nevada in 1859, and the Yukon territory of Canada in 1897.

Precious metals have always represented wealth of the easiest kind—in the ground, “free” for the taking. But except for a few rare instances where large deposits were actually stumbled upon accidentally (the largest nugget ever found, 156 pounds, was turned up by a wagon wheel in Australia in 1869), prospectors discovered there was nothing “free” about getting gold and silver. Most spent more than they made, and many died in pursuit of phantom riches.

Nonetheless, King Solomon, a man who had treasures of wisdom and of gold, said that obtaining wisdom was a lot like mining for precious metals and “hidden treasure.” You have to dig for wisdom like you’re a California “Forty-Niner,” and search for it like you are on a quest for the hidden treasures in the pharaoh’s tombs. You have to turn your ear to it,

apply your heart to it; call out for it, and cry aloud for it. But when you do (if you do), you will become a wealthy person—a person wealthy in wisdom. No prospectors ever knew whether the dirt they were digging in would yield anything more than disappointment. Not so with the search for wisdom. When you dig in the mountain that is God, you will find wisdom: “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).

How to find wisdom? Mine the Word, be on your knees in prayer, talk to others about their discoveries—and don’t give up: “. . . wisdom will enter your heart” (Proverbs 2:10).

GOD’S PROMISE TO YOU:

“The wealth of my wisdom awaits your diligent search.”

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JANUARY 2018



REFLECTIONS

Reflections on God's
revealed truth

beyond HUMAN COMPREHENSION

Lord Jesus, I aspire to know You better, and I recognize that, at present, I am only dimly aware of who You really are and what You are like. Scripture reveals wonderful truths about You, but You are unimaginably more than those words can communicate to me. I affirm that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, but my capacity to understand what that means is bounded. Your majesty and glory are beyond human comprehension, and even in heaven the journey into knowledge of You will be limitless. And yet You invite me to know You even now. Because intimacy with You is related to trust and obedience, may I respond by obeying what You command me to do as an expression of my love for You. In this way, You will progressively disclose Yourself to me and enlighten the eyes of my heart.

A teaching letter encouraging believers
to develop a clear mind and a warm heart.



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COMMUNICATION SKILLS (Part 4)

BEYOND SPEAKING AND HEARING TO UNDERSTANDING

Effective communication involves more than just speaking and hearing. Real communication only takes place when both parties move beyond speaking and hearing to understanding. Speaking and listening are means, not ends. People who feel better because they “spoke their mind” or think they fulfilled their obligation because they “heard him [or her] out” inadvertently communicate a message that they don’t really want to communicate!

Suppose Jack and Jane, a married couple, have recently been in an argument. If Jack offers an eloquent bit of advice or articulately expresses love to Jane, and Jane doesn’t listen or understand, why should Jack feel better? The purpose wasn’t for Jack to say it; the purpose was for Jane to understand it. Yet this routine goes on every day. Or, if Jane courageously explains to Jack why she is angry enough to strangle him, and Jack in turn makes some unrelated comment, then Jack has not heard Jane out. He has not fulfilled his obligation to Jane as a fellow human being, let alone as a husband. In either situation, has this couple established greater mutual understanding? No.

God forewarned Isaiah at his commissioning that he would face similar

communication problems throughout his ministry: “[God] said, ‘Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving”’” (Isaiah 6:9 NIV). The people would hear his message, yet they wouldn’t understand it. They might allow his words to pass briefly through their conscious minds, but they wouldn’t permit those words to take hold in any meaningful way. God’s message through Isaiah would go in one ear and out the other. Were they to hear and understand the message, “they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed” (6:10).

The parables of Jesus were like this. They were designed to reveal truth to those who would receive it and conceal truth from those who would reject it. If a person’s heart is right, he or she will hear the teachings of Jesus and respond and be healed. But if the heart is not right, the person will only hear a story.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

No one would disagree that communication is essential to effective leadership. But we may be surprised by the extent to which open, honest, two-way communication can actually benefit leaders and their organizations. Solomon warns his readers to be on the alert for one-sided communication:

“Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions” (Proverbs 18:2 NIV). John Stott tells a wonderful story about Joseph Parker, who served the City Temple in London at the end of the 19th century. As Parker climbed into the pulpit one Sunday morning, a woman threw a piece of paper at him. He picked the paper up and read the word written on it: “Fool!” Dr. Parker turned to the people and said: “I have received many anonymous letters in my life. Previously they have been a text without a signature. Today for the first time I have received a signature without a text!”¹

“Fools find no pleasure
in understanding
but delight in airing
their own opinions.”
(Proverbs 18:2 NIV)

This look at communication skills has come full circle. We began by saying that responsible communication demands interaction. We end it by saying the same thing. Ted Engstrom observed this kind of one-sided communication in the one place where it shouldn’t have happened: a seminar on communication. He writes:

The seminar leader, well known as the chairman of the department of

communications at a state university, had failed to communicate. He knew all the proper language and theories. He projected facts, but not understanding. Communication is blocked when emotions do not coincide with another’s feelings or when there is selective listening on the hearer’s part. An appreciation of these factors will enable leaders to take better steps to guarantee effective communication in their own group. The issue can be put another way. Do you communicate without trying, or do you try without communicating?²

Proverbs 18:2 demonstrates that the one-sided communicator comes off looking foolish. But look now at Proverbs 18:13: “To answer before listening—that is folly and shame” (NIV). A leader must also hear before answering—that is essential. But in order to be truly effective, that leader must also listen and respond with a mind that is open and searching for a fuller meaning. Then, and only then, can effective two-way communication begin to take place.

¹ John R. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 112.

² Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 153.

- Noah was a drunk.
- Abraham was too old.
- Isaac was a daydreamer.
- Jacob was a liar.
- Leah was unattractive.
- Joseph was abused.
- Moses had a stuttering problem.
- Gideon was afraid.
- Samson was a womanizer.
- Rahab was a prostitute.
- Jeremiah and Timothy were too young.
- David had an affair and was a murderer.
- Elijah was suicidal.
- Jonah ran from God.
- Naomi was a widow.
- Job went bankrupt.
- John the Baptist ate bugs.
- Peter denied Christ.
- The disciples fell asleep.
- Martha worried about everything.
- Mary Magdalene was, well, you know.
- The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once.
- Zaccheus was too small.
- Paul was too religious.
- Timothy had an ulcer.
- AND . . . Lazarus was dead!

**NO MORE EXCUSES NOW. GOD CAN
USE YOU TO YOUR FULL POTENTIAL!**