



During COVID, our congregation began to internalize a paradigm to help guide us through those days: “watch, listen, think, and act.” This tool helped us develop the practice of watching, listening, thinking, and then acting through God’s Holy Spirit—not simply accepting or believing that everything communicated to us was true—even when it came from official agencies and media sources. The greatest and most consistent warning Jesus gave us about the End of the Age was about deception. If we will cultivate the habits of watching, listening, thinking, and then acting (not just sitting in the bleachers, but becoming active participants in what God calls us to do), it will help us avoid deception and fulfill God’s purposes in the season ahead of us. Most of us feel there is a need for change, but we hope someone else will “do the changing.” The reality is we must be a part of the change. But to do that, we will *have* to avoid deception.

### **WATCH, LISTEN, THINK, ACT: Avoiding Deception and Fulfilling God’s Purposes**

**\*\*Pastor Allen said to avoid deception and fulfill God’s purposes we must watch, listen, think, and act. Which one of these are you good at consistently, and which one do you see as a challenge?**

#### **I. BREAKTHROUGH . . . WHEN GOD INTERVENES**

Luke 1:30–31 *But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.*

**Breakthrough . . .** deliverance, revelation, insight, understanding, redirection ... when God’s purposes and plans are initiated, completed, revealed, advanced, welcomed, understood

**\*\*Share a time from your life when you had a breakthrough in a situation, a relationship, a healing, or an opportunity that came differently than you expected. What did you learn about how God intervenes on your behalf?**

#### **II. SHEPHERDS, CHOSEN BY GOD**

Luke 2:8–20 *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord **appeared to them**, and the glory of the Lord **shone around them**, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But **the angel said to them**,*

*“Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news** of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been **born to you**; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be **a sign to you: You will find** a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which **the Lord has told us about.**”*

*<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

##### **A. Seven Personal Aspects of this Revelation**

1. Angel appeared to them
2. Glory of the Lord shone around them
3. Angel said to them
4. I bring you good news
5. A Savior has been born to you
6. This will be a sign to you
7. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths

##### **B. Shepherds, On the Outside**

##### **C. Accepted by God, welcomed to the party**

**\*\*Have you ever benefited from someone else's breakthrough? If so, how did it impact your life?**

### III. BREAKTHROUGH HACKS

- A. Breakthrough for them, in the midst of God's purposes emerging.
- B. God did not change the system, he changed them.
- C. Breakthroughs bring invitations to God's purposes.
- D. Breakthroughs bring new awareness to life's assignments.

#### PROCLAMATION

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:3–6)

### IV. OVERCOMING REJECTION: STEPS TO ACCEPTANCE

Proverbs 18:14 *A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?*

Proverbs 15:13 *A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.*

#### A. **Forgive**

Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

**\*\*Discuss the statement, "To be free, we have to forgive." Why is it difficult for people to understand that forgiving someone does not let them off the hook, but it sets you free? How is this an act of faith?**

#### B. **Lay down baggage of rejection**

#### C. **You are accepted in Christ.** (An act of faith)

Ephesians 1:6 (KJV®) *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

#### D. **Accept yourself**

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

#### E. **Finding your place in Body of Christ** (acceptance by community of faith)

Psalms 68:6 (NASB®) *God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

**\*\*Do you tend to internalize rejection or do you express it outwardly? What have you learned about yourself with past rejections?**

**\*\*What positive affirmations (i.e. what God says about them) can you share with others who are struggling with rejection?**

#### PRAYER

God, I thank You that You love me. Thank You that You gave Jesus, Your Son, to die on my behalf, that He bore my sins, that He took my rejection, that He took my penalty. Because I come to You through Him ... I am not unwanted. I am not excluded. I belong to the family of God. I belong to the best family in the universe. Heaven is my home. Thank You!