

The Voice of God Acts 13:1-3

Introduction

We continue on our journey, our quest to go deeper with our relationship with God

- Paul who was used mightily by God, even went to the “third heavens” and saw and heard things he couldn’t mention
- Had one desire in Philippians 3, “I want to know you more”
- One of the keys to knowing him more is *communication*
- All marriage counselors agree communication is crucial to a healthy marriage
- James instructs us to; “slow to speak, quick to listen

God speaks to everyone; he has something to say to you

- In the Old Testament he spoke to and through Prophets
- Now he doesn’t only speak to Pastors and Prophets, but he wants to speak to you

The Church in Antioch

- This church that never received a letter from one of the Apostles like several of the other churches
- But this was a group of God’s people that were engaged, alive and diverse
- *Saul*/Paul was a Jew, *Simeon* was believed to be from North Africa, *Barnabas* was from Cyprus, *Lucius* was from modern day Libya and *Manaen* was from a privileged upbringing
- They were worshipping and fasting and heard the voice of the Holy Spirit

“Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.”² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:1-3)

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God wants you to know his voice; he leads us with his voice

The *Primary way* he speaks to us is through the *scriptures*

- But he also speaks to us through dreams, visions, prophets, even Angels
- But these types of communication need to be weighed, filtered through the scriptures

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

“Word” in the original language is “rhema” a “spoken word”, “by the living voice”. It is a common word used in the New Testament for the Lord speaking his *dynamic living word*.

- So his dynamic, living word will build faith in you...in your heart (Rom 10:9-10)
- There was a famine of his voice for 400 years after the prophet Malachi
- Then God spoke to shepherds tending their sheep in the field
- And it exploded from there as he spoke to men, woman and children

Getting to know Jesus better is the key to learning to listen

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.” (Acts 13:2a)

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...” (James 1:19)

When are you most likely to hear his voice?

- Sometimes we are so busy and distracted by many things
- We don't make space or make ourselves available
- These areas will hinder us from hearing him
- God speaks to those who want to hear from him

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15)

What I know, you know because you are my friends

- With a true friend, you don't need to worry about being an inconvenience
- Moses and David were called friends of God
- This does not diminish his Lordship or his sovereignty, but it is about

- This does not diminish his Lordship or his sovereignty, but it is about cultivating a deep, close relationship
- Prayer shouldn't be about results, but relationship
- We're focused on what we want him to do and he has something he wants to say, something he wants us to hear

Learn to discern and test what you've heard. (Filters)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

- **The Bible:** the scriptures are the primary manner that God will speak to us. It is also important to weigh all things against the Word of God, because God will never contradict himself.
- **Is it consistent with the character of Jesus?** This is one of the reasons we need to grow and mature in our relationship with Jesus and desire like Paul; "to know you more". We can line up things with the character of Jesus and on some things we'll know right away, positive or negative.
- **Does it pass the sniff test of wise, trusted people around you?** It is very wise to have mature, Godly, trusted people in your life that you can walk through these areas with. Much like our text in Acts 13, they were seeking God together when the Holy Spirit spoke to them.
- **Does it fit how God made you, how you are wired-up.** God will challenge us in areas that will stretch us, but a good filter is stacking up what is being said in light of how God has made and "wired" us.

Obey it no matter the cost

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2b)

"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."
(John 14:21)

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- This was not an easy road that the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to
- God challenges us when he speaks to us, we need to respond and step out
 - Although difficult and costly, eternally there is a greater gain
 - Don't be deceived because the road you've been called to is difficult and not Gods direction and purpose for this time in your life
 - Throughout the history of the church, many eternal gains have come at a cost to the person who obey Gods voice and call

Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **02/01/15**

Going Deeper Part 5" (The Voice of God, Hearing his Voice)

Theologian and Baptist Pastor John Piper wrote about a personal experience he called "The morning I heard the voice of God". Here are a few excerpts:

"Let me tell you about a most wonderful experience I had early Monday morning, March 19, 2007, a little after six o'clock. God actually spoke to me. There is no doubt that it was God. I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that God still speaks today. It was about five thirty in the morning. I lay there wondering if I should get up, as I prayed and mused...suddenly it happened. God said, "*Come and see what I have done.*" There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that these were the very words of God. In this very moment. At this very place in the twenty-first century, 2007, God was speaking to me with absolute authority and self-evidencing reality. I paused to let this sink in. There was a sweetness about it. Time seemed to matter little. God was near. He had me in his sights. He had something to say to me. When God draws near, hurry ceases. Time slows down".

As he is contemplating what was happening he said: "It doesn't matter. I was being enveloped in the love of his personal communication. The God of the universe was speaking to me".

There isn't enough room in this document for the entire article, but one last quote: "There settled over me a wonderful reverence. A palpable peace came down. This was a holy moment and a holy corner of the world in northern Minnesota. God Almighty had come down and was giving me the stillness and the openness and the willingness to hear his very voice".

Main Sermon text: (Acts 13:1-3)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- The Church in Antioch didn't get the press that the other early churches did. Acts 11: tells us that during the persecution that scattered of the church, many went out sharing the Good News, but generally only with the Jews. But some from Cyprus and Cyrene began to evangelize the Greeks in that city. The Antioch church became a great example of a vibrant, engaged and diverse church.
- God still speaks directly to his children today. Jesus promised us that we as his sheep would *hear* and *recognize* his voice. Although the *primary* way he speaks to us is through the scriptures, he will speak to us in a variety of ways. These other means of communication should be measured thru his written word. His word, (rhema) to us is a *dynamic living word*, because it comes from him.
- Getting to know Jesus better is the key to learning to listen. We need to be *available* and *make space* for God to speak to us. John 15:15, he tells us that we are no longer servants but friends. He wants to communicate with us, we need to grow in our knowledge of him, draw close to him and listen.
- Learn to discern and test what you've heard; God has given us *filters* for this purpose. The suggested filters are: the Bible, is it consistent with the character of Jesus, does it pass the sniff test of wise, trusted people around and does it fit how God made you, how you are wired-up?
- We need to obey his voice no matter the cost. God will challenge us when he speaks, listen and respond with faith and courage. Many times, as with Paul and Barnabas, the road we're called to will be difficult. The eternal gains far out weigh the cost.

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Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- When we read about the Antioch Church in Acts 11:19-30 and in our text Acts 13, what stands out about this local church?
Peter reaches out to the Gentiles in Acts 10, now brothers from Cyprus and Cyrene are bringing the Greeks to Christ. This church is vibrant, alive, open to moving with the Holy Spirit and diverse.
- We have a wonderful promise that God still speaks to his children today. All through John 10, he promises that we will hear his voice and recognize his voice. We know that the primary way God speaks to us is through his inspired written word, but what are some other ways God chooses to speak with us?
He also speaks to us through dreams, visions, prophets, and other believers, even Angels
- What are the things in our lives that distract us or cause us not to listen to God? What is the key to learning to listen to Jesus?
Various things...Getting to know Jesus, walk with him, he wants to communicate with us!
- Pastor Randy suggested four filters to test or weigh something we're hearing, what are those 4 things?
See above; take your time discussing these, they are very important.
- Paul and Barnabas were set apart for a work the Lord wanted them to do. This was not an easy road; many times God will speak to us and challenge us in various ways. What are some ways you've seen people respond to times like this or how have you responded yourself?
If God hasn't challenged us in some time, we're probably not listening. It is easy to just ignore or believe that it wasn't God. Also what is our belief on difficult assignments? For some if the assignment is hard or if we're struggling we missed God's voice and direction, how does that weigh out in light of Paul and Barnabas call?

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-02.html>

Log on and check "Right now Media" there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.