

Experiencing God

Looking to God (Part 2)

Combined Service

John 4:34
July 23, 2016

Today

Let me give you a little scenario this morning: As a church we decide to do something for God. We make plans; get people to commit their time or their resources. We splurge for flyers and posters. We invite the neighbors. We feel pretty good about our plans and all the new people who will fill our pews. But then the whole thing falls flat. People's lives aren't changed for the better. No one comes into a saving relationship with Jesus. Our Baptistery goes unused. Our pews do not fill. What happened? Who is to blame? We become discouraged and frustrated.

John 5:17-20 tells us that God is always at work and if that's true, then why is it that so many of the activities and plans we make to further the work of God, in fact do not work?

We cause some of the wreck and ruin in our churches because we have a plan. We ask God to bless our plans – as my friend Nancy once said, "Here are my plans, Lord – keep up" and then we go about doing only those things that WE can do (the money WE can raise, etc). We promise to give God the glory when our plans succeed. But God is not glorified by our success. He is glorified when His will is done.

Do we really want God to communicate His will to us and work through us?? Are we more devoted to our own plans and programs even though we say we are frustrated by the lack of progress in our churches? The truth is we like it to be about us. Our efforts. Our resources. Our time. We like the pats on the back and the "well dones" when something we plan actually works. The thing about participating in what God is doing is that we are not the center of attention. It is never about us. He gets the glory.

God-centeredness requires a daily death to self and submission to God. To live a God-centered life, you must focus your life on God's purposes, not your own plans.

God never asks people to dream up things to do for Him. He does not sit on the edge of His throne just waiting for us to spell out the plans we have made to further His kingdom. It is not His job to fulfill our plans; rather it is our job, as Christians to participate in His plans.

When God starts to do something, HE takes the initiative to involve people by revealing His will and purposes.

Throughout scripture it is God who takes the initiative:

- He comes to a person
- He reveals Himself/His activity
- He extends the invitation to join Him
- The invitation requires life adjustments to God

EXAMPLES:

- **Genesis 6:5-14** - When God was about to judge the world, He asked Noah to build the ark.
- **Genesis 12** - When God was about to build a nation, He asked Abram to go a place he had never been.
- **Exodus 3** - When God was about to free Israel from Egyptian oppression, He appeared to Moses from the burning bush.
- **Judges 6:11-16** - When God was about to free Israel from Midian oppression, He made a visit to Gideon.
- **Acts 9:1-16** - When God was about to expand His mission to the Gentiles, He met Saul on the road to Damascus.

Who brought the flood? God did

Who built a nation? God did

Who delivered Israel from Egypt? God did

Who liberated Israel from Midian? God did

Who spread the Gospel to the Gentiles? God did

- **Exodus 14:13** - But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.
- **Isaiah 46:9-10** - Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';
- **John 4:34** - Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

Scripture is about God accomplishing His work – never the other way around.

Okay, that was then this is now. Does God still speak to people and invite them to join Him where He is working?

Let us look at some “modern” example:

JOHN & CHARLES WESLEY:



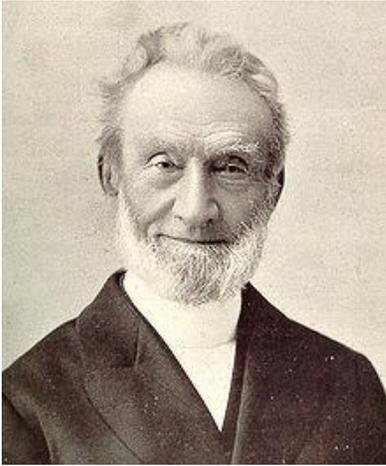
When God was about to bring a sweeping revival to England that would save the nation from a bloody revolution, He began speaking to John and Charles Wesley.

ELLEN WHITE:



When God wanted to comfort and encourage and give new evidence of His continued guidance to those broken and discouraged hearts after the Great Disappointment of 1844, He turned to a feeble and uneducated 17-year-old girl.

GEORGE MÜLLER:



George Müller was a 19th century English minister. He was concerned about the lack of faith and discouragement he observed in God's people.

God led Müller to pray. He prayed that God would lead him to a work that could only be explained as an act of God.

When Müller felt led by God to a ministry, he prayed for the needed resources and told no one else. By the time of Müller's death in 1898 at age 93, God had used him to build 4 orphanages that had provided for 10,024 children. Though his worldly possession totaled only 8 hundred dollars, he had distributed more than 8 million dollars that had been given to him in answer to prayer.

Here is how Müller summed up the way he entered a heart relationship with God & learned to discern His voice:

- I get my heart in such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter.
- I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. To do so leaves me open to great delusions.
- I seek Holy Spirit guidance in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, He will do it in according to Scripture.
- I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with the Word and Holy Spirit.
- I ask God in prayer to reveal His will.
- Through prayer, the Word, Holy Spirit and reflection I come to a deliberate judgment & if my mind is at peace after 2/3 more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

In every one of these examples, God had the plan and then invited ordinary people to participate in HIS plan.

The key to knowing /recognizing God's voice is not a formula or a method or a self-help book or a How-to seminar:

- **Matthew 6:33** - But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.
- **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** - Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The secret is an intimate love relationship. And through that relationship God will speak to you in a personal and unique way.

When God reveals His activity to you it is an invitation to join Him. The moment God speaks is the time He wants you to respond. The first step is to answer YES.

After you have said Yes to God, He then goes about preparing and equipping you for the assignment He has called you to. Through the whole process from beginning to end, it is all about God.

Today we have looked at stories about people who made themselves available to God and through that relationship God accomplished mighty things for His Kingdom.

Maybe you have been inspired and you wonder, "Will God reveal to ME where He is working?" The answer is a resounding YES!

God has something for each person sitting here to do and He has something for this church to do. It is not something we can dream up on our own. It is not something we have the ability or resources to accomplish, BUT it is something that will glorify God and further His work in this community.

Our church is at a crossroads. We can continue to seek our own will and do those things we believe to be important and slowly but surely die or we can begin to seek and develop a relationship with God and through His leading accomplish things we've never dreamed of.

Let us make a commitment today to be about God's business. Let us be devoted to His cause whatever it looks like and wherever it takes us.

Let us set aside our own plans and programs and seek, instead, only that which He is calling us to do.

Christ can accomplish more in 6 months in this church through people yielded to Him than we can accomplish in 60 years without Him.

I want to be doing what God is calling me to do..... How about you?