



It Takes Time

John 14:6 NIV

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

What Will You Do About The Truth?

Last month our church had a potluck and it was poorly attended. In fact, there were fewer people in the worship service that day than I can remember. A number of people put a significant amount of work into getting the potluck ready and the food was great. Yet I wasn't sure if we should have another one for a while. I asked a couple if they thought we should wait a few months for the next church potluck or have one this month and they both smiled broadly and insisted that we have it this month. I was caught off guard by their enthusiasm and then in a split moment of certainty, I knew that the Lord had spoken to me through them, that He wanted us to have a potluck so I went ahead and scheduled it.

I must admit though that I had a dilemma. How was I to know that it really was God speaking to me and not just peer pressure? It is not always God speaking to you when you want it to be and it isn't easy knowing if you are right or wrong in it. I did not have any Bible verse I could point to as evidence that this was coming from God. Do you just rely on positive thinking and optimistic strategizing to guide you when you aren't sure how to connect with the Lord on some matter that means a lot to you? What is your go to method for hearing from God? Most don't care what God might be saying; they never give it much thought but what about you? Have you come to the place where you want the Lord to show you the way?

Good people, God's people have made horrible mistakes, when it comes to God. We rightfully commend Peter for his tremendous faith taking God at His word and walking on the water. When he and his fellow disciples were going across the Sea of Galilee in the middle of a great storm, they all saw Jesus coming toward them but at first none of them were really sure it was Him. Timidly, Peter cried out to the Lord with a tremendous request. **"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.** (Matthew 14:28-29 NIV) However, quickly Peter's faith failed him and he started sinking into the billowing waves. **But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"** (Matthew 14:30-31 NIV) When Peter started out toward Jesus, He had complete confidence in God to take him along but it didn't last and rather than walking in the might and protection of God, he went out in his own strength and insight. He could see no way that he was going to survive the waves and down he went.

The same was true with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Instead of maintaining her faith in Jesus and walking in Him, she trusted in her own wits and along with her children, came to the conclusion that Jesus had lost His

mind. What He was teaching and how He was behaving seemed irrational to her. **Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." ...Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.** (Mark 3:20-21,31 NIV) You can talk yourself into nearly anything if you rely just on you to figure out everything, including deciding that Jesus is crazy. When Saul, who later became Paul was an unbeliever, he was convinced the Christian people were the worst sorts of souls and he set out on a quest to destroy them. It seems so very reasonable, any conclusion you make when you are walking in yourself and deciding what you think is best. The most rational and acceptable determinations are made by those who have no relationship with Christ. They make sense and their arguments are levelheaded. Mary, Saul and Peter all had their ducks in a row with their conclusions but just because the whole world agrees with you doesn't mean it is so.

Jesus told His disciples not to talk about certain things until He was risen from the dead. **As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.** (Mark 9:9 NIV) There are many things you cannot understand nor can you grasp their importance until Christ is raised from the dead in you. No matter how hard you look at a matter, regardless of how intensely you stare at a problem or an idea, you cannot get the gist of it until Jesus Christ has come alive in you. Here is a Biblical example. When Saul was just an ordinary person and had no sense of Christ in Him, he thought it was best to do whatever He could to stop the progression of the Christian message. However, He met Christ and could no longer refute His Presence or authority as Lord. Jesus became alive in Him and it completely changed the way He saw everything. There is a magical moment recorded in Acts 13 that completely altered the course of His life. **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. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went...** (Acts 13:1-4 NIV)

Consider just how monumental this really was. Saul, who had been instrumental in the horrific persecution of Christian people in the Middle East, who personally ordered the murder of Christians and their imprisonment was now being commissioned to begin the great missionary movement into the depths of the Roman Empire. Not only that, Saul was accepting the call and going off on the enterprise...without coercion, without resistance on his part! We treat this lightly because we are used to Paul being the greatest of all missionaries and the author of one fourth the New Testament. This was new ground however; for the Church as well as for Saul. Never before had any Christian workers officially with the blessing of the Church been sent out beyond the narrow confines of the Jewish world and certainly not someone of Saul's notoriety. You must consider the risk being taken by everyone involved. What if Saul turned on them? What if he wasn't spiritually strong enough to withstand the persecution they might face? What if Saul's Christianity had no staying power? It was a most shocking enterprise!

Take a close look at how this decision to send Saul and Barnabas into the wild pagan world of Roman rule developed. In this one church in Antioch, there were a group of believers who had some experience hearing from God and praying. While they were in a time of worship, the Holy Spirit told them to make Saul and Barnabas missionaries. Somehow, the Lord got this message across to each one of these Christian leaders and church members. They knew it was God saying it and they were certain of what He said. Also, Christ in some way prepared Saul and Barnabas for this dramatic change of course. They were not like Moses or Gideon who were spiritually unprepared for the calling each received from God. Saul and Barnabas were ready to go; up for the challenge. God did that in them. God prepared their hearts for this crucial mission.

God has important things to say to you. He has tasks for you that matter for eternity. He has a way of looking at things that He wants you to see. The Lord has plans for you, challenges for you, certain ways of doing things that are critical for you and for others that you may not even know yet. You can be oblivious to Christ and remain in a spiritual fog if you like or you can come up into the bright sunlight of God and His word. You can know what only Christ can show you. You can see what only the Lord can reveal. It is possible for you to be just as alert and spiritually alive as those Antioch church members who all knew God wanted Saul and Barnabas to be the first missionaries to the world outside the Middle East.

You must read the Bible if you want to hear from God. You can never be certain it is Jesus talking to you if the Bible isn't a part of your thinking. You don't read the Bible to get something out of it but to be with Jesus. If you don't care what He is doing or how He thinks, then keep the Bible on your coffee table or stuck in your phone. But if you want God to talk with you and be close to you, then you must read the Bible. Do what God says whenever you know what He wants you to do. The Lord will be as silent as a door knob if you disobey Him and ignore what He is telling you. Pray. Just sit with God and tell Him you love Him and be quiet...do this several times a day. You don't have to ask for anything. If you have a sin to confess then confess it. If you feel the desire to thank Him or tell Him you love Him, then do that. Mostly just sit with Christ and let the Lord have room in your mind to work in it. Become someone the Lord talks with and gives His thoughts and directions. Be a disciple that the Lord can guide and lead. Make the best use of your time here on earth by being one of the Lord's trusted friends. Be a disciple!