

The Power of a Whisper: Get Up and Do Something

by Senior Pastor: Bill Couch

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This morning we conclude our series of messages entitled the Power of a Whisper. God is constantly whispering to us in a still, small voice. It is not necessarily an audible voice. It is sometimes a thought that comes into our heads. Sometimes it is a gentle nudging by the Holy Spirit to do something or say something. Sometimes it is a nudging to keep quiet or wait. We have discussed ways to discern God's voice from the other voices in our heads. Last week we focused on how God speaks to us when the darkness is closing in on us. I hope that during this series you have discovered some ways to tune into God and listen. He is always speaking. Our challenge is to listen.

Today we are going to focus on listening to those nudges from God to get up and do something. James, the brother of Jesus, in his letter recorded in the New Testament speaks often about how our prayers and our faith need to lead us to action.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror

²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶ If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:22-27

One of the ways that we hear God speaking is through the scriptures—his Word! In my devotional times, I'm reading a book by Richard Foster called, Sanctuary for the Soul, Journey into Meditative Prayer. He suggests a way to meditate on scripture that helps to quiet our minds so we can hear God speaking. He recommends selecting a short Psalm and reading it three times. The first time

read the entire Psalm out loud. The second time prayerfully ask God to speak to you through this Psalm. Then read the Psalm again silently and highlight the words or verses that speak to you or grab you. The third time focus on the highlighted words and ask God to speak to you through one of those passages. Then meditate on those words—slowly reflect on each word. Foster writes those words on a note card and looks at them through the day.

I selected Psalm 29 for a meditation. I went through the process and felt drawn to four words: “The Lord gives strength’ (Psalm 29:11) I was rather exhausted and overwhelmed the day I read that passage. It became a message from God—he would give me strength for that day and the days ahead. I did not have to do everything or anything in my own strength. As I continued to meditate on those words, my focus was narrowed to the first three: “The Lord gives”. And for a few moments, I began to think about all the things that God gives me. It was overwhelming. I began to thank him for each blessing he had given me. As I began to thank him and realized how blessed I was, I noticed the tiredness lifting off my shoulders. I felt rejuvenated. Later in the day, the gratitude was sucked out of me as I got busy with my “to do” list and a variety of issues and problems that needed to be resolved. I would stop and remember those words “The Lord gives” and gratitude would fill me up again. I had a place of gratitude to come back to, because of my meditation on the Psalm.

I want to invite you to have a brief mediation on those three words right now: “The Lord gives.” What has God given you? What better way to begin this

Thanksgiving week than to take a moment and thank God for three blessings he has given you. (Allow time for silent prayer)

It is important for us to spend time listening to God, thanking him and praising him. As we do so we discover the joy of simply being in the presence of God—basking in his love and his grace. There is always the danger as we delight in God that we will become so “heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.” James emphasizes this in his letter:

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

¹⁶ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:15-17

Spending time thanking God for his blessings fills our hearts with gratitude. And gratitude leads to action. “God, because of all the blessings you have given me, what do you want me to do with those blessings? Where can I use them to join with you in what you are doing in the world?”

As we spend time with God, we get to know his heart. As we meditate on his word we discover the things that matter to God. If we love God, the things that matter to him matter to us. I’ve been reading through the book of Jeremiah recently. I noticed a recurring theme regarding “justice.” I started to underline all the passages that contained themes related to “justice.” In the book of Jeremiah alone there are over 30 verses that deal with caring for orphans and widows, treating aliens with respect, feeding the hungry and lifting up those who are trapped in poverty. Here are just a few:

²⁸ “Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor.”

Jeremiah 5:28

²⁴ "Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:24

¹² "O house of David, this is what the LORD says: 'Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed.'"

Jeremiah 21:12

³ "This is what the LORD says: 'Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow.'"

Jeremiah 22:3

The word "justice" occurs over 134 times in the Bible. Hundreds of other verses deal with the theme of justice. You cannot read the scripture without realizing that justice is on the heart of God. When we love God we care about the things that are on God's heart. What breaks his heart breaks our heart. God cares about people who are struggling to survive in extreme poverty. He cares about people who are oppressed by cruel regimes—like we have seen recently in Syria. He cares about his 21,000 children who die every day of preventable diseases. He cares about the 1 billion people who have no access to clean water. As we realize how much God has blessed us and our hearts are filled with gratitude, we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit directing us to a place where we can join with him in changing the world. We become a part of something greater than ourselves.

The Holy Spirit may prompt you to give monetary resources to make a difference. Some of you have been blessed with the gift to make money, and you use that gift well. That is a gift from God. How will you express your gratitude to God for this gift? One way is to give generously. You have given generously this

year to our “Clean Water Faith Promise Fund”. Nearly \$300,000 has been given this year to provide clean water to villages in Africa and Guatemala. You have saved 1,000s of lives. Your gifts have made a difference for the Kingdom of God. You have helped to change the world. Hundreds of children will live today—because of the clean water you have provided.

On Christmas Eve you will have another opportunity to give to make a difference for those who are struggling to survive. When Paul Rider and I visited our mission work at the Mulungwishi mission station in the Congo, we were overwhelmed by the needs. Our Christmas Eve offering this year is going to help meet two of those needs. Our gifts will provide funds to feed children at their weekly nutrition center. We are also going to provide medical equipment and drugs for their clinic. Let’s watch a video that will show the impact these two ministries have on this part of the Congo.

VIDEO: Mulungwishi clinic and nutrition center

Many of the parents walk all night with their children to come to the clinic each week for food. They are given what their children will need to eat for the following week. Currently they feed about 100 children each week. With additional funds they could save perhaps twice that many next year.

As we toured the hospital we saw the woefully under-stocked pharmacy lacking such basics as antibiotics and medication for the most common illnesses of malaria and dysentery. The day we were there 5 new babies had been born and 4 mothers were in labor. Over a 100 persons a day are treated at the only clinic within 50 miles.

One of our blessings is certainly the quality of health care that is available to us. When we count our blessings and our hearts are filled with gratitude, we want to join with God in his work of redeeming a broken world. Listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to give. Pray about how much you will give to this special offering. The first \$40,000 of our offering will go to the clinic and nutrition center.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will prompt us to go and give of our time, our talents and abilities to make a difference for God's Kingdom. Recently a team of five persons listened to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to return to Tanzania. On a previous trip Guy and Stephanie Wells saw the needs of orphans ages 5 to 15 who live in a garbage dump. Guy and Stephanie returned to vaccinate 250 of these children against hepatitis. They also treated them for intestinal parasites and gave them vitamins.

Another great need is a place for these orphans to live so they can escape the disease infested dump. Guy's daughter and her fiancé worked on construction of a small cinder block house to provide a place for some of the orphans. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress." (James 1:27)

Duke Underwood also was a part of this team and provided training for pastors in the area. Ninety-five pastors walked great distances for a time of desperately needed training and encouragement.

While healing others, Stephanie acquired typhoid fever which sent her to bed with a high fever for a couple of days. She is recovering slowly, but even that

has not discouraged her from the call to do God's work in this area. The team plans to return in July to administer polio vaccine and test the orphans for malaria. They also want to continue construction on additional housing for the orphans. They would like to invite you to go with them. If you are interested talk with Guy or Stephanie or call the church office.

Many people fear that the promptings of the Holy Spirit all lead to Africa! That is not the case. The Holy Spirit calls us to do a variety of things. Most of us are called to get up and do something right here. Mandy Jeffery is a junior at Coronado High School and active in our youth ministry. She recently felt the Holy Spirit prompting her to do something. She is going to come and tell us about it.

Testimony by Mandy Jeffrey.

Listening to God fills us with gratitude. When we listen to God he meets us where we are and offers healing, comfort, hope and joy. Overflowing with his love enables us to lift our eyes off of ourselves and see the needs of others. When we join with him in his work of redeeming and restoring a broken world, our lives connect with something greater than ourselves. We discover why God made us.

Last week Clarissa Hayes shared with us an email she wrote on the day her 25 year old son Keith died after a courageous battle with cancer. We heard how she experienced God's strength during the incredible pain of losing a child. As Clarissa continued to listen to God, she followed his promptings that enabled her to focus on the needs of others. She is going to share more of her story of healing. Following her testimony, several of our members are going to share via cardboard how God called them to get up and do something. The first side of the

card will describe where they were in their lives before God called them. And the second side will describe what God called them to get up and do.

AUDIO: CLARISSA HAYES TESTIMONY

CARDBOARD TESTIMONIES

CONGREGATION TO STAND IN GROUPS AS MINISTRY AREAS ARE

CALLED

Wrap up: Bill