



Even in our closest relationships, misunderstandings and confusion can occur. You might think that this would not occur with those we know intimately and have walked alongside for decades. Our experience tells us otherwise. Communication is a challenge in every relationship. It is logical for us to assume and to expect the same to be true in our relationship with our Creator. A lack of clarity and, at times, confusion is a part of every relationship.

Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Paul is adding to the complexity by highlighting the notion that understanding God is even more difficult than another human being. God is different from us. In Isaiah 55, we find these words from God, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” The challenge to hear and understand is even greater in our relationship with God. Yet, there is hope, for as Paul states, we have received “the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” The way God loves is remarkably different from the way that we love, but we have been given the gift of the Spirit who helps us understand the depth and power of the love of God. Today, take a moment to give thanks for the gift of the Spirit. Spend a few moments asking the Spirit to continue to encourage, comfort, teach and remind you of the things you have learned about experiencing God.

MESSAGE

“What Is God Saying?”

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Creating Space

Being Attentive

Developing Relationships

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Holy and loving God, I want to experience you in my life. I know that you have been pursuing a relationship with me because you love me. Today, Lord, I pray that you would give me eyes to see you at work, ears to hear your invitation to join you and the courage to follow your leading in my life. I am no longer my own, God. I am yours. I offer you this prayer in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Our memory verse this week comes from the section of John’s Gospel which contains the teaching Jesus shares with his disciples at the Last Supper. Jesus begins the meal with an act of service as he washes his disciples’ feet. He follows that with words of comfort and peace designed to prepare the disciples for what was to come in the next 24 hours. In verse 18, Jesus shares the promise, “I will not leave you as orphans,” and in the verse that immediately follows our text for today, Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

Putting these verses together, we see that the Spirit comforts, encourages, teaches and continually reminds us of what we have already learned. Which of these tasks would you identify as the work the Spirit is doing in your life today?

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Israel’s exodus from Egypt was under the direction of God’s servant, Moses. However, you may recall from our readings several weeks ago that even Moses responded to God’s invitation to lead with great hesitancy and fear. “Who am I,” Moses asked, “that I should go to Pharaoh?” It was in Moses’ hearing of God’s response to his uncertainty that Moses received the confidence to respond to God’s invitation. Experiencing God has always required a willingness to listen and submit to the distinct direction of God.

Would the people who know you best describe you as a good listener? Why or why not? Take a moment to list out what you would describe as some of the distinct qualities of someone who is an exceptional listener.

What adjustments would you need to make in your life to become a better listener in your relationship with God?

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John’s Gospel opens with the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Later, John describes this “Word” as “becoming flesh and making his home among us.” The writer of Hebrews is emphasizing a similar theme. By saying that God “has spoken to us by his Son” and describing that Son as “the radiance of God’s glory,” this writer is contending that Jesus is indeed “the word that has become flesh and has made his home among us.”

God speaks to us through Jesus’ teaching, but more importantly, God speaks through the fullness of all that Jesus did in his life, death and resurrection. Can you identify some specific things you have learned about God and God’s character through Jesus? What might those be? How might God be speaking to you today through God’s Son?

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Body language is an important component of our understanding. Hearing someone’s tone adds clarity to our appreciation of what they may be trying to say. The more distant that we are from someone, the greater the likelihood that we will miss something important. At times, that gap in our comprehension is enough for us to miss the point entirely. Is it possible that this same thing occurs in our relationship with God?

In Matthew 23, we find Jesus near the end of his life expressing his deep compassion for Jerusalem and the people who have refused to turn to God. We get a sense of the deep sadness and pain of Christ that fueled him in his final act of love. Jesus is driven by love. As you listen for God’s voice in your life, do you hear a tender and loving voice?

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