

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

The idea and a great part of the information for this particular lesson has been taken from Henry T. Blackaby's book, *Experiencing God*, Chapters 8, 14, and 15. (Blackaby, Henry T. *Experiencing God*. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.)

Lesson 17 – God Speaks, Part II (Teacher's Lesson)

Opening: Answer the opening question.

Study Notes:

John 5:17

While Jesus was on the earth, who took the initiative in doing God's work? The Father

John 5:19

Did Jesus do anything on His own initiative? No

How did He know what to do? He did what He saw His Father doing.

This is saying that Jesus looked for where the Father was working and entered His work. Many people try to serve God by deciding what they want to do and then asking God to bless it. To see where God is working, we should look for things that only God can do (some examples – drawing people to Him, giving spiritual understanding, or the desire to know Him more).

John 5:20

Why did the Father show the Son what He was doing? Because He loved Him.

God reveals Himself and His will to those whom He loves. (John 15:15).

**** Special – “Having a wool fleece on the ground” ****

In Judges 6:36-40, Gideon looks for the will of God through a test. He puts a wool fleece on the ground and asks God that the fleece be wet and the ground around it dry. Then the next night, he asks God to do the opposite as confirmation. Some people think that it is an example of how we should always determine God's will. But we have to remember that Gideon's example is really one of weak faith. He was very young and insecure of himself at that time. Circumstances can sometimes be a guide for seeing God's direction, but they are not the only means nor the most reliable means of determining the will of God.

Acts 13:1

Who were the church leaders in Antioch? Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, y Saul

Acts 13:2

What was God's instruction for the church? Send Barnabas and Saul as missionaries. Observe that God reveals His specific instruction to the whole church, not just one or two members. Saul and Barnabas had just demonstrated their faithfulness in the ministry by delivering a gift from the church in Antioch to help the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:25-32).

Acts 13:3

What did the church leaders do to prepare themselves to understand the will of God better? Fast and pray.

Observe that the church leaders were already in a place in their relationship where they were prepared to hear from God. The church came together in worship to the Lord.

**** Special – Rules of the Majority of the Church ****

Some people question whether all things should be done unanimously in a church. Shouldn't things be decided by a majority of votes? In the first place, sometimes those in the minority are right. Consider Joshua and Caleb of the 12 spies sent to Canaan (Numbers 13-14). Only they believed that the Israelites could defeat the Canaanites – and they were right, but the people listened to the majority. In the second place, even if the majority is right, the church and those who are not happy with a decision are a family. If some disagree with a particular line of conduct, the entire church needs to pray together until all the members detect God's leadership in that direction.

Summary: God speaks with His people through circumstances and the church, but the two methods should be approached carefully, because they can be easily misunderstood.

Application: Help the group to discover some specific actions that the church can and should be doing now. This is a good opportunity for you as that leader to explain the vision that God has given you for His church and at the same time listen to some new possibilities.

Lesson 17 – God Speaks, part II

No Man is an Island

When you have to make a big decision, do you seek the advice of friends or do you make it on your own?

In the previous lesson, we studied two primary methods through which God communicates with His people. The Bible and prayer. This lesson we will focus on two other methods – circumstances and the church.

Circumstances

Looking for the will of God through circumstances can be a difficult business. The problem is that we sometimes see circumstances from a human perspective. We need God's perspective in our circumstances. Jesus gives us a good example in John chapter 5. Read the verses below and answer the questions.

Verse 17 – While Jesus was on the earth, who took the initiative in doing God's work?

Verse 19 – Did Jesus do anything of His own initiative?

How did He know what to do?

Verse 20 – Why did the Father show the Son what He was doing?

Getting God's Perspective

Tragic or difficult circumstances can sometimes be hard to understand. When the circumstances seem confusing, remember that God loves you completely – He demonstrated this on the cross. Then, look to Him and ask Him to help you understand the situation from His perspective. Give the Holy Spirit time to help you understand and continue to seek His presence. When He does, adjust your life to what He tells you to do. Jesus did this in Gethsemane. He revealed His heart to God about His difficult circumstances and finally told Him, “but let what you want be done, not what I want.” (Matthew 26:39)

The Church

The church is the local group of believers with which you are affiliated. These are the people God has placed near you to help you understand His will. At times God speaks to us through other believers. Again, you should exercise caution here, because not necessarily everyone who attends church is a believer and even those who are believers can occasionally be far from God. A good example of God speaking through the church can be found in Acts 13.

Verse 1 – Who were the leaders of the church in Antioch?

Verse 2 – What was God’s instruction for the church?

Verse 3 – What did the leaders of the church do to prepare themselves to understand God’s will better?

Seeking the Will of God Together

The church is more than just a group of individuals – it is the bod of Christ. It should function as a unit. God can speak with us through other believer, but we should remember that one member is not the entire body. A person can declare what he or she believes is the will of God for the church, but the church functions as a unit, every member must discover the leadership of God in that direction. As a group of leaders in your church, talk about some areas in which you sense the direction of God for your church. Write below two or three important priorities that you believe that your church should do.

Scripture to memorize:

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

Psalm 5:3