

Southport Presbyterian Church
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Adjusting Your Life to God
I Kings 19:19-21; Matthew 4:18-22

As we started Unit 8 of Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God*, one of the people in my Wednesday morning group called it the "Guilt Chapter." Taking the book very seriously and really trying to know and do the will of God, my friend felt that it was very difficult to make the kind of adjustments in his life that were being used as examples in the study guide. Did any of you have the same reaction?

Let's quickly remember where we have come on this journey over the past 10 weeks. We began by saying that we should look around us and see what God is doing in our world. As we do that, it is crucial to realize that God pursues a continual love relationship with us that is both personal and real. This is the foundation of all that follows. This personal relationship with God is crucial to knowing and doing the will of God.

Next, we find that God invites us to become involved with Him in what He is doing. That invitation comes as God speaks to us, primarily through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church. In speaking to us He desires to reveal to Himself, His purposes and His ways.

What comes next is the difficult part for us. When we have heard God speak to us, we are confronted with a crisis of belief. Will we decide to follow God's instructions or will we go in a different direction?

That's what we are looking at today; making major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He is doing. This is where "the rubber hits the road." This is "crunch time." It's one thing to talk about knowing the will of God. It's quite another thing to do the will of God.

Before we have the joy of once again gathering around the table our Lord Jesus has set for us, let's look briefly at scenes in the Bible where we find people like you and me adjusting their lives to God. Then we will look at the way in which God has called one of our own to make adjustments in her life. Finally, we will look at the kind of adjustments God may be calling you and me to make.

Adjustments made by biblical people.

The Bible is filled with people who encountered God in all kinds of ways, had a crisis of belief, or a decision to make, and then had to make adjustments to their lives. These adjustments come as a part of a process that God was already doing in the lives of those whom He is inviting to participate in His activity in the world.

The first person adjusting his life to God comes from I Kings 19:19-21. In a heartwarming picture in the life of one of the great Old Testament prophets, we see God calling Elisha. His predecessor and mentor, Elijah, has just heard God's "gentle whisper" in the cave on Mount Horeb. Elijah's first act of obedience is to return the way he came and anoint Elisha who will take the prophetic mantle and speak and do the word of the Lord to the people.

Elijah finds Elisha plowing a field with twelve yoke of oxen. He throws his cloak or mantle around him symbolizing for all to see that he has anointed Elisha to be his successor.

In a touching way, Elisha has a crisis of belief—will he follow Elijah and take over his ministry for the Lord? In saying “yes” to God, Elisha is confronted with some adjustments to his life. In this situation, following God’s purposes for him means that he cannot stay where he is.

As a good son, he goes home and kisses his parents good bye. Then he takes his yoke of oxen and slaughters them. Next he burns his plow and cooks the oxen on the fire giving the people meat to eat as he bids them all farewell. It’s like Elisha is burning his bridges behind him. There is no turning back. He is totally surrendering his life to God. He is holding nothing back.

In Matthew 4, we see the compelling account of Jesus calling four of His disciples to leave their nets there on the shores of Galilee and become fishers of men. While we are given a few other details in the other Gospels, we don’t know what happened before this to prepare these men for this encounter with God. In the first chapter of John, we see that they had been mentored by John the Baptist. It is also possible that they had spent time with Jesus before this. Without question, as Jesus calls them, there is a crisis of belief requiring adjustments on their parts.

The first two men are brothers who probably were quite successful in the fishing business. Peter and Andrew are casting heir net into Galilee, expectantly hopeful, as are all fishermen that they are going to catch that elusive big one or that they are going to catch a large quantity of fish this time. After hearing Jesus words, if they followed Him, they would be fishing for men.

The adjustments for them are large to be sure. Following would mean a whole new way of life. They took the first step in adjusting to God’s ways when they left their nets and began following Jesus.

In verses 21-22, we find Jesus walking a little further on the shore. He encounters two more brothers, James and John, whose father, Zebedee, is mentioned. By the way in Mark’s Gospel, these two brothers are called the “Sons of Thunder,” probably giving us a window into the temperamental disposition of their father.

Jesus finds James and John in a boat with Zebedee, making last minute preparations with their nets, before launching out into the deep. They must have had quite a crisis of belief as they heard Jesus words that day. Adjusting to God meant that they had to leave their father, who might explode at their actions. We are told that “they left their father and their boat and followed Him.”

The Bible is filled with vignettes of faith like these three where God speaks to people; they experience a crisis of belief, and find themselves making adjustments in their lives. Figuratively and often geographically, they can’t stay where they are when these adjustments are made.

An interview with Sarah Lantz talking about adjustments

At this time, I want to ask Sarah Lantz to come forward and join me as we talk about how she is adjusting her life to God as she finishes her last year at IU Medical School and prepares to venture forth into the future. Sarah has grown up in this church and has participated in the life of our community of faith in numerous ways.

Q1: How has God spoken to you and what has he called you to be and do?

Q2: What crises of belief have you encountered when God spoke to you?

Q3: What adjustments have you made and are you making to join with God in what He is doing in our world?

Thank you very much, Sarah. May God bless and continue to lead you as you faithfully serve Him.

If we are to be faithful, what adjustments are we being called to make?

Adjustments come in all shapes and sizes. Some may be gradual as a part of a process of refining and growth. Others may demand an immediate response, as was true for Elisha and the two sets of brothers who became followers of Jesus. Adjustments require faith and action on our parts. We can't stay the same when we make adjustments.

What adjustments to your life is God calling you to make? Could it be that God is calling you to make adjustments in your circumstances, like your job, your home, and your finances? Those are radical adjustments, to be sure, yet, not different from Elisha, the Disciple Brothers, or Sarah.

Maybe God is speaking to you about making adjustments in your relationships? Those relationships include your family, friends, colleagues and peer group.

Possibly God wants you to make adjustments in your thinking. Maybe you have fallen into the habit of being hyper-critical; prejudiced; over-confident or under-confident in yourself; paralyzed by your past or anxious about your future.

Could it be that God is asking you to adjust your commitments? What about your commitments to your family, church, job and plans for the future? The list could go on and on.

Does God want you to adjust your actions, like how you study, pray, serve and give?

Is there a possibility that God maybe calling you to change what you believe about Him, His plans and purposes for you, and your relationship with others?

How are you being called to adjust your life to God?

If we are to be a church for others, what adjustments is God calling us to make? Last week, a visitor told me of a church she attended that asked people to sit in the middle of the rows when they came in, so that late-comers could find a place to sit. Now that might be a difficult adjustment for some of us. Yet, if we are a church for others, it really makes sense.

Maybe it means, as a church, asking God to send us people who we can get to know and point them to Jesus by sharing our faith with them. Maybe it means becoming a church made up of small groups where everyone is a part of a group of one kind or another.

Maybe it means adjusting our thinking from programs and events to looking far past what we are doing to what God is doing in our world. Maybe it means looking seriously about how we spend money. How much of it is used to service ourselves and our needs and how much of it is really reaching out to serve others far beyond our walls and property?

When God speaks to us, we experience a crisis of belief which then calls for us to make adjustments. What adjustment is God calling you to make? Us to make?