

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church  
Bible Study  
Monday, January 5, 2009

God Wants to Get Our Attention  
Proverbs 3:5-6

Over the last month or so several people have asked me this question, “how can I tell if God is trying to get my attention or if God is trying to tell me something?” These are very good questions and the beginning of a new year is a good time to try to answer them.

First, the feeling or conviction that God is trying to get our attention or tell us something speaks to an absence of fulfillment in our lives which is good. This means that there is some restlessness or lack of peace where God is at work in our lives. We will not be able to be at “peace” until we know what God is trying to tell us or gets our attention. Fulfillment is not a matter of position or power it is living in harmony with God’s will and purpose for our lives. God has designed our lives for His glory. He says, “I know the plans I have for you.” (Jeremiah 29:11) When we surrender ourselves to God, we exchange our thoughts, feelings, and desires for new ones. We can only do this by faith. By faith we believe that God is who He says He is and that He will do exactly what He has promised. Fulfillment comes only when we decide to love God and give Him all of ourselves.

Second, when God seeks to get our attention or tell us something He must communicate with us. God communicates or speaks to us in four different ways. It is through these four different ways that we will find out what God wants to tell us or by which He will get our attention. These eight ways that God communicates are:

A Restless Spirit

One of the simplest ways God gets our attention is by making us restless. If we experience a restlessness deep within – something we sense but cannot quite identify – the wise thing to do is to stop and pray, “Lord are You trying to say something to me?” God does not work the same way in everyone’s life, but His primary method for getting attention is by giving us a restlessness which should let us know that God wants to change what we are doing or change our direction. This restlessness will persist until we do it. Like Paul on the Damascus Road we need to ask “Lord, what would you have me do?” (Acts 22:10)

A Spoken Word

A second way that God gets our attention is by a word spoken through someone else. God will speak through other people. For example when God wanted to get a message to the priest Eli He used young Samuel. (1 Samuel 3:4-8) When He wanted to get a message to David He used the prophet Nathan. (2 Samuel 12:1) Sometime people will come to us in the name of the Lord claiming to have a word from Him to us. But when God has a message for us from somebody else there is always an indication that it is from God because the word is convicting or uplifting to us. The message does not have to be

negative or judgmental. In other words the message moves us inwardly where we know without doubt it is from God.

### An Unusual Blessing

A third way that God speaks is the method most people prefer; by blessing us in an unusual way. The blessing might be related to spiritual growth, finances, home, work, or health. God does not always choose this method. For those who turn away and refuse to depend on Him, a lavish blessing would likely result in greater independence and self-centeredness--God would be totally ignored. If we are an overly self-sufficient person, be aware that God may use some other method to get our focus onto Him. But remember that no matter which method He uses to get our attention, it is always an expression of His love.

### Unanswered Prayer

The fourth way that God speaks is usually the hardest. God will simply not answer our prayers when our desires are not in harmony or sync with His. God loves everyone equally, but He has different purposes for each of our lives. Sin is one reason the Lord will use unanswered prayer to get our attention. Even if the prayer itself is in line with God's will – maybe even exactly what He wants us to do – the Lord may close the doors of heaven and refuse to answer that prayer as a way of forcing us to examine ourselves. When necessary, God uses drastic measures, but we must never take it upon ourselves to pass judgment against other believers- that task belongs solely to God. An example of this is when David sinned with Bathsheba and God did not hear or ignored David's prayer to spare the baby's life. (2 Samuel 12:16-18)

### Disappointment

God will sometimes use disappointment to get our attention. An example is Numbers 14. The people of Israel were poised to enter the land of promise but the "spy committee" voted ten to two against possessing what the Lord had given them. They later acknowledged they had sinned and changed their minds but God said it was too late. God then certainly had their attention.

### Extraordinary Circumstances

Sometime God will use bizarre or unusual circumstances to get us to stop and listen. An example is Moses and the burning bush. (Exodus 3:2)

### Defeat

Sometime God will use defeat to get our attention. A terrible defeat may prove to be the greatest stepping stone to success when we are wise enough to ask, "Lord, what are you saying?" It is important for us to remember that there is a difference between failing and being a failure. An example is Joshua 7.

### Tragedy, Sickness and Affliction

We should never look at someone's situation and presume why God allowed a calamity, yet we should regard tragedies and afflictions as reasons to inquire of the Lord. It may be that God is trying to tell us something. Examples are 2 Chronicles 32:24 and Acts 9:3-5.

At any given moment, God knows exactly where we are in our journey and precisely what it will take to get our attention. So we should be alert; take notice to see if any of God's methods are occurring – or recurring in our lives. In prayer ask Him what He wants to tell us, then listen, not simply to hear but also to obey.