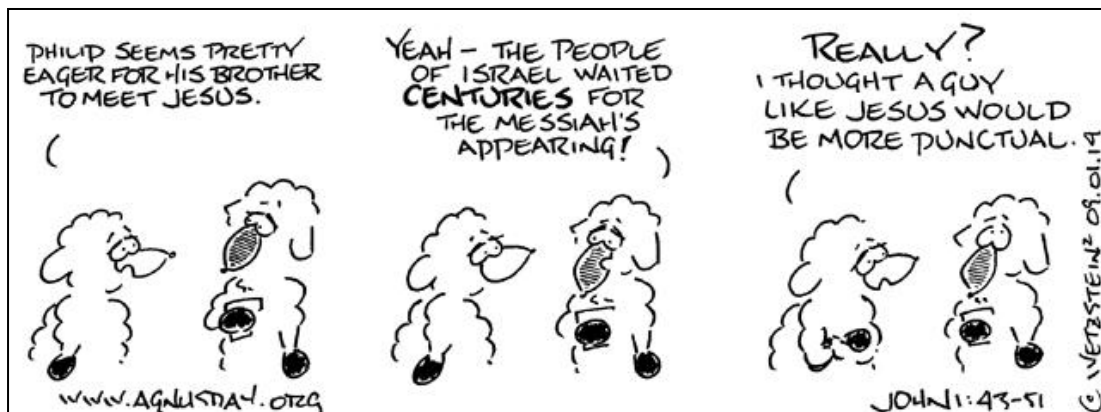


STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

John 1:43-51 ⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

The way God reveals himself to us is primarily through his word, the word we hear with our ears. To our way of thinking, seeing is more important than hearing. We say things like, "don't believe your ears," "You've got to see it to believe it," "Words are cheap," and so on. We put a lot of stock in our eyes, but not much in our ears. With God, it is the other way around. In fact, Jesus condemned the whole generation he spoke to for their desire to see signs and wonders (Matt. 16:4). And later in the next chapter of John, he removed himself from a crowd who followed him because of what they saw (John 2:23-25). He turned them away from their eyes to open their ears (Luke 11:27-38).

The best statement of the tension between seeing and hearing in John's Gospel is Jesus' statement to Thomas: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe (20:29). Jesus condemns those who need to see signs and wonders to believe. Jesus commends hearing, speaking of the power in the word. "Truly, truly, I say to you," he said, "he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (5:24). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." he said (10-27). The same kind of tension between seeing and hearing is present in Paul's letters.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2Cor. 5:7). As Luther once said, before God it is as if we have only one organ -- our ears. He may occasionally give sights, as he did in Jesus, but when he makes himself manifest to us, showing us who he is and what we can expect from him, he always does so through the word. The word is the Spirit's instrument, too, or means. Jesus spoke the word to Philip who in turn spoke it to Nathanael. Nathanael then came to Jesus to hear some more. This Gospel reveals to us that there is a priority of hearing over seeing -- the priority of the word of God.

Through the Gospel, as it is read and proclaimed, God reveals himself to us. He is present with us in his Word to call us as Nathanael was called; to gather us as the disciples were gathered; to sanctify us as he sanctifies and makes whole all of his people. As Paul says, "Now we see in a mirror dimly." But "then," on the last day, when Christ is all in all, we shall see "face to face" (1Cor. 13:12).

Our ears and words play a much bigger part in everyday life than we often realize. It is primarily through hearing that we communicate with other people. The Bible puts so much priority on the word of God because it is through his speaking and our hearing that God expresses himself to us and makes himself known. "No one has ever seen God," but "the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." We Lutherans believe that when the Gospel is read and proclaimed God himself is speaking to us. In the sacraments, it is the word alone with the water, bread, and wine that makes the sacrament the power of God's forgiveness.

STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ?* It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *God speaks to us almost exclusively through his "voice" (words)...And yet, we expect God to communicate to us by what we "see" occurring in our lives.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God?* It may be helpful to circle those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *Our faith and trust in God is strengthened **not** by what we "see" happening in our lives (success/failure). Our faith is strengthened by what we "hear" from the Word of God.*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "said to him"