

A matter of faith

A long time ago in a faraway land, a well to do man heard this Voice. It asked him to pull up his family and chattels and move to another country. He will be told along the way where he was to go. The promise was that he would become the father of a nation. This seemed a strange promise because he had married a beautiful woman who was unfortunately barren. But there was something compelling about the Voice. So much so that he did pull up his family and roots, took his nephew for the ride and moved to a different country many kilometres away. The Voice continued to speak to him and led him continuing to offer the same promise though his wife got much older.

A few hundred years later, an old shepherd was sitting looking after his sheep. He noticed a fire and went to investigate. He found a bush burning and from it the Voice spoke to him. This is your mission if you care to accept it. I want you to return to where you grew up and face your step brother who happens to be the most powerful King in the world. I want you to tell him that he has to let the Israelites go back to their homeland who else! While the man questioned his ability to do the mission, the Voice was quite compelling and gave him little room to move.

A few hundred years later, the Voice comes to a young girl who is wed to be married to an older man. The Voice wants her to bear a baby boy but it will not be fathered by her fiancé but by God himself. This young girl questioned why she was chosen but there was something compelling about this Voice and so she accepted the request .

Thirty years later, some professional fisherman had been out all night fishing. They were not happy as they had caught nothing except a cold! Nothing could be worse than asking a fisherman how they have gone when they have nothing in the boat. The Voice said that they should cast their nets out into deeper water! Who should tell us where to throw our nets? But there was something compelling about this Voice and what the heck they had nothing to lose. They threw the nets over and to their amazement there was so many fish that they had to ask for the nearby boats to help haul them in. The Voice then said to them after the fish were brought in to shore, Follow Me.

A few years later, a man who was lame from birth was again placed at the gates of the Temple to see what alms he could collect. As he watched the crowd he saw two men coming towards

him and they looked like they could be a soft touch. They came and said look at us. They had no money to give him but they could help him to walk again. There was something in their voice that was quite compelling. As if there was another Voice speaking to them. As the men spoke and helped the man up, power was released in his legs and body and he began not just to walk but to leap around like a person with giant springs on his leg.

A couple of thousand years later, today, we have baptised a little girl and the Voice has spoken again. He has said to this little one that she now belongs to God and God will never let her down if she puts her trust and life in His hands. The Voice also spoke to the parents saying that as they live the life of trust in the Voice, the Voice will help them to be good parents and through their walk with the Voice, this little girl will also trust in the Voice.

Christianity is not about rules and regulations but about hearing the Voice of God and following it. It is all about a relationship with the One who loves you: a relationship based on mutual love, trust, belief and faith.

To each of us, the voice comes to speak to us about God's desire to be in relationship with you. For God does not want us to perish but to have a whole and lasting life. This whole and lasting life is called eternal life or salvation.

To each of us, the Voice calls to our deepest need and offers a better way through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

For me the naughtiest thing I did was talk and thrown out of French class in year 9 or maybe it was having a compass fight with Olivia who sat next to me in year 11 and being caught by the Chemistry teacher.

I never did any horrible thing except have fights with my brother in the back yard. And he started them anyway, well most of the time.

But there was a deep need to love and be loved and accepted that somehow was not fulfilled. What I know now, I can fill in the dots of why this was so but at the time of late high school it

was not obvious to the reasons but the feelings were there.

My first visit to a church literally stopped the service when my brother and I brought a laughing machine that went off before the lay preacher had finished. But the people saw the funny side and welcomed me back. One evening as I sat in the service the Voice came to me, not in any loud audible sound, but in a way that I knew it was God and that I felt that God loved me as I am. That was good enough for me and so I decided to join His team and become a follower.

I did not feel that I am the worst sinner out or I needed to go to the front to say something. As I sat in my seat in this little church, I knew that I was loved and I choose to follow the Voice.

For the women and men at Teen Challenge that I visit from time to time, the Voice comes to them offering forgiveness for a bad start in life in their relationships; some poor decisions that they made and getting involved with drugs and alcohol.

For some they are sick and tired of being hurt and bitter about life and the Voice comes to offer healing and the opportunity for a better life.

For some like Lee Strobel it is the reluctance to believe that Jesus really lived, died on the cross and was bodily raised again. When he realized the truth of this historical fact, he began to see the truth of what Jesus said about himself.

In the end as we hearken to the Voice, we realize that we are not as good as we think we are and that we all have flaws in our personality that can trip us up. We decide that the Voice was really right about us. We struggle to sort out our messes. Many times we make things worse. We do need a saviour to rescue us from our messes and ourselves.

For some of you here today, the Voice is calling you into a relationship with Him. You know what is keeping you from saying Yes but The Voice will come softly and invite you to enter in this relationship with the Living God that only brings life now and beyond the grave.

To the parents and grandparents, family friends gathered here today, the Voice is calling you into partnership with Him so that the children and grandchildren around you can hear the Voice and answer the call. The most important gift that you can give is to live out of the Voice of God and show by your words and actions that you do really love and trust the Voice, Jesus.

We are entering a new era where the world is changing and loud voices are screaming at you to believe and trust what they say or else. It will be increasingly harder to stand for what you believe as a Christian. Never before will it be necessary to know the Voice when it calls and be able to discern it amongst all the voices that are yelling at you. Never before in our living memories will we come under more and more scrutiny about who we are and whose we are. Never before will it be important to trust the Voice, believe the voice and have faith in the Voice.

It will be easier to go along with the crowd. It will be harder to stand out from the crowd. Never before will it be necessary to train your child in the Way of the Voice and encourage them to trust in the Voice when they hear it.

Finally the healing of the man at the Gate Beautiful is a tangible example of the power of the Voice that still operates today. The words of Peter Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. As the people gathered around Peter and John, marvelling what God has done, Peter reminds them "Why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if we did this? It is faith in the name of Jesus that has made this man strong".

What we have to offer to others and ourselves is the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In that name there is power to heal, power to transform, power to change, power to live. But we have lost our faith, belief and trust in the power of the name of Jesus. We try it once and if it does not work, we give up and revert to our human ways.

The recurring story of people who are now effective in praying in the powerful name of Jesus is that they had hundreds of failures before they understood how to work with Jesus and pray in His name.

We are too ready to accept our circumstances, our situation as our lot and nothing better can happen for us. We do not know how to fight or persevere for what can be ours in Jesus.

We close ourselves off to the Voice who offers a new way to follow, out of the maze that we find ourselves in. What we find is that our levels of trust, believe and faith are not deep enough, strong enough to follow the Voice out of the maze. For the Voice will ask us to do some strange things to get to where we want to be.

It may mean that the Voice will need to highlight where you may have walked off the path eg where your anxiety and fears have become louder than The Voice's or where you made your own decision not hearkening to the Voice that was trying to tell you not to go there

The challenge is to believe and trust in the power of the name of Jesus as you pray; as you live.

The challenge is to develop our relationship with the Voice and grow in our trust, belief and faith with the Voice.; to live in relationship with the Voice and learn to have a two way conversation about everything. No matter is unimportant.

As you develop that relationship each day, it will become stronger and resilient when the storms of life try to batter us down. But you must place this relationship with Jesus and the ability to hear His voice as a priority in your living.

Erwin McManus , pastor of Mosaic Church, had a son, Aaron, was five or six when he began asking the question, "What does God's voice sound like?" Erwin didn't know how to answer.

A few years later, Aaron went off to his first junior high camp. In the middle of the week, Erwin went up with another pastor at Mosaic to see their kids. Aaron, Erwin learned, had started to assault another kid but had been held back by his friends. He was unrepentant, wanted to leave camp, pulled together his stuff, and shoved it into the car.

Erwin asked him for a last talk with me before we drove away. We sat on two large rocks in the middle of the woods. "Aaron," I asked, "is there any voice inside you telling you what you should do?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"What's the voice telling you?"

"That I should stay and work it out."

"Can you identify that voice?"

"Yes," he said immediately, "It's God." It was the moment I'd waited for.

"Aaron," Erwin said, "do you realize what just happened? You heard God's voice. He spoke to you from within your soul. Forget everything else that's happened. God spoke to you, and you were able to recognize him."

Erwin will never forget Aaron's dug-in response: "Well, I'm still not doing what God said."

Erwin explained to him that that was his choice, but this is what would happen. If he rejected the voice of God coming from deep within and chose to disobey his guidance, his heart would become hardened, and his ears would become dull.

If he continued on this path, there would be a day when he would never again hear the voice of God. There would come a day when he would deny that God even speaks or has ever spoken to him.

But if he treasures God's voice however it comes to him—through the Scriptures, through his conscience—and responds to him with obedience, then his heart would be softened, and his

ears would always be able to hear the whisper of God into his soul.

Aaron chose to stay. If he had chosen differently, he would have begun the path toward nominal discipleship. Perhaps he never would have rejected the faith overtly. He might have even chosen to be a faithful attender at a church and been by everyone else's estimation a good man, but he would no longer be a close Jesus-follower.

This is the choice that we have today. This is the decision that we need to make. Will we listen to the Voice and respond to his invitation to be in relationship with Him? Or will we harden our hearts to his offer of eternal life. Will you teach your children by your life and words to put their trust in Jesus; to have faith in Him? Will you live your life attuned to the Voice; to hearken to it?

Let me close with the life verse that Jonathan and Naomi have selected Emily for her Baptism.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

Walking Free: We have seen God bring healing to people as we pray for them. While some of our clients take a long time to gain their healing, others have found their healing after 3-5 ministries. We have been blessed with Diane helping us on a Tuesday and Tim on Thursdays. They have been anointed by Jesus and bring great insight from God to our client's issues. We have also people who have joined us on Tuesday nights fortnightly to pray for our clients.

Bible Studies: We have had 16 people attending the bible studies on Monday afternoon and Wednesday nights. We are also sharing with the men from Teen Challenge on a Thursday nights. We are exploring prayer and hearing from God.

Finances: We have been blessed by our clients donating for their ministry. We have also had some large donations from individuals that will help us to pay for our insurance that comes in August.

We are looking for more sponsors to support the healing and teaching work of Jesus through Walking Free. No matter how small the donation, we welcome new donors. Remember that each donation to the gift fund is tax deductible. If you would like to become a sponsor, it is a matter of a one off or regular donation to the following:

Walking Free Renewing Ministries Gift Fund

BSB 084-961 ACC 82-215-5845.

Use your name if you would like a tax receipt at the end of the financial year.

Praise God for His provision.

- **Thank God for the healing and restoration He is bringing to our clients.**
- **Pray for more finances to support Walking Free Ministry**

- **Pray for team in Adelaide who pray for the ministry: Margaret, Lesley, Diane, Julie, Valda and Tim.**
- **Please pray for team at Toowoomba: Hal and Debbie, Stephanie, Charmaine.**

Family Life. We have two new additions to our family. Naomi and Jonathan have a 14 week girl Emily Grace. David and Maddie have a little boy , 4 weeks old, Gabriel. We have been

supporting both families with food and baby sitting help. Jess has now been admitted to a graduate diploma course in Cardiology. We (and Naomi) will spend time supporting, proof reading etc as we did for her in Matriculation!!!

Pray for Naomi, Jonathan, Jennifer and Emily; David, Maddy and Elijah and Gabriel; Jess

India: Our friends continue to proclaim the gospel in India. I have been sending my sermons to teach and encourage them and their local pastors.

They report: *Recently one woman who is name Mariyamma (40) was delivered in the name of Jesus !from her leg pains which pains made her much suffer since long time..She praised God much! for her deliverance.(CH)*

We have been praying for a family to get a privilege of sharing Gospel for many years that family is very close to our Church. Recently her daughter was about to give birth but struggling with pains and all the family members were suffering with her, after four days though they are not believers asked Jesus to help.soon after they prayed she gave birth normally .they understood Jesus is true God and invited whole Church to have prayer meeting.yesterday we had prayer meeting at their home and shared Gospel with them. Now we got access to share Gospel with them at any time.Please pray for Ratnamma and her family. She has husband and married two sons and one married daughter and grand sons and grand daughters (Devadas)

Thank God for his presence and power in their ministry in their rural villages. Every person counts for God.

Kenya: Walking Free Kenya church is nearly built. Pastor Isaac reports

. Fixing of electric wires/pipes will commence next week in walls and plastering as we waiting 4th anniversary on 10th july. We shall have a minor/simple lauching/committing the house before the Lord as we waiting major one that will be done by you when you will come. The project has attracted local pastors from other churches who will come and join us in prayer as we celebrate the birth of the church and see the new church building. Celebration will start on 7th and highpick on 10th july.

Pray for the opening of the new church that it may be a witness to the locals of what God can do. Pray that the church will grow now that they have a building.