



**LIFE WITH GOD:
Disruption**

By: Peter Bales
No. 34, June 23, 2024

Last week we talked about the filling of the Holy Spirit. Another way to say this is that God shows up! God shows up and fills us with himself. Sometimes God shows up and it's an interruption! It might even be a disruption because it requires us to change our plans. Let's look at an occasion where God showed up in a surprising way to two different people in Acts. READ Acts 9:1-19.

Saul, who later was renamed Paul, was on a mission to put followers of the Way in jail and prevent the spread of this message. But God had a different idea! God got Saul's attention through a disruption.

- 1. What is so unusual about how God revealed himself to Saul.**
- 2. What is a time that God got your attention in a *big* way?**

Saul becomes the famous missionary, Paul, who ends up writing much of the New Testament and planting many churches. Sometimes we can read about him and feel like we're all supposed to be like Paul. However, we're not Paul! It's helpful to notice the other people in the Bible that God uses—like Ananias. We may see Ananias as a "minor character" in the story, but God knew his name and used him in mighty ways.

- 3. What are ways you can relate to Ananias?**

Ananias is interesting because he isn't mentioned other than in this one chapter in the Bible, yet he played such an important role in bringing the gospel to Saul. He's a great example of doing *life with God* well. First, notice that Ananias is described as simply a "disciple." He's not called an Apostle or even a preacher or elder. This is important, because it helps us see that God can use all of his followers in mighty ways! Ananias was available to God and paying attention.

It's also instructive to notice how Ananias talks to God. He needs some clarity and brings his concerns to God. He wants to make he understands the mission, especially because of who Saul is! But God doesn't rebuke Ananias for having this dialogue. Instead, God answers him! He explains that Saul *is* his chosen instrument. Through this, Ananias begins to see what God sees. Instead of seeing Saul as a "disciple-killer" which was his reputation, he begins to see Saul as a future disciple! We know this because when he walks up to Saul he calls him "brother Saul." What a statement of faith!

- 4. Ananias had a conversation with God. What does this tell us about how we interact with God?**

After the vision, Ananias went to Saul. God even told him what street it was on and said that Saul was expecting him. Ananias was quick to obey. This may not sound like a big deal until we remember who Saul was. He had the authority to persecute disciples of Jesus! Ananias knew that God was going to use Saul, but God didn't tell Ananias what exactly would happen when he went to see him. He trusted God, even though he wasn't sure how it might turn out.

Looking back from our position, 2000 years later, we see what a crucial role Ananias played in the conversion of Saul, which led to the expansion of the early church and even the writing of parts of

the Bible that we are still reading and studying today! But Ananias was *just* a disciple. He was obedient in small—even hidden—ways, not to be mentioned again in the Bible.

This story also displays how God builds his kingdom—through us! Think about it. God didn't *need* Ananias to go to Saul, yet God used Ananias. Over and over we see how God uses his people to accomplish his purposes, even when they don't get it right at first. This is how he designed things. He uses his people to spread the gospel and expand his kingdom.

5. Ananias and Saul may have been unlikely candidates for doing great things in God's kingdom, yet they were chosen. Who are some other people in the Bible who looked like the most unlikely persons that God would use, yet that's exactly what God did?

God interrupted both Saul and Ananias, yet it looked a little different. Saul needed a *big* disruption. God showed up and it looked more like a confrontation. God used a bright light to get Saul's attention and illuminate the fact that Saul was wrong about Jesus. This is what it's like when God shows up sometimes—it exposes truth and lies. It helps us see where we are wrong and how to get back on track.

For Ananias, it was not a confrontation. God's interruption was more like guidance or direction. Ananias was already a disciple—a follower of Jesus. He didn't need to change course, but he did need some guidance to know what God wanted him to do that day. He was doing life with God, and was already in a position to respond with obedience.

Notice that God's disruptions are part of how he pursues us. He desires to lead us and have relationship with us! Jesus described it like this in Luke 15:8-10, "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

6. What does this parable of the lost coin tell us about how God feels about us?

God can show up anytime he wants in our lives. It's not always a "mountain-top" spiritual experience. Instead, it might be while we are just doing the normal stuff that we do every day. Frederick Buechner, a novelist who got saved and became a minister, noted,

"All the absurd little meetings, decisions, inner skirmishes that go to make up our days. It all adds up to very little, and yet it all adds up to very much. Our days are full of nonsense, and yet not, because it is precisely into the nonsense of our days that God speaks to us words of great significance..."¹

7. In what ways have you experienced God "showing up?"

8. What are steps you can take to become more aware that God is already with you and speaking to you?

GOING DEEPER>> READ Luke 15 and reflect on what these stories show you about God's heart.

¹ <https://www.frederickbuechner.com/quote-of-the-day/2022/5/20/the-sound-of-gods-voice>.