

iWitness - The Witness of Ananias

Introduction:

At times, God will call us to places that we do not want to go. Ananias was not the first to be led by the Holy Spirit to do something he did not want to do:

- Jonah did not want to go and preach to the people of Ninevah, his enemies. He fled by sea, but God had a different plan for him. He ended up in the belly of a big fish.
- Moses wanted to stay as far away from Egypt that he could. When God appeared to him in the burning bush, he asked him to send someone else.
- Gideon did not want to stand up against the Midianites. He asked God for multiple signs before he was fully convinced, and that he should go.
- Jeremiah was called to preach to people that did not want to hear. He tried to plead to God that he was too young and inexperienced.
- Simon Peter swore that he would follow Jesus even unto death, but when push came to shove denied him three times. It was only Jesus' forgiveness and mercy that led Peter to become the rock on which the church was established.
- Esther is asked to be the one to stand up to the King for her people. She does not want to go, but is faithful, saying "though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." (Esther 4:16)
- Samuel is asked by God to go anoint David as the new King of Israel. He asks God, "How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

Sometimes, God may ask you to do what you do not want to do. It may not be to anoint a future king or preach words of warning to a nation,

but it certainly will require us to fully trust in God. Perhaps it will be to speak a word of truth in love to a family member or close friend whose actions are causing harm to themselves and others. Maybe it will be to give up on a dream of a career path to follow and serve someplace you never envisioned. It might be to give up a hurt, a hangup, or a habit that is getting in the way of a more fully devoted life with God. Certainly, it will be an invitation to lay down our pride and serve humbly in his name.

In fact, I am convinced that God doesn't call us to do what is easy. The counter intuitive calling of the Gospel is not to do what makes us happy, but to go where Jesus leads us. After all, Jesus instructed us to "take up our cross, and follow him" (Matthew 16:24-26). Jesus is on a rescue mission to go after the lost sheep, to restore and redeem that which has been lost to sin and death. When we follow Jesus, we are invited to partner in this mission. This will most certainly lead us not to seek the comfortable path but rather a life of sacrifice and service.

Read Your Bible

- Acts 9:1-19
- Matthew 16:24-26

Apply God's Word to Your Life:

1. What does it mean to be obedient to God?
2. The Gospel is both a message of comfort and assurance as is a calling to service and sacrifice. Do these contradict? How is that possible?
3. Why do you think Ananias did what he did? What would have happened if he did not?
4. What do you believe Jesus is calling his church to do that is hard in this world?

5. What is Jesus calling you do with your life? What is stopping you?
6. Have you ever run from God like Jonah?
7. What does it mean for you to be obedient to God?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Father, give us the courage to lead where you call us. Help us to believe and to follow. Give us willing hearts and hands to enter the broken places of this world with the good news of your gospel. Stir up in our bellies a desire to go where you call us that is greater than our desire to be comfortable. Show us your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.