

Call to Obedience #457
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God's First Words to Seven Men of the Bible

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Many of us remember the first words that God ever spoke to us. We treasure them to this day. Today, let us single out the seven most influential men in the Bible to find out what God first said to them and see what we can learn. Perhaps if we look at them, we might discover some important pillars of the Christian faith. Following are the names of the seven key figures of the Bible: 1) Adam, 2) Abraham, 3) Moses, 4) John the Baptist, 5) Jesus, 6) Peter and 7) Paul. What do we learn from their first encounters with God?

Adam: *Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat..."* (Gen. 2:15-17 NKJV). Notice that in His first conversation with man, God did not say: "I love you." He did not need to say that because His love was obvious by the 5-star living quarters He had provided for Adam and Eve. What man really needed was for God to lay down the foundation of morality. "This you can do—that you cannot do." With this first instruction, morality was introduced on the face of the earth. We learn from this that all of our dealings with God, all of our relationships with both God and man operate in the framework of a moral universe. That is, they are either right or wrong. They either give life or death. They either add to or subtract from life at their best. So remember as you go through the day, you are not dealing with an indifferent God who does not care what you do, but with a God who in the end will fix your everlasting destiny by the choices you have made during your life. Jesus tells us that in the end we all *...come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation* (John 5:29 NKJV). **Morality matters.** We will call this pillar number one.

Abraham: *Now the LORD had said to Abram, "Get thee out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing* (Gen. 12:1-2 NKJV). With God's first words to

Abraham, we learn the essence of our covenant relationship with God: to enter into and remain in this covenant relationship with Him, we must forsake all—ALL—and follow God (Jesus) in childlike trust. Here Abraham was instructed to leave all of his relatives and to move so far away that for all practical purposes he would be cut off from all their future events for the rest of his life. Yes, leave family and country, leave all that he was familiar and comfortable with, even to the point of having to learn a new language. Of course, the main point here is not necessarily a physical forsaking but an inner forsaking. Jesus repeated it: *For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother* (Matt. 12:50 NKJV). And what did Abraham get in return for all of this? The answer is in the same text: *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you... And you shall be a blessing.* You never lose by going with God. Never! **There is no life with God outside of the covenant relationship.** We will call this pillar number two.

Moses: *So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground”* (Ex. 3:4-5 NKJV). These are God’s first words to Moses. Here, God clearly conveys to us that if we want to meet with Him, we can only do so on the ground of holiness. We also hear the echo of His voice throughout Scripture: *Be holy, for I am holy.* We cannot have fellowship with God except that we be holy. Holiness requires action on our part; it requires putting off the old man with its affections and lusts; and it requires a new lifestyle, new habits, new priorities and a new circle of friends—in fact, a total reversal of direction. The popular idea that we can be holy by claiming to be so because of the work of Christ, without a change of direction in our lives, is of no more value than a lake without water. Take off your shoes. Holiness is God’s most prominent attribute and is mentioned 600 times in the Bible. Holiness is at the heart of morality. **Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.** We will call this pillar number three.

John the Baptist: Jesus called this John the greatest man born of women. We do not know Jesus’ first words to him so we shall simply focus on John’s most important words concerning Jesus: *He must increase, but I must decrease* (John 3:30 NKJV). Embedded in these words, we find the sum and substance of victorious Christian living, of fruitfulness in our walk with God. This is indeed the principal law of spiritual physics. As we go down in humility, our spiritual branches spring upward. As we decrease, there is no room left for

the flesh to get its way. As we decrease, God becomes all in all to us. As we decrease, the kingdom of God will operate in us and reveal the fruits of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit on a perpetual basis. It was by John decreasing and not by human efforts or gimmicks that brought all people out of Judea and Jerusalem seeking repentance. **If we do the decreasing, God will do the increasing.** We will call this pillar number four.

Jesus: *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:16-17 NKJV). We do not know any of the communications between God the Father and Jesus His Son prior to the baptism of Jesus. But here are God's first public words in reference to Jesus: *This is My beloved Son*. First, this is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and immediately God establishes the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity simply means that we have one God in three persons: a) God the Father speaking from above; b) God the Son standing in the water; and c) God the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Jesus. Each of the three persons forming the Godhead has free will, intelligence and personality. Also, each functions independently and yet at the same time is complementary to the others, in harmony with the others and completing the others. Secondly, at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, God the Father, by declaring that Jesus is His Son, establishes His equality with the Father. Jesus said later: *...He who has seen Me has seen the Father...* (John 14:9 NKJV). Thirdly, Jesus' messiahship is revealed here. He is the only Savior and we need to hear Him because: **...there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved** (Acts 4:12 NKJV). We will call this pillar number five.

Peter: *Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Matt. 4:19 NKJV). In this simple call to Peter and Andrew, Jesus calls all of us to follow Him. You cannot follow two masters, nor three, nor four at the same time. You can **only** follow one at a time. Jesus completed His first words to Peter and Andrew by saying: *...I will make you fishers of men*. As the first part of His instruction to Peter and Andrew is for all of us, so likewise is the second part of the sentence. This means that Peter had to leave all that he counted dear in his life and totally redirect his priorities. He had to leave his boat, his nets, his fishing business, the sea he had learned to love and his way of earning a living—all of this in order to follow Jesus and become a fisher of

men. **We learn from this that following and witnessing always go together.** We will call this pillar number six.

Paul: *As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do? Then the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do (Acts 9:3-6 NKJV).* Here we have God's first encounter with Paul, the greatest theologian of all time (and also one of the least-loved pastors on the planet, though now we all love him). In order for God to get the attention of this great Jewish theologian who was trained under the famous teacher Gamaliel, He had to knock him off his high horse. Theologians sometimes have a hard time in the art of hearing. Their heads are so full of stuff that they have difficulty hearing other voices than those of their own kind. For example, most of the scribes and Pharisees could not hear Jesus. They mistakenly judged Him to be a false prophet and had Him killed. Jesus had to help this "somebody" named Saul of Tarsus to become a "nobody" so that He could teach him to hear. He had to blind him, get him off his horse and onto his knees, and keep him there the rest of his life. Only then did Saul ask: *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"* I have never heard of a more dramatic conversion than this. The message to Saul is essentially the same as that given by God to every one of the other six men mentioned above: **Follow me. I am in charge now. Bury your choices and by following Mine, you will become one of the happiest persons possible in this troubled world.**

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