

Coach House Church

BEACONS

HAVING A VOICE

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One of the important aspects of working with children and young people is in encouraging and developing their skills in using their voice. By this, I mean in having the ability and confidence to speak up when they need to. This may be to report a fault, rather than putting up with second rate equipment. It may be to highlight a difficulty they have with learning or understanding. It may be as simple as feeling at ease with joining in a conversation with friends.

The children and young people I work with have some degree of deafness so communication is often a challenge. Not being able to express your own thoughts and feelings can have a detrimental effect on all aspects of your life: mental, social, emotional and physical. Can you imagine not being able to ask for something as basic as a drink or to tell some exciting news because you don't have the means to connect with those around you?

Even if you can speak eloquently and can access an extensive vocabulary, it's not always easy to convey your own thoughts, ideas and feelings to others. Sometimes it is easier to stay quiet and passive but there comes a point when a message has to be said.

In the Old Testament, God often spoke to people through the voice of the prophets. I must admit I feel sorry for the prophets and think what a tough job they had. When you read about them, they are ignored many times, and as a consequence were often isolated and solitary figures.

Prophets often felt alone in using their voice to express God's voice. For example, Jeremiah spent 40 years delivering God's message to Judah, warning them to change from their wicked ways and to put their trust in God. He had the unenviable task of telling them they were going to face disaster and ruin if they didn't change. To top it all off, over the years, he was attacked, put in

stocks, ridiculed, abandoned by his family who plotted to kill him, thrown in jail and above not listened to. If ever you're having a bad day, just compare it to one of Jeremiah's, and yours will be like a walk in the park.

Yet, Jeremiah's and therefore God's message wasn't just doom and gloom. The point of the message was to provide an opportunity for repentance and restoration. One of the verses in Jeremiah is very well known. Jeremiah 29:11 says:

11 For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

And later in Jeremiah 33: 6-9 God lays out his promise for the people of Israel. Read it yourself to see how uplifting it is, that God never gives up on us, and God always has a plan for restoration.

Throughout the Psalms we hear the voice of people calling out to God in praise and worship, in distress and hurt, in awe and wonder, expressing their deepest emotions.

It's important to be truthful and honest with God and Psalm 50:15 encourages this: Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.

In Matthew 6, Jesus said – 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

We are expected to call out. God wants us to communicate with him. It shows our dependence on him and our understanding of him as our creator and saviour. However, we don't have to use an audible voice. We don't have to be sitting, bowing or kneeling. We don't have to be in a particular church building. Our conversation with God can be silent, internalised and private or it can be outspoken and exuberant. What is important is the content not the delivery.

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 18:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed[a] thus: 'God, I thank

you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

The tax collector spoke from the heart, his true feelings, recognising his need of God and how unworthy he felt; simple words with great impact and with a promise from Jesus that he would be lifted up by God.

Matthew 5:8 says "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. If we have the right intention, are genuine in wanting to do the right thing, not pretending to be someone we're not then we will be blessed by God. We don't even need to use fancy words or even to understand everything written in the whole bible.

There are times when we don't even know what to say to God in our prayers, in our conversations. But that's not a problem either as it says in

Romans 8:

26the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

So, use your voice, audible or internally because God sees our heart, our true self. Don't worry if the words don't come out in the right order, if you struggle to express yourself because you can ask God through his Holy Spirit to help you.

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus tells us that we should be like little children. He doesn't mean immature, he means honestly, simply, not in a complicated way, showing how we feel, saying 'it as it is'.

And why do we use this voice? To build on the relationship with God our father who provided Jesus as the example of how to live and act with others, as the perfect sacrifice which allows us to enter into God's Holy presence so we can

talk to him and feel his support and encouragement in everyday life. Why struggle alone when help is nearby.

James 4:8 encourages us to Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
Amen



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