Dear Class Member,  
We just passed the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), which has brought opportunity, access and assistance to millions of people. For our next class, we will use this milestone to consider what the ADA has taught us, for our public life and for our church life, and how it has reinforced some biblical views.



**Americans With Disabilities Act Turns 30  
*The Wired Word* for the Week of August 9, 2020**

**In the News**

July 26 marked the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed by President George H. W. Bush on that date in 1990. The act banned discrimination against people with many types of disabilities and required reasonable accommodations and accessibility in schools, employment, transportation, public places, communications and access to state and local government programs and services.

When the ADA became law,*The New York Times*described it as "the most sweeping anti-discrimination measure since the Civil Rights Act of 1964." And it does, in fact, afford similar protections against discrimination of Americans with disabilities to those the Civil Rights Act of 1964 affords against discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin and other characteristics.

The ADA did not come into being easily, but was the culmination of activism and struggle by people with disabilities to provide opportunities long denied. Many public places and programs were simply not designed to provide access to people who needed special accommodations.

As an example, when Judy Heumann was growing up in the 1950s, the New York City school system barred her from attending school and instead gave her only two and a half hours a week of home instruction because she was in a wheelchair as a result of polio. School administrators were unwilling to make the necessary changes to accommodate her in a classroom.

Today, thanks to the ADA, no child can legally be denied schooling because of a disability. Public spaces and workplaces constructed since the act's passage are required to be built to be accessible to people with disabilities. And for those without the necessary mobilities to use the public spaces, the ADA calls for other accommodations.

The ADA did not become law without opposition along the way. Some business organizations said the costs of making the changes would have a disastrous effect on small businesses struggling to survive.

Opposition to the proposed act from some religious groups resulted in churches being excluded from the mandate to make their buildings accessible. Some religious groups maintained that being required to make structural changes to their properties was a violation of religious liberty and an improper intrusion of the federal government. Thus, the ADA does not apply to religious organizations and entities controlled by religious organizations. Many houses of worship have  voluntarily made their properties accessible, however.

On September 25, 2008, President George W. Bush signed the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) into law. The amendment broadened the definition of "disability," thereby extending the ADA's protections to a greater number of people.

Though some people have decried the expansion of what counts as a disability, others say the ADA needs to be further broadened to address barriers imposed by the digital age, and still others call for employment protections for people with disabilities during events such as the current pandemic.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[A More Accessible World. *The New York Times*](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/24/briefing/china-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-ufo-your-friday-briefing.html)[Americans With Disabilities Act. *U.S. Department of Labor*](https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/ada)[Amid Covid-19, the Americans With Disabilities Act Turns 30. It Needs to Be Updated. *Los Angeles Times*](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-07-25/ada-30-update-covid19-americans-with-disabilities-act)[Did the Americans With Disabilities Act Hurt Some People With Disabilities? *Newsweek*](https://www.newsweek.com/did-americans-disabilities-act-hurt-some-people-disabilities-71541)

**The Big Questions**

1. Do you, or does anyone you know, benefit personally from the ADA access requirements? Have you or anyone you know been harmed or unreasonably imposed on by any ADA rules or rulings? How would their/your daily life be different if the ADA rules did not exist?

2. What priority do you think governments should place on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities during a pandemic? In your reply, distinguish between a government doing something *itself*, and a government compelling others to do something.

3. Do you think it is right that houses of worship are not required to be accessible to persons with disabilities? Explain your answer. What does the statement "we have no one here who needs handicap access" mean for the future of your church?

4. Some reports say that one in four members of every parish has a physical or non-physical disability (as defined by the ADA). Do you know who these people are in your church? Is there anything about your building setup that keeps them from participating in your church? Are there unspoken attitudes among attendees that might discourage a person with a disability from attending? What does your church do intentionally to include people with disabilities and/or their families?

5. What do you think God wants people who have no apparent disabilities to learn from the presence among us of people with disabilities?

**Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Leviticus 19:14 (CEB)***You must not insult a deaf person or put some obstacle in front of a blind person that would cause them to trip. Instead, fear your God; I am the LORD.* (For context, read 19:9-18.)

Leviticus 19:9-18 was part of the "holiness code" of ancient Israel, the description of what it meant for all persons to live a holy life, a description that reaches its high point in 19:18 with the summarizing statement, "you must love your neighbor as yourself."

Verse 19:14, quoted above, not only prohibited ridiculing persons with these two physical disabilities, but was also concerned with not allowing such persons to be taken advantage of. And note that the way one treated such persons was related to how one honored ("feared") one's God.

**Question:** Why do you think the quoted verse ends with "I am the LORD"?

**Matthew 21:14-15***The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry ...* (For context, read 21:12-17.)

These verses are "Part 2" of the incident where Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and animal sellers in the temple, so it's not surprising that the chief priests and scribes were already angry at him. Still, we might have expected that the sight of Jesus subsequently curing "the blind and the lame" would have awakened their empathy for the afflicted.

But no. They became angry! Granted, their anger was also driven by Jesus' growing popularity, so much so that children were praising him, but these religious leaders -- who above all should have been concerned about the well-being of their people -- could not spare a drop of gladness that some people were being freed of their physical disabilities.

If asked about their hardheartedness, we can imagine them saying something like, "It's not the healings we object to; it's the principle of the thing!"

**Questions:**When seeking a parking place in the lot of a busy store, what did you feel when finding that the only open spot was reserved for persons with an official handicap placard or plate? Answer this question from the perspective of a person with no mobility disabilities. Then answer it from the perspective of a person with mobility disabilities. If you've seen a person park in a handicap slot who didn't appear disabled, how did you feel? Might they have disabilities that are not immediately obvious? Have you ever been tempted to cheat with a handicap placard? How did you justify the desire or overcome the temptation?

**John 5:2-7 (NIV)**  
*Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie -- the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."* (For context, read 5:1-9.)

The pool by Jerusalem's Sheep Gate was supposed to have healing powers, but only at certain miraculous moments. (Verses 3b-4, which attribute the stirring of the waters to the activity of an angel of the Lord and say that only the first one into the pool at such moments was healed, do not appear in the older Greek manuscripts of John. In both the NIV and the NRSV, as well as in several other Bible translations, verses 3b-4 are relegated to footnotes. The information in them, however, does seem pertinent to the story.)

In any case, at that pool, Jesus comes across a sick man who has lain beside it for 38 years while hoping for the opportunity to enter the pool at the right time and be healed. When Jesus asks the man if he wants to be healed, the man explains that he has no one to help him into the pool, and apparently, movement under his own power is so slow that others always get into the pool ahead of him.

This man's response should not be viewed as an excuse. It is a clear statement about the shortage of support services in that time for people with disabilities. We could ask where this man's parents were, but if he had lain at the pool for 38 years, then he had to be at least that old, and quite possibly his parents were deceased. At minimum, they may have been at work trying to make a living after delivering him poolside each morning.

Jesus, of course, overcame all of that, and healed the man, but not everyone has the opportunity for a miraculous healing.

**Questions:** Are the support services for persons with disabilities in your community adequate? How do you know? Are the support services for persons who care for disabled individuals in your community adequate? How do you know? Who pays for them? Who decides who should receive the services? Who decides who is to pay for the support services?

**Luke 17:12-13**  
… *Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"* (For context, read 17:11-19.)

In terms of our topic, the key words in the verses above are "keeping their distance." This comes from the account of Jesus healing 10 individuals who had leprosy. In that time, leprosy was an untreatable, contagious illness. The only way the people knew how to deal with it all was by isolating its victims from the rest of the populace. The Old Testament laws even had a provision about lepers: "The person who has the leprous disease shall ... remain unclean as long as he has the disease ... He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Leviticus 13:45-46).

Thus, people infected with this terrible disease were outcasts. They could live in colonies with others like themselves, but they had to steer clear of everybody else. They were distanced physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Lepers sometimes congregated near village entrances to beg for alms, but they dared not get too close. That's where these 10 miserable, infected persons were when Jesus entered a certain village. Having heard of his reputation as a healer, they cried out to him for mercy, but in keeping with the policy, they kept their distance while doing so.

Luke does not tell us how physically close Jesus came to the 10, but we do know that on another occasion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched a leper to heal him (Matthew 8:1-3). But what's more important here is not how near he came to these 10 physically, but that he allowed himself to feel their misery and then reached across the social distance to address them as fellow human beings, not as outcasts.

**Questions:** In what ways, if any, has the current experience of being socially distanced enhanced your understanding of the plight of the lepers in this story? How do you think persons with disabilities prior to the ADA felt about the barriers that prevented or made it difficult for them to participate in education, employment, shopping, social activities and other public activities?

**For Further Discussion**

1. Comment on this: The apostle Paul had what he called a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7), which some think was a weak vision issue. Yet his "disability" didn't prevent him from having a very full life and ministry. We shouldn't assume that persons with disabilities are people only with needs. They are also people with talents and gifts to benefit others.

2. Thinking about what churches might do to accommodate persons with disabilities, respond to this, from TWW team member Bill Tammeus: "My stepson Chris is a special-needs adult who uses a wheelchair. Until my wife pushed for it, there were no cut-out shorter rows for Chris to sit in his wheelchair and not block an aisle."

            Tammeus also said, "If church members with disabilities have a legal guardian, that information should be in the church's database, whether electronic, paper or memory. That's the person to contact to assess needs in this Covid time, especially in helping the person have access to streaming worship services, etc.

            "Thus, my bride picked up her special-needs adult son Chris yesterday morning from his group home and brought him to our house so he could watch worship on Zoom and see his friends. We aren't yet allowed to be inside his group home because of the virus but we are able now to bring him to our house. Marcia is Chris' legal guardian."

3. In John 9:2, Jesus' disciples, upon seeing a man blind from birth, asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" What new understanding of disability did Jesus promote in his response in verse 3? What new understanding of disability does ADA promote?

4. If your church has healing services, and you pray for a person with a disability, is there healing only if the disability is removed? If so, what is the theology behind this and do you agree with it?

5. Some persons with disabilities say that "a ramp alone does not make a church building accessible." Why do you think a person might say that?

6. Think about this: In mid-2002, *Wired* magazine ran an article about eugenics, which is  a set of beliefs and practices using science aiming to improve the human race and correct defects through genetics. The following issue of the magazine included a letter to the editor responding to the article. It was from a man who had a 17-year-old son with Angelman syndrome, a birth defect that includes severe developmental delays and intellectual disability. It's marked by speech impairment, trembling limbs and unique behavior with inappropriate happy demeanor and excitability. There are lots of other problems associated with it as well, and its victims require assistance with almost all activities of daily life.

            Here's what this father wrote: "Had we known of his condition prior to his birth, I have no doubt we would have chosen abortion. If new technology suddenly allowed us to 'correct' his genetic malformation, I am much less sure we would employ it. ... Our lives ... are changed. Because he requires more care, we have learned patience. Because he is different, we have learned tolerance and compassion. Because he has a great sense of humor, we have learned to laugh at ourselves."

7. Consider this: Theologian Jurgen Moltmann says that a church without disabled people in it is itself disabled: "Church congregations become communities when they themselves accept their disabled members, as far as they can. … the community of the disabled and the non-disabled ... [is] a mark of the true church."

8. A TWW consultant writes: Our congregation’s choir rehearsed and sang from the balcony, which could only be accessed by stairs. We preferred not to be on display when singing, so that our appearance would not detract from the anthem’s message. We were all pretty firm about that. A woman who was wheelchair bound joined our congregation, and expressed regret that she couldn’t sing in the choir since she couldn’t get up the stairs. When we found that out, the choir immediately decided to practice and sing in the main sanctuary. There was no dissension or discussion: Things had changed, and we adapted. In one way of looking at it, the needs of the one outweighed the desires of the many.

**Responding to the News**

This is a good time to do an audit of how your church seeks to be welcoming to persons with disabilities. Bear in mind what a broad spectrum of (dis)abilities there is. They include:

* mobility limitations (wheelchair use, etc.)
* blindness, visual impairment (large-print bulletins, etc.; may include some older members with declining vision)
* deafness, hearing impaired (may include some of our older members who have lost some hearing ability)
* autism spectrum conditions (wide range of abilities)
* intellectual and developmental disabilities (wide range)
* mental illness (might be debated whether this should be included under "disability" or not)

Other types of disabilities could possibly be included as well, but the point is that making plans to be accessible to "people with disabilities" should include the understanding that not all such persons can be served under one strategy.

**Prayer**

O God, sensitize us to the humanity of the persons with disability in our midst. Let us not make them "invisible." Help us to be genuinely supportive as well of those who provide daily care to others. Enable us, like Jesus, to bridge the distance that keeps us from seeing the struggles of those in need around us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Dear Class Member,  
For our next class, we will consider an idea raised by the book When God Talks Back. As might be expected from its title, the book explores how Christians perceive what they believe to be God's responses to their prayers. We will explore that as well, related to God's responses to our prayers.

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**Book Explores How Christians Perceive God's Voice**  
**The Wired Word for the Week of August 9, 2020**

**In the News**

Do you believe that when you speak to God he not only hears but answers you? If you do, you are in the company of millions of Christians -- and, contrary to what some non-Christians may claim, not just those on some lunatic fringe of the faith, but well-adjusted, mainstream followers of Jesus.

For many, and probably most, Christians, praying about the issues of one's own life as well as the needs of one's friends, family and fellow believers is standard practice. The fact that many of those who pray also believe God responds to those prayers got the attention of Tanya Luhrmann, an anthropologist from Stanford University. She decided to explore this phenomenon by attending churches belonging to the Vineyard movement, a confederation of congregations grown from the charismatic Christianity of 1960s America.

Luhrmann treats the Vineyardites as representative of "evangelical" Christianity, but we think what she found among that group applies more widely than that. Evangelicals are present in virtually every Christian denomination, and many Christians who wouldn't classify themselves as evangelical nonetheless pray and seek responses from God.

In her discussions with Vineyard Christians, Luhrmann found that many speak to God in highly familiar ways and believe they can discern God's answers. In other words, after they talked to God, they expected God to speak back.

But in what form? Luhrmann identified three ways:

First, people said God speaks back through circumstances. For example, you've thought about participating in a mission, and a few days later, you meet a stranger in church who's organizing a mission trip, and you conclude that God wants you to go.

Second, people said God speaks back through the Bible. For example, you are invited to be on your church's prayer team and initially say no. But later you read in Scripture about elders praying for the church, and you understand it as God telling you to join.

Third, people said God speaks to them in their minds. Explaining this in Psychology Today, Luhrmann wrote, "People talked about developing 'discernment,' about learning to pick out which thoughts came from God and which from themselves. Thoughts that came from God were ones that you hadn't been thinking about; thoughts that gave you peace; thoughts that seemed consonant with God's nature. 'We do not expect,' the pastor explained, 'that God would want someone to cut themselves, or tell them to jump off a bridge. That is not God.'"

Luhrmann is not a believer and tries to put this in secular vocabulary that make sense to her, using terms such as "therapy" and "imagination." She says that in the realm of discernment, God becomes a "therapist" who listens to the pray-er's deepest concerns, fears and worries. She concluded that the "therapy" seems to work, for those who spoke to God about their personal issues often said that in response, God's love felt very real to them. Some said they also felt less lonely and less stressed.

Writing elsewhere, Luhrmann said, "What I found so striking as an anthropologist is that prayer changed people, not so much morally or emotionally, although prayer might change people in these ways, but in their capacity to imagine. Prayer changed the way people used their imagination and it changed the quality of their imagination, so that what they imagined felt more real to them. They became able to feel God beside them as they walked. They experienced God as talking back. They needed to use a new 'theory of mind' to do this -- they needed to be taught that what happened in their imaginations could be real. But when they practiced taking what they imagined seriously, they began to feel that they had evidence that God was real and responding to them."

Though Luhrmann is not a religious person, she stated that her intention with her research was neither to support nor to undermine claims evangelical Christians make about communicating with God, but rather to show that such claims do not spring from ignorance or from a mere desire to believe the world is not a matter of chance.

She also said that what she found especially striking in her research is that prayer actually changed people, "not so much morally or emotionally ... but in their capacity to imagine … so that what they imagined felt more real to them. … They experienced God as talking back."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[That Voice Sounds Familiar. The Wall Street Journal](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303816504577314063168857308.html) (subscription required for access)  
[When God Becomes a Therapist. Psychology Today](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/when-god-talks-back/201204/when-god-becomes-therapist)  
[When God Talks Back. Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tanya-luhrmann/when-god-talks-back_b_1373277.html)

**The Big Questions**

1. Do you hear back from God when you pray? If so, in what ways? If not, how does the absence of a reply figure into your ongoing faith?

2. What role, if any, does imagination play in your prayer life? How are you defining imagination? Are you using the term in the same way that Luhrmann is, or is there a difference? Explain.

3. Can you be a Christian without praying? Explain your answer.

4. Do you ever think of God as a therapist? Do you go to God about your worries, concerns, fears, anxieties? If so, what happens when you do?

5. Luhrmann examines the idea of talking to God and his speaking back using psychoanalytical and sociological explanations, but not theological ones. Can prayer, spiritual discernment and the voice of God be wholly understood apart from theology (the study of the nature of God)? Why or why not?

**Confronting the News with Scripture**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Genesis 18:32-33**  
Then [Abraham] said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.' [The Lord] answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place. (For context, read 18:1, 16-33.)

Genesis 18:16-33 tells of Abraham learning that God intended to destroy the town of Sodom. Abraham then has an extended conversation with God in which he poses scenarios with varying numbers of righteous persons found in Sodom and asks God if, for the sake of those persons, God would spare the city. (In the end, no righteous persons are actually found in the city and it, along with the town of Gomorrah, is destroyed.)

For our purposes in this lesson, we note that Abraham apparently could hear the voice of God so plainly that an actual conversation between them takes place. Genesis 18:1 says that "the LORD appeared to Abraham" (italics added), in the form of one of three men, and verses 22-23 say Abraham "remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham came near and said ..."

**Questions:** What would you think about someone today who claimed to be having actual conversations with God? Do you think the kind of verbal exchange Abraham had with God was a special kind of communication granted to Abraham because of his crucial role in God's covenant? What forms does God use today to speak to us? From Scriptures like these, is God presented as a deity who encourages conversation? How does this sort of petitionary prayer compare to the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane -- "not my will, but yours"?

**1 Samuel 3:1**  
… The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. (For context, read 3:1-18.)

This verse is telling us that in the period (perhaps years long) leading up to Samuel's divine call, God rarely spoke to anyone in Israel. If you read the later chapters of Judges, which describe that period, and notice how far the tribes of Israel often were from living God's covenant, it's not surprising. But it's worth considering whether God was not speaking or people were not listening. In the case of young Samuel, however, God takes the initiative, and continues speaking until Samuel, with some help from Eli, understands that it is indeed God's voice.

**Questions:**Is communication with God always from his initiative? Would he speak to us even if we didn't pray? When has God used some form of repetition to get your attention?

**Isaiah 55:6**  
Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near … (For context, read 55:6-9.)

The expressions, "while he may be found" and "while he is near," raise the question about whether God is nearer at some times than at others. The overall testimony of scripture is that God is never far from any one of us.

At the same time, however, God is not a servant of humankind, available at our beck and call. In fact, the prophets knew that there was an immediacy to God's call at certain distinct times. When the prophets said, "Thus says the LORD ...," they meant "God is speaking right now, so right now is the time to respond." They understood that God controls the lines of approach, and that there are events in the tides of our lives that make us suddenly aware that God has opened those approaches.

Those times especially call for response. This does not contradict our belief that God is always with us, but it recognizes that we can miss the blessing and help of God by not responding in those times when we are sharply aware of his call.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul alluded to this truth when he wrote to the Corinthians, "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

**Questions:** What sorts of things tell you the "lines of approach" to God are open for your immediate response? Do you experience dry spells where it seems hard to talk to God or where your prayers seem to go nowhere? How do you get a conversation going again with God?

**John 5:37-38**  
And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. (For context, read 5:30-38.)

Jesus spoke these words to an audience that was skeptical about him. They wanted some proof of Jesus' identity as the Son of God, and Jesus says that the Father has testified on his behalf. The skeptics, however, have not heard the voice of God in this matter because of their unbelief.

In other words, belief in Christ opens the way for one to hear God speak.

**Questions:** Does that mean that not believing in Christ renders one unable to hear God? Explain your answer. Does an unbeliever hear God and become a believer, or does God convert the unbeliever, who can then hear and respond to God?

**Acts 11:7**  
I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." (For context, read 11:1-18.)

The apostle Peter made this statement to the church at Jerusalem while describing his vision in which God taught him that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews (see Acts 10:1-35). Peter says it was "a voice," but clearly he recognizes that the whole vision was from God.

**Questions:**How does God use "vision" with Christians today.? Peter's vision pushed Peter and, as he told it to others, his fellow believers as well, when it came to definitions of clean and unclean. God challenged Peter three times with the vision to widen his boundaries and change his definition of who is in and who is out. How are we challenged today as individuals and as God’s people?

 Is God’s persistence necessary because of our own reluctance to accept a challenge? Shouldn't Peter -- shouldn't we -- respond affirmatively immediately? How do we know if the perceived challenge is from God and not from Satan or from the popular culture? In other words, how do we know if the challenge is God's will or if it's opposed to God's will?

**For Further Discussion**

 . Respond to this comment from author Herman Wouk (Wouk is Jewish, and prayer is a regular part of Jewish worship and practice): "If you believe in fatality, prayer is nothing. If you believe in God, the prayer of a [person] is an event; not necessarily a decisive event … but a new element in a situation, like a birth."

2. Back in the sixth century there was a monk by the name of John Climatus who said that prayer, as "a dialog and union with God," has the effect of "[holding] the world together." That's a way of saying that the very act of praying, quite apart from what is said in the prayer, is a counterpunch to the things that knock us down. Prayer has the effect of holding the world together -- of holding our personal world together, too. Does this definition fit your experience of prayer? Why or why not?

3. E. Stanley Jones, who for years was a missionary in India, tells about his early career decision. He had given his life to Christ at 17, and at 23, he was asked by a college president to teach at the college. The president said to him, "It is the will of the student body, the will of the townspeople, the will of the faculty, and we believe it is the will of God for you to teach in this college." But at the same time, Jones had a letter from a friend that said, "I believe it is the will of God for you to go into evangelistic work here in America." He also received a letter from his denomination's board of missions saying, "It is our will to send you to India." And at the same time, he had the notion that God's will for him was to go as a missionary to Africa. He describes this as a "traffic jam of wills." In the end, Jones went to India. How do you pick out God's voice when there is a traffic jam of wills? In what ways might it be God's will for different people to have opposing views of God's will regarding the same situation?

4. Does God sometimes "speak" through what he doesn't say? Consider the following from a TWW team member before answering: "My mother was a missionary to children in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s when she met my father, a Czech national youth evangelist. They came to love each other, and when my mother was in danger of expulsion by the atheistic Communist government, my father proposed. On the way to the courthouse where they were to say their vows, they prayed: 'God, if it is not your will that we proceed with this wedding, do whatever is necessary to prevent it; if it is your will that we marry, let nothing interfere to stop it.' My existence and that of my five siblings tells you how God answered that prayer."

5. Are there occasions when you choose not to pray, not to talk to God? Why? Are you reacting to circumstances or to God? What did you perceive God's response to be when you refused to talk?

**Responding to the News**

This is a good time to consider what you do to listen for God. How can you listen for God's voice more intentionally?

**Closing Prayer**

O God, help us to be able to distinguish your voice from the clamor of our daily lives. And hearing you, make us ready to respond. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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