

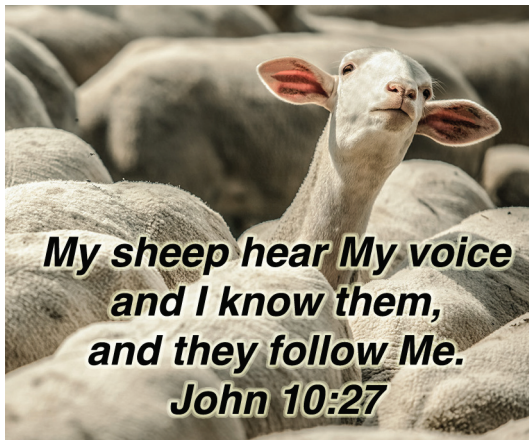
The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the "landscape" we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we're learning and doing.

ElderTalk: *God's sheep hear His voice*

JADAÉ FOX

"I don't want you to take this the wrong way but...what do you mean you can hear the voice of God?"



Original photo by Hans Pollner (<http://hans-pollner.de>)

This is a question that has been asked of me more than once. Recently, it was asked when I explained to...let's call her "Sally"... where Melissa and I got the name Arrow for our daughter.

I was praying one morning. "Lord, would You please convince Melissa that four kids are enough?" What I heard in my spirit was, "You will name your child Arrow." A week later, Melissa told me she was pregnant. I then shared with her what I had heard from the Lord (that the name was to be Arrow). She smiled saying, "I was already thinking about that name!"

About three months later while praying, I asked the Lord, "Did I hear You right? I want to know for sure that we are to name this child Arrow." That same day a friend called asking where they might buy a toy bow and arrow. I was so excited. God spoke to me through another person and confirmed what He had said.

The most important step in hearing God speak is to trust Jesus and His finished work on the cross. When we do, we have His Holy Spirit living inside of us (I Corinthians 3:16). All who have received Jesus and believed in His name are children of God. (John 1:12) John 10:22 says, "My sheep hear My voice." In John 10, Jesus uses symbolism to describe His relationship with believers. A shepherd will practice calling out to his sheep so that they know what his voice sounds like. The longer the sheep know the shepherd and the longer the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, the more confident and willing to respond to his voice the sheep will become.

It is important not to put God in a box. God is God and He will speak in many different ways. The key is learning what the voice sounds like. Jesus calls believers sheep who know His voice. This is a picture to help us understand. We are not actual sheep and we should not assume that the primary or only way that God speaks is through an audible voice.

God speaks through His creation, (Rom. 1:20) through visions, dreams, and an audible voice. (I Sam. 3:1-10). God speaks through other believers (or unbelievers) to give a word of confirmation or encouragement or even conviction of sin at the right time. In Numbers 22:28 God speaks through a donkey to rebuke a disobedient prophet. God can speak through our circumstances in the music we hear on the radio or even the TV program we are watching. But the most profound way that God speaks is through His Holy Word. (II Timothy 3:15, II Peter 1:16-22)

When we hear the Lord speak, it is important to compare it to God's written Word. God's voice will never add to, circumvent, override or contradict what God's Word says. So, if you want to hear God speak, you need to read and know His Word. We are told to weigh what is said (I Cor. 14:29) when another brings a word as from God. This is because try as we might, we do not always hear God correctly. So, it calls for humility of the ones sharing what they are hearing from God. Don't be afraid of going to another believer to test what you are hearing. (I Thes. 5:21)

We want to be aware that there are false prophets who claim to hear from God but in fact are hearing from evil spirits. This is why we are told to test the spirits. (2 Cor. 11:14, I John 4:1-4) For this reason we want to be careful what books we read and what teaching we listen to. Always test and weigh it against Scripture. There is absolutely no higher authority than the Word of God. The best sounding truth with a bit of lie in it is still a lie.

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“I don’t want you to take this the wrong way, but...what do you mean that you can hear the voice of God?” (continued from page 1.)

I had the privilege of sharing with “Sally” several examples of hearing the Lord’s voice. Here’s one of them. Once, when I was driving Josiah to an appointment, he suddenly said. *“Be careful, Daddy!”* Without thinking, I put my foot on the brake. Just then, the car ahead of me came to a very sudden and unexpected stop. The Lord spared us from an accident! God had spoken through a child.

I gave some guidance to “Sally” on how I hear God’s voice and she went away excited to practice hearing His voice. For me, learning to hear that voice requires listening for it. I ask Him to speak to me. *“Lord, is that You I am hearing?”* Many times I have not heard Him clearly. Getting it wrong is a part of the process of learning to hear God correctly. Like any skill, it takes practice. For me, God’s voice is like a thought that seems to pop in my head. The question I must ask is, *“Is this my thought, the Enemy, or the voice of the Lord?”*

JUNE 2019

- 1** Men’s Prayer Breakfast at McDonald’s on Hanley Rd. 9:00 am.
- 2** Jon Vega preaching. The series on Colossians continues.
- 9** Pentecost Sunday. Robert Key preaching from Acts 2. 🍷🍷 Circle Church leaders meet at church from 7:00-8:00 pm.
- 16** Father’s Day. Jon Vega preaching. Topic T.B.A.
- 20** Deadline for *TrailNotes* submissions.
- 23** Bob Gardner preaching. Topic T.B.A. 🍷🍷
- 23-28** Youth for Christ renting the whole building.
- 30** Celebration Sunday. Potluck meal after worship. No Circle Church or Sunday School.

Dates to remember: **Aug. 2-4** Campout Weekend including a GFC 50th Anniversary Celebration.
Sep. 7 Community Celebration.



Pastor Eric holds Arrow Fox with mom, Melissa, in the background as Arrow is dedicated to the Lord on May 19 during worship.

Congratulations to our 2019 Grads! Caleb Parsons graduated from Hocking Technical College on May 11 with a degree in Natural and Historic Interpretation. He will return to Hocking next fall for a degree in Wildlife Resources Management. Meanwhile he is volunteering at Perry’s Monument, getting a taste of park ranger work. Steve and Juli will be visiting him in June if you would like to send a card with them. **Kera Gardner** will be graduating from homeschool and Genesis Christian School, You’re invited to her party: **June 2 from 3-6 pm in the Upper Room.** She’s looking at Kent State U., Bowling Green U., among others, for a musical theatre major, but will attend her first year at NC State.



In photo (l to r): Addison Karger, Kera Gardner, and Caleb Parsons. Missing: Carol Heininger.

Carol Heininger graduated May 26 from Mansfield Christian. She plans to attend Mt.Vernon Nazarene U., majoring in voice and business. You are invited to **her party on June 15 at the church (11 am to 2:30 pm.)**. **Addison Karger** will graduate from Mansfield Christian School and will also attend Mt. Vernon Nazarene University. He will be majoring in business administration. His party will be held at his grandparents’ home at **720 Vanderbilt Rd. in Lexington.** The Kargers would love to have you come! **June 22 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm.**

“All is well in Japan...Love my kids, learning the language and the lifestyle!”

ANDY BRUBAKER

「日本は元気です。子供が大好きで、移行やライフスタイルから学んでいます」

Introduction and Purpose:

“Goooooooood Afternoon!” This is how I typically start my classes with my students.

It has been almost a full month since my arrival in Japan, and already it has felt like it has been longer! There have been many ups and downs while adjusting to a new land, a new culture, new language, new routine, new teammates, new people and the desire to form new friendships. All and all however, I am certainly enjoying my time in the Land of the Rising Sun.

My hope is that this newsletter will be informative in 1) sharing the experience of living in a foreign country, 2) encouraging you in your own walk with Christ, and 3) keeping you up to date when you wonder how Andy is doing in Japan.

Transition:

My paperwork delay was the first hurdle I had to cross to get to Japan. While it may have felt more of a roadblock, God had intended it for good where I used that time to see my family, friends, and alma mater one last time before heading out a week later than originally planned.

For one, I returned to Toledo, OH on Sunday, March 31 for a week in order to complete my paperwork with the Japanese Embassy and receive my work visa. This was after my orientation in Mansfield with Grace Fellowship Church, the group partnered with the Wakakusa Evangelical Church and its English School program. Sure enough, the paperwork arrived in the mail on Monday, April 1, the following day after returning to Toledo. While it



wasn't according to my timeline, it was as God had timed it, because during the week, until my rescheduled flight, I was able to reconnect with family and friends again.

On April 9, I boarded the plane in Detroit. The flight to Japan was one of smoothest it could have been! I give credit to God and everyone's prayers of receiving travel mercies when transitioning to Japan. For one, the flight was ahead of schedule and arrived early in Narita Airport. Additionally, I had no issues with luggage being misplaced or the visa check-in. Then, I found Nate Tucker, the Wakakusa Coordinator, right away outside airport security, and we did not miss a single train ride on our way to Tamura, Japan (though we almost did by four minutes at one point).

The weather was dreary and rainy in Narita Airport, but when I flew in, I was greeted by the sight of blooming Sakura trees off the runway, a Japanese cultural symbol of the fragility and beauty of life. Once the bullet train or “shinkansen” had left Tokyo, I was greeted by an unexpected, unwanted and familiar sight:

snow! Apparently, the weather in Ohio had followed me to Japan. Regardless, it did not put a damper at all on my spirits nor of the spirits of the team greeting me as I arrived.

Since my arrival, I've experienced so much. Of course, the top lesson to learn is how to adjust to living in a new culture, such as where and how to go shopping for groceries, how to travel, and what to do and not do (take your shoes off when entering buildings like schools and homes; arrive at Japan appointments ten minutes earlier than the stated time, etc.) Other learning experiences I've had revolved around learning to become an English teacher. I've never directly taught young children before, but thankfully my team was supportive in helping me adjust to this new learned skill. I was provided the opportunities to observe and note my co-worker's classes before taking on my own. When I began to teach my own classes, Nate and my teammates would sit in and comment on where I could improve while also encouraging me on areas I was per

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All is well in Japan... (continued from page 3)

forming well. It will be an adjustment but each class has its own challenges and own unique needs, so learning about each of the students' needs and learning styles will also help me learn too.

Classroom 5A1 Highlight:

One of my classes has become my favorite! In all my classes I had the students create their own name tags so I could remember their names. My fifth graders, six girls and six boys, tested me by shuffling their nametags with one another and sitting in different seats. This has developed quite a playful but effective learning experience both for me and the class, and I am always eager to see this class again during the work week!

Each of my classes was able to familiarize themselves with me when I would give a presentation or "Jikoshoki," describing my likes, dislikes, hobbies, etc. From this, I would introduce the fact to my male students that I like Pokémon, which has proved to help me bond faster with my male students. One of my boys, in this class, Fumitaka, was brave enough to come up and ask for Pokémon battle on the Nintendo 3DS system. I happily accepted. More than happy even, it wasn't so much just having a battle for the sake of the game. Rather, it was an opportunity to develop a closer relationship with him, and it certainly has proved that after our battle. And yes, I couldn't let him win--I'm the Sensei!

The girls in this class are silly! Three of them are always pointing to each other to call on alternatively from when I address one of them individually. They often will stop me during class to hand me a pen cap of the other one of the girls and say "presento." Lately they have been describing each other as "super crazy," so I capitalize on this by saying this when they would do weird things to disrupt the class. Additionally, one of the girls gave me two print outs, each with a cat's face, with a "thought dialogue" saying something to the effect of "forgetting about me," which I assume was when I was forgetting their names early in the school year. You can bet this created motivation to remember students' names for this class!

Personal Endeavors:

One ongoing learning experience I'm taking on myself is to be able to understand, speak, read, and maybe even write Japanese. I can say that I am about 90% confident with the Hiragana Japanese alphabet from my personal studies. While I watch shows with

Japanese subtitles or take hikes around Japan, I find opportunities to read any signs and words written in Hiragana. Unfortunately, most signs have a mix of Hiragana and the other two Japanese alphabets, Katakana and the Chinese script, Kanji. In time, I'll be able to build the vocabulary to be able to understand what Japanese culture is to its fullest but until then, I take baby steps forward in the studies thereof.

Prayer Requests:

1) Pray that I can learn to become a better teacher for each of my students and their specific learning styles and needs. Each class has its own challenges but nothing that is insurmountable!

2) Pray that any and all studies of the Japanese language will be fruitful in helping me understand how to speak, listen, read, and write Japanese.

3) Pray for God-incidences that will allow each of us to have divine appointments with people here in Japan with whom we can share the love of Christ.

4) Pray that the team discerns when the Holy Spirit is leading us to act out of our comfort zone for His Plan.

Until next time, *またね! Mata Ne! (See you later!)*

Andy —

aka JapAndy aka The Shining Ally aka Hikaru (Light)



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Jon Vega	Elder
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John and Donna Kurtz	TrailNotes

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)