

HEARING AND INTERPRETING GOD'S WORD AND HIS VOICE WEEK 3

HEARING GOD AS A LIFESTYLE OF LISTENING

I. Introduction

Today we want to talk about cultivating a lifestyle prioritized around hearing and responding to the voice of God. We want to learn how to expect to hear God not as a surprise **interruption** but as a **guiding light** leading us through life.

A. Review

We have been learning how vital this skill of listening, translating, and having the guts to obey God's voice is to the life of leadership God has called us.

1. Listening and communication is a key to **relationships**. Just like in marriage, we can't have a thriving marriage or family without listening and communicating.
2. It is key to living a life of obedience to God-getting off of **our agenda** and on to God's.
Fuzziness in our ability to hear God **results in fogginess** in our ability to obey God and do His will.
3. Hearing God is key to **doors and opportunities** opening up to us to see and receive and help others receive miracles and **breakthroughs** in their life. You're **just a whisper** from God heard and obeyed from seeing the **next breakthrough**. In the Bible whenever someone heard and responded to God the narrative of their life's destiny moved forward. (**Morse Code story**)
4. Hearing from God is the key to **leading for God** and helping others hear from God and receive from God. Even in preaching there are some who's focus is on finishing a message other's whose focus is on **how God is connecting that message** to the needs of the people and how God wants to impact people in the minute.

People not only need the eternal Word (Logos), they need the Now Word (Rhema) for their lives.

"The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground." (I Samuel 3:19 NIV)

Because Samuel was faithful to see that **not one whisper was ignored**, God saw to it that not one of his words failed to deliver grace.

- B. In our earlier session we talked about some of the different ways that God speaks to us (Luke 24:13-35) -**Exegetically, Sacramentally, Prophetically, Inwardly**.. Today I want to talk about how God speaks to us **conversationally through intimacy and friendship**.

Premise: Many Christians don't know what it means to have a **living, listening, relationship** with Jesus. We see in the story of the road to **Emmaeus** it was after He entered into a conversation with the disciples and invited them to share their hearts that they were brought to a place of revelation where they recognized and had their lives changed by the Lord's conversation with them.

- II. Some **reasons Christian's don't** have a conversational relationship with Jesus.
- A. We have **misbelief's (veils), false ideas**, and assumptions that keep us from asking, expecting, or being able to hear God's voice. Some examples
1. God stopped speaking to us when He gave us the Bible, we are just suppose to read the directions and go do them.
 2. It is dangerous to try to hear God speak. "You're crazy if you hear voices."
 3. God might speak but it is only to people more spiritual than you.
 4. God only speaks very rarely on places like Mt. Sinai, as kind of a once in a life time experience.
 5. If God speaks it is only about really big things like if you are called to be a missionary to Africa
 6. If God talks to you, it probably means you're in trouble, or He's telling you something that is really scary to hear.
 7. It is so hard to hear from God you probably have to fast 3 weeks.
- B. Some dangers of misbeliefs
1. **You make wrong assumptions and rush to negative conclusions.** (Jesus is still dead...)
 - Jesus warned us: "**Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.**" (John 7:24 NIV)
 - "You don't know the truth about a situation until you've heard from **Jesus.**" -Henry Blackaby
 - All miracles happen because someone choose to reach up and listen to a **higher opinion** than their circumstances and emotions were telling them.
 - **Faith is not the denial of facts**, it is just recognizing that facts as they may appear can only be a small part of the story. For example when Jesus raised the girl from the dead they saw her dead but Jesus said she was sleeping because He knew she was about to wake up. ***Replay Booth**
 - **The final truth about any situation is who God has decided to be and what God has decided to say about that situation.**
 - The veil of doubt and unbelief is one of the first veils you have to remove before you can see and hear God.
 - **If you truly believe that "with God all things are possible" you will naturally believe that there is a solution to every problem and even an opportunity in all opposition. This will cause you to keep your heart, ears, and eye open to recognize possibilities and opportunities for miracle** "whispers" that people who don't believe will never hear. Great questions?

- “Do you have your ears and eyes open for the impossible?” Will you see the door that leads out of your bondage into your victory?” (I **Corinthians 10:13**)
 - People of victory doubt their doubts and believe their beliefs. They **intentionally turn down the volume of doubt, hopelessness, and unbelief.**
 - They wake up with thoughts like, “Could this be the day?” God always speaks in the language of possibility not negativity!
2. We don’t hear God’s voice or have revelation because we **don’t ask.** (James 4:2)
 - Actually, asking for revelation is one of the primary things we’re taught to ask for. (Eph. 1:18-20)
 - How silly that we tell God all about what is wrong but don’t ask for His opinion.
 - **People who hear from Jesus as a lifestyle, ask and keep asking. (Example of Jason’s story from a culture of expectation)**
 - **“Wherever God gives a revelation it is an invitation to a conversation.” -Jason Walker**
 3. We assume that **silence means God isn’t interested.** We let a delay in an answer cause us to assume a denial. Perhaps God is saying-“Go back to the last thing you’ve heard,” “Don’t doubt in the dark what I showed you in the light.”

God could be saying, like with **Job, wait and keep pressing in.**

- C. Another major reason and obstacle to a conversational relationship with Jesus is that we live in a culture that teaches us and pushes us to **compete instead of contemplate**, that drives us to think in terms of **performance not partnership.**

If we are going to hear God we need to confront American idols that cause most people/even Christians to spend their lives being driven instead of led (Examples of a culture independent individualism and American “**Successism**” -If it’s going to be it’s up to me, the faster, more, and harder I work the more successful I’ll be...”

This leads us choosing the way of striving **instead of abiding (John 15:1-16)** **which** Jesus said in the long run will cause us to bear less or no fruit, whereas His way of rest causes us to bear much fruit.

True fruitfulness requires a radical shift and transformation of our thinking. God has called us to a lifestyle of partnership instead of performance (Matthew 11:28-30). We are to sail by the Spirit to His call, not row to our goals. We must believe that one action in line with God’s Spirit’s will and timing

can accomplish more than a decade of our own hard work. “Apart from Me you can do nothing-of eternal significance.

The fundamental switch to a life time of living “by every word that precedes out of the mouth of God” is the decision and mindset to **QUIT ASKING GOD TO BLESS WHAT I’M DOING AND ASKING PASSIONATELY FOR GOD TO HELP ME DO WHAT HE IS BLESSING.’** (Woodpecker)

We see this fundamental difference in the leadership of Saul and David.
Saul-I Samuel 13:11-13

“When I saw that the men were scattering and you did not come at the set time.. I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering... You have done a foolish things 15:22...”I desire obedience not sacrifice..”

David-I Chron. 14:13-15

Once more the Philistines raided the valley; so David inquired of God again, and God answered him, “Do not go directly after them in front of the poplar trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.”

- III. Ways to move into a lifestyle of hearing Jesus in intimate relationship
- A. Make our **ongoing intimate connection the highest priority of our life.** (John 15, Abiding)

It is significant in the story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus described what Mary did as the “**one thing.**” The awareness of your personal intimate connection with Jesus is always the first priority before any and every other thing. (It’s like in a **marriage, you** may have 10 things on your list, but if you’re connection isn’t right, fixing that needs to be the first thing or nothing of everything else will go right.)

- B. Position your heart to enter a conversation that allows Jesus to freely speak to you.
Keys to this positioning

1. Hunger and desire

“Blessed is the man that hears me watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” (Prov. 8:34)

“As the eyes of a handmaid looks to her master, so our eyes are on you.” (Prov. 27:18)

“My soul waits on God for from Him is my salvation.” (Ps. 62:1)

2. Continually casting your cares on the Lord and committing your way to the Lord.

- If we’re carrying anxiety, unconfessed sin, or other burdens it will hinder us.

- **Proverbs 16:3 AMPC**

Roll your works upon the Lord (commit and trust them wholly to Him; He will cause your thoughts to become agreeable to His will, (and) so shall your plans be established and succeed.”

- **Phil. 4:6**

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and thanksgiving, make your requests known to Him.”

3. Be in a constant state of praise and thanksgiving.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Pray without ceasing.” (I Thess. 4:16-17)

4. Be open and expectant for God to speak in **different ways, through different things**. Don’t get stuck in old expectations. **Elijah struggled** because he expected God to speak with wind and fire on a mountain top, not with a still small voice in a cave.

5. Practice the presence of God in everything. **Brother Lawrence** lived in conversation with God by celebrating God’s presence in the ordinariness of every day life.

C. Learn the disciplines **of silence, sabbaths, and solitude**

- Like an iceberg 90% of what God wants to show and speak is under the surface of your daily life, apart from the noise and busyness of life. This is why **Psalms 46:10** says **“Be still and know that I’m in God.”**

- **The main challenge for most Americans to hear God is to get in a place of reduced distraction (especially digital distraction) and “ruthlessly eliminate hurry” from their lives in order for their soul to hear and contemplate God.**

- The scourge of much of American Christianity is shallow/surface Christianity-mile wide/inch deep-Being in the outer court, rarely the holy of holies.

1. Solitude means being alone and quiet enough-the RPM’s of your engine stilled so you can distinguish between your soul and spirit.

Henry Nouwen

“Solitude is the place of great struggle and the great encounter-the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers Himself as the substance of the new self.”

2. Silence is where we still our soul in a way that **“amplifies the** whispers of God in a world of perpetual distraction, busyness, and noise.”

3. Sabbaths are the obedient decision **to pull the plug on our normal work routines, to turn from a work** in a complete fast in a way that recalibrates our heart and mind to move at the rhythm of God instead of the world. It is a time to focus on being instead of doing.

“Sabbath commitment is a radical step and belief of faith that says if I honor God by ceasing to work so I can rest and listen, I can trust that God is more than able to accomplish more by my honoring Him with this than I could by trying to do things in my own efforts.

Richard Foster encourages the added discipline of making the most of **“Selah” moments**. Take moments wherever you can to detach with God. Shut off digital distractions and be with God in a car ride, or taking the long route to work. Little moments taken can add up to long pauses with great revelations.

- D. Learn the art of **contemplation**. There are a few things we do in this time of reflection.

It is interesting that **Warren Buffet** said the main difference between successful and highly successful people is reflection.

1. **Mediate on Scripture.**

Ask Questions, Use your imagination, Look at things from many different angles. Give thanks, pray, and surrender. Speak declarations to yourself.

Journal

2. **Interrogate your emotions, reactions, and experiences.**

The true test of our growth and transformation isn't seen in our actions but our reactions.

Sadly, many see **negative emotions as enemies to suppress**, we see in Psalms and other places that emotions are often radar screens to look underneath the surface of our lives to discover areas God is speaking in. **Connection Codes**

3. Pause to **savor things you don't usually have time to consider, draw the nector out of nature, a song, appreciation for a special remembrance.** **George Washington Carver** changed the world through meditating on nature and science and especially the peanut.

You have a **geyser of revelation** inside of you, that God wants you to open the floodgates to realize.

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

1. Which of the lies or assumptions have you seen in your life that have hindered you from hearing God? What would a true belief and response to the fact that God is always speaking possibly have on your ability to hear God?
2. Can you relate to how negative beliefs about situations could shut you down from recognizing a way that God might want to move in a problem in an unrecognized way? What is a circumstance or situation that you need to really look to God to give you a second opinion on?
How could you shift your attitude towards faith?
3. How do you identify with the barriers that our digital and driven culture has worked to hinder you from really having the time or space to hear from God?
4. Do you have an example of a time when you took time to be still, contemplate, seek God's perspective and voice, that resulted in a radical shift in your reactions and choices?
5. What are some ways you can start practicing more solitude, silence, sabbath, or contemplation in your life?