

HEARING AND INTERPRETING GOD'S VOICE THROUGH HIS WORD (WEEK 6)
DO YOU SEE WHAT HE SEES?
2/15/2023

- I. Introduction:** Today we want to continue learning how to hear God speak through the Scripture by learning to effectively interpret and apply God's Word, through the help of the Holy Spirit. We aren't called to be Bible scholars but we are all called to be Bible interpreters.

"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (interpreting like a carpenter fitting a window pane) the word of truth."
(2 Timothy 2:15)

Observations:

- A. There is some **work** involved. It's like weights and measurements. Working hard to study and understand God's Word is commended as an act of noble character.

"Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11 NIV)

"Indeed if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure." (Proverbs 2:3-4)

- B. Rightly interpreting is very important because it is possible to misinterpret. Jesus said, *"Therefore consider carefully how you listen/hear."* (Luke 8:18).

It is possible to hear the right thing in the wrong way. Some people read the same passage and become more compassionate, while others become more judgmental. Some get condemned, while others get cleansed. Some become hardened, others become transformed.

"Most Christians are educated way beyond their obedience." -Rick Warren

1. Some have the word just go in their heads, others have the word go through their heads to their hearts, to their hands.
 2. If we study the Scripture right it will turn up the volume of God's voice in every area of our life.
- C. Learning to interpret Scripture is not just something for Bible studies; it is the key to letting God's truth and Holy Spirit lead us in being able to stay in God's will and fulfill His plan in all of the circumstances of life. One of the main purposes of our Bible school is to train people to become trustworthy leaders, that make great God centered decisions, that lead them and those they lead to the best God has for them.

At the heart of this is becoming leaders, who intentionally and carefully weigh and make decisions and choose attitudes and responses to life based on a careful study of the truth of Scripture, with the application of the Holy Spirit. A trustworthy Christian leader uses the Scripture as the primary filter for all decisions of life.

1. A trustworthy leader is one who won't be sucked into the temptation to make fleshly decisions based on feelings, appearance, the views of culture or tradition. They guide their lives with both the wind and the compass (Spirit and truth).

They understand that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord: The awesome respect for God that acknowledges God's truth is separate and above my opinion and assumptions. It realizes the constant need to subject myself to an objective truth source above what I can naturally judge as right or wrong. It acknowledges what Jesus said, "*We are sanctified (safe, wise, set apart) by the truth: thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17)

2. Like a careful detective they are willing to suspend judgment until they've objectively viewed the evidence.

3. Many good Christian leaders have gotten off course and it is so possible that we can too. We are all just one step away from stupid.

"Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have departed from the truth. They say the resurrection has already taken place."
(2 Timothy 2:18)

The devil is the expert at tempting us to misinterpret and misapply truth.

"If you are the Son of God," he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:6)

- D. . . . As we shared last week, learning this skill is key to advancing in your maturity and leadership. God wants us to go from a child sitting at the table waiting for food, to a cook in the kitchen preparing wisdom and truth not only for their lives but those they serve.

II. **Guidelines from the Bible on how to rightly interpret the Bible. The best and only fully reliable interpreter of the Bible is the Bible.**

- A. The first rule of exegesis is that the true meaning of a text is in the context. The true meaning doesn't come from my opinion of what it means but by discovering the intended meaning of what the passage said to those who first heard it. The

Bible doesn't mean something new and different to us than it did before. It may have a specific application but not a different meaning.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

1. This involves putting ourselves in the shoes of those who first heard and really absorbing the historical and literary context. There is something called Eisegesis (reading into the text). For example, as Americans we view words like blessing from the context of success. Therefore, it is easy for faith to become formulas, and faith and prosperity to be about money.

The Bible view faith was about trusting a person, not a slot machine-prosperity but about maturity and wholeness.

“Count it all joy when you encounter various trials.” (James 1:3)

2. In unpacking some of the difficult topics in the Old Testament such as slavery, polygamy, and genocide, we have to understand the context that comes from realizing there was progressive revelation. God wasn't endorsing this but meeting people in the context of where He was taking them. (How do you teach a 2-year-old?)

- B. The law of harmonization. The interpretation of any part of Scripture must be considered in the light of the whole of Scripture. The internal meaning of any text is not in contradiction with any other Scripture, all little narratives have their place as part of a grand narrative.

So for example Jesus answered Satan with the larger view of Scripture, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” (Matthew 4:7)

A verse that helps us get the big perspective of Scripture is, I Timothy 1:5 NKJV, ***“Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of a faith unfeigned.”***

Good questions to ask:

1. Is this prescriptive or descriptive?

“Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?” (I Cor. 15:29)

“Don't you see nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out the body.” In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.” (Mark 7:19-20)

2. What is the “balancing point” where there appears to be tension between Scriptures? When we see verses that seem to say two different things the best approach is not to stake out a theological position but to find the place of obedience.

“Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.” (2 Timothy 2:14)

The Bible speaks about “disputable matters” that should be left up to individuals conscience in their cultural context (meat offered to idols, observing sabbaths, eschatology, alcohol, yoga, celebrating Christmas, Easter, Halloween).

An obedience approach to end times: Expect it any moment. Hope for the best; prepare for the worst.

3. Choose humility where God doesn’t give specific answers.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.”

III. The most important interpreting key is to understand the difference between law and grace, from interpreting the Bible as the Pharisees did and interpreting it as Jesus and the apostles taught us.

Beware of legalism and a religious spirit. Behind legalism is a spirit of control, elitism, criticalness of the Body of Christ, narrowness, a tendency to major on minors, a way of interpreting the Bible that perpetuates an ongoing sense of spiritual insecurity among followers. Legalistic leaders often use it as a form of control and to cover up their own weakness by comparing themselves with others.

- A. Note some key Scriptures

“Out of His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
(John 1:16-17)

“I did not come to condemn the world but that the world through me might be saved.” (John 3:17)

“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-not of letter but of Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives us life.” (2 Corinthians 3:6)
“But now by dying to what we once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we may serve in a new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Romans 7:6)

“The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” (Galatians 3:12)

***“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written:
“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book
of the law.” (Galatians 3:10)***

B. Principles

1. Every Scripture of the Bible should be understood in the light of the greater story of the Bible.

God gave the law to reveal right and wrong, to restrain evil, and ultimately show us that no one can be righteous enough to reach God by their works. Even Moses and David couldn't make it.

Jesus came to fulfill the law by keeping it perfectly on our behalf and fulfilling “all righteousness.” Jesus revealed to us a new way to know God-grace. We are more sinful than we ever imagined but more loved than we could ever realize.

He reveals our need for Him by convicting us of our sin so that we can experience grace and come into a relationship with Him, whereby He gives us His Spirit and lives out obedience by His commands. Through Jesus sacrificial death He ended the dietary laws, sacrificial laws, ceremonial laws, civil laws, and summarized all of the moral laws into one: *love one another as I have loved you.*

2. Satan tries to use religion to bring us back under bondage by trying to be good enough and perform so we live in perpetual insecurity. Romans 7 says law is like living with an unpleasable husband. The best we could do is to put a muzzle on our sinful nature. But grace transforms us. The laws are Spirit, guiding us in living out the perfect law of love in each new situation.

3. The story of the woman caught in adultery illustrates how Jesus applies the Word. The Pharisees had a simple interpretation of the Bible. Stone her. Jesus uses the law of harmonization to ask who is qualified to judge sin. Jesus illustrates grace when He said “neither do I condemn you.” Why- because He condemned himself. Jesus speaks life- the Spirit into her. He imparts to her grace, “be free to go and sin no more” because of love for Him, gratitude, and a clean conscience.

“The law bids me fly but gives me neither feet nor hands, better news the gospel brings it bids me fly and gives me wings.”

C. Hearing God speak through the grid of grace

1. We receive conviction as God's invitation to do a supernatural work in us.

Like the doctor telling us the gall bladder must come out and I will do it. We acknowledge weakness and flesh in humility and dependency not condemnation.

2. We don't make excuses or justify a rebellious lifestyle, nor do we make a new year's resolution. We understand that our liberating response is a response of faith. We don't have our hope in our promises to God but in His promises to us.
3. We activate our faith by responding to the Spirit in whatever way He is leading us to take next steps. We believe that our victory is not in what we can do but in the fact that we are simply vessels He lives through.
4. Our activation becomes a declaration.
5. In making decisions, we weigh the wisdom of God. We believe that God is leading us in the application. If it is a disputable matter, we examine both wisdom, Scripture, our conscience, but most importantly what the highest expression of Christ's love would look like demonstrated in this situation.
6. We wait and listen to the Holy Spirit to prompt us. We make a decision by faith and not condemnation.

For Discussion

What might you implement a Scripture based, Spirit led approach to the following decisions you or someone you love is making?

1. What limits or approach in what social media practices should I allow my kids to participate in? What's the difference between an opinion and a leading?
2. What would my approach be in helping a new Christian, who has some moral issue still holding out in their life (cohabiting, gay lifestyle, abusing drugs or alcohol)? How would I approach this issue in their life with grace and truth?
3. What would be an approach to making a decision as to whether to take a good paying job in another place but where there is uncertainty about the spiritual impact on your family?
4. How would you counsel a Christian couple to make a decision together, God's way, when husband and wife are in disagreement?