

Not 719 Hearing the Voice of God

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Knowing God's Voice

Text: John 8:47a, John 10:27, Matthew 4:4

~ A.W. Tozer – It is the Nature of God to Speak.

God is a **speaking** God and He still speaks to us today. Fifteen times in the New Testament Jesus says, "He who has ears, let him hear". **Matthew 11:15, Revelation 2:29**
God gave us ears for **listening**, He uses words to express what He wants us to understand and He has a **voice** that He uses so that we are able to know that He is communicating with us.

Many today remind us that we are not to **add** to scripture. **Revelation 22:18-19** The Bible is a sealed book. What is there is there. The Bible tells us however, that God still speaks to us today. Scripture is finished it was divinely inspired by God. God guided men to write the sacred text and is the same as if God Himself wrote it down. Today the Holy Spirit still **guides**, prompts, convicts, instructs and leads. **Isaiah 30:21** Both the Old and New Testaments describe God as speaking to us.

There are four things that we are taking as fact for this series- Knowing God's Voice:

- 1) There **is** a God.
- 2) He **communicates** with people.
- 3) We can **recognize** His voice when He speaks.
- 4) God has **something** to say.

From the very beginning of creation God has been speaking with us. **Genesis 3:8-10a**
God spoke with Adam, gave detailed instructions to Noah and even called out to Moses from a burning bush. **Exodus 3:1-6**

We need to grab a hold of the foundational truth that God **wants** to talk to you and me. **Matthew 4:4** We need God to speak to us even more that we need food to nourish us. God desires us to live by His **voice**.

As a Christian, the main difference between us and an unbeliever is the fact that we have a **relationship** with Jesus Christ. Jesus is a living, thinking person. Jesus loves the church the same way a husband loves a wife. In any personal relationship **communication** is a necessary thing.

Hearing God's voice is a question of identity. Hearing God's voice is not about something we do. Hearing God is about someone we are. Hearing God is not primarily a behavior, it is a reflection of our identity. We hear God because of who we are and because of whose we are, we are sheep. **John 10:1-16**

The whole idea of our being sheep is that our identity is rooted in a shepherd to sheep relationship. Sheep, by their very nature, need a guide. We hear God because we were designed to hear God. In the Shepherd's Psalm we are introduced to how and where God leads us. **Psalm 23:1-6** We are led by God by learning to depend on hearing His voice regularly and clearly.

Sometimes sheep do not listen to the shepherd. Sometimes people do not listen because of

- willful disobedience,
- they have not learned to hear.

The great news is that we can learn to hear the voice of God.

Truths of hearing God's voice

- Our ability to hear God is innate, this means that it is part of our instinct. Hearing God comes naturally to believers. Jesus said, "My sheep know My voice".
- Our ability to hear God is learned. Just like in all relationships, communication involves speaking and listening. In close and mature relationships much can be communicated without even saying a word. Remember children instinctively want to talk. They make all kinds of noises and imitate but eventually they find their voice and they learn to know the voice of their parents. As the relationship grows, they learn to communicate better. I always tell new parents – If you will be your child's parents while they are young you will have them as a friend when they are older. If you want them as a friend when they are young, they will not respect you as a parent when you are older. The same holds true as we walk with God. **John 15:15-16**
- Our ability to hear God can mature, as we grow so does our ability to communicate. We even learn that a big part of effective communication is knowing when to keep your mouth shut. We mature by spending time with God but also by living out what He has told us on our own. **Hebrews 5:13-14** Part of hearing from God and knowing His voice is being able to make grown up decisions on our own. I don't need to pray about being kind because the Bible already records God's thoughts on that. While God may help quicken us to wear a certain thing on a unique occasion, God expects us to be able to get up and dress ourselves most days without consulting Him. Maturity means we understand that God has a general will for everyone. We are all called to fulfill the Great Commission, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to separate ourselves from sin and be conformed to the image of His Son, to be thankful in all things. His general will is found in His Word. This will is for all of us, it is clearly spelled out and given to all.

The Bible also speaks of His specific will for our lives. God spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus and had such an impact on his life that it caused him to change his name to Paul. The Prophet who was to go and pray over Saul received instructions from God right down to the street and house to find him. **Acts 9:10-18** The Bible is filled with those who received specific instructions from God. Abraham was to leave his land. The wise men were warned to go home another way after seeing the baby Jesus. If God spoke to His servants back then, He will still speak to us today. Remember, we are sheep designed to hear and know His voice.

There are many voices in the world competing for our attention. **1 Corinthians 14:10**
In our high-tech world it seems that the voices are so many it is hard to know what is what.

- There is the voice of man - this voice is easy to recognize. It is the audible voices of other people. Everyone is offering opinions, philosophies and new and bold ideas. Many times, the voice of people's opinions and so-called wisdom actually conflicts with the voice of God. **Acts 5:29**
- The voice of Satan. It is important that we know that Satan speaks. **Genesis 3:1-5**
Many times he comes disguised as God. Remember, the devil comes and presents himself as an angel of light. He sounds like a voice of reason. Satan slithered into the garden and tried to talk to Adam and Eve just like God did. Satan's voice lies, deceives, and always attempts to lead us into sin and away from God. He will try to sound like God while all the time causing us to doubt if God really said what He said and meant what He told us.
We know that evil and demonic spirits have a voice. **Acts 8:7, Luke 4:33-34** While demons can have an audible voice when they use the vocal cords of a possessed man or woman. Satan usually speaks in an inaudible voice that puts sinful, deceitful and unbelieving thoughts into the mind.
- The voice of self. The voice of self is one of our most familiar voices. We speak to ourselves all of the time. We often confuse the voice of self with the voice of God because of the longings of our heart. We want what we want. If we are not careful, we will follow our heart instead of the heart of God. **Jeremiah 10:23, Jeremiah 17:9**
- The voice of God. He is the good Shepherd, and we are the sheep.

God's Will and His Voice.

Ask any true Christians, they have a desire to walk in the will of God. By this we mean we want to walk in His general will which is outlined in the Bible and we want His specific guidance when it comes to making decisions and choices for our lives. Knowing God's voice results in us finding and understanding the will of God.

It is important to understand that God wants us to know His will. We act like finding His will is God playing a spiritual game of hide and seek. **Ephesians 5:17, Romans 12:1-2**
IF we know the voice of God then we will know the will of God. **Matthew 4:4** We live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father. The word 'proceeds' is a continuing function. God spoke in the past; He is speaking now, and He will continue to speak with us in the future.

The Bible tells us that there are two types of listeners – the wise and the foolish.

Matthew 7:24-26 A foolish listener hears the voice of God but does not act upon it. The wise are hearers and doers of the Word. **James 1:22-25**

It is one thing to hear God's voice, but is quite another to receive what He is saying. God describes His word as seed. **Luke 8:11**

We are the soil. Whenever God speaks, He is depositing the seed of His Word in us and how we receive it will depend on how fruitful His Word is in our life.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 This scripture is referring to those who will receive the Gospel, but it is also applicable for fully mature Christians as well.

- The seed by the wayside is God's Word given to us, but we do not allow it to take root in our heart and it becomes easy pickings for Satan to steal away. We don't take it to heart and it just gets pushed out of the way.
- The seed on stony places is God's Word that He speaks to us and we get excited about it. We allow it to grow up quickly but never give it time to get rooted depth, then things get hard. You believe His promises, you step out in the direction that God told you to but then things get hard. Like the sun, some days are brutally hot and God's Word withers in us because we never nourished it and prepared it for the realities of life.
- The Seed among the thorns is an example of everything else getting in the way of God's will. If we allow all the other cares of the world and desires of our heart and the ambitions of our life to crowd out the Word of God in our life that word will die. What we care about grows. We only have a certain capacity to care for so many things. We must choose what we allow to blossom in our lives, God's Word or the thorns.
- The seed on good ground represents the one who listens, recognizes and receives the voice of God with gladness. This person will become a fruitful and reproducing believer.