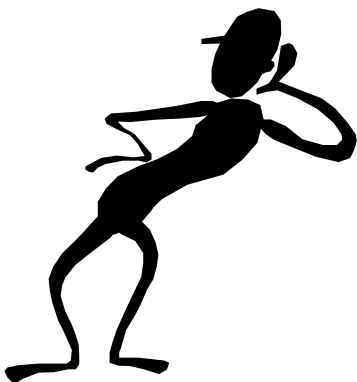
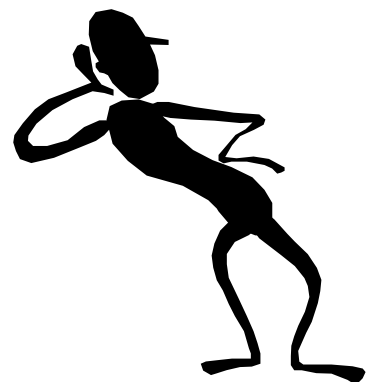


LISTENING **TO GOD**

- 1. “Does God Really Speak to Me Today?”**
- 2. “What Does God’s Voice Sound Like?”**
- 3. What Can I Do to Hear God’s Voice?**
- 4. How Can I Learn to Hear God Better?**
- 5. How Can I Tell the Voice is God’s and Not Satan’s?**



from a sermon series
by Rev. Jerry
Schmoyer
delivered at Main
Street Baptist Church,
Doylestown, PA,
Jan & Feb 2004 ©



1. “Does God Really Speak to Me Today?”

from a sermon series by Rev. Jerry Schmoyer
delivered at Main Street Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA,
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About a week and a half ago, right before Christmas, the US government raised the terrorist alert to Orange. If you remember, they had reason to believe terrorists might be trying to hijack airplanes and use them as they did on September 11, 2001. There was special concern for the Great Lakes area. What made this of special concern to us was that our son Dan was to be flying home the next day, Christmas Eve. His plans called for a 2-hour layover in Chicago. Of course that mean we had a decision to make, a very important decision, perhaps even a life-or-death decision. Should we tell him to just forget his flight and stay, spend Christmas with Maggie and her family, then drive in with them a week later? I know Dan would have chosen that option, but I needed to know what God wanted us to do. Only He knew the future. What He wanted us to do in this situation was our only consideration. That really brought a time of prayer and seeking God's will. I needed to hear from Him for there were only a few hours to make that important decision.

Now we have a major decision to make concerning Glory. She's been invited to travel and sing another year. Should she accept that invitation or get back to her education? Major decisions like this can affect the whole direction a life can take. We have about a week to decide, and we want to make sure we do what God wants. We need to hear from Him.

I believe God does speak to us, revealing His will and guidance. He speaks in other ways as well.

This past week has been very busy with school each day. It was a stretching time with me often far outside my comfort zone. Yet He was always there, speaking peace to my soul, wisdom to my heart and insight to my mind. He even revealed Himself in a special way Tuesday evening, leading to a special time of praise and worship.

You see, God speaks to us in various ways and at numerous times. The problem is we often don't recognize His voice. The purpose of this series is to help each of us better listen to God and hear His voice when He speaks guidance, direction, comfort, encouragement, peace or worship.

For many years I've been interested in this subject. I've studied it, read about it and worked on it in my own life. Deeper intimacy with a more personal connection to God has been things I've always desired. Therefore I chose this subject do so some research and writing on for one of my school classes. I've turned that material into a series of five sermons: 1. Does God Really Speak to Me Today? 2. What Does God's Voice Sound Like?, 3. What Can I Do to Hear God's Voice?, 4. How Can I Learn to Hear God Better?, and 5. How Can I Tell the Voice is God's and Not Satan's?

Today will be an introduction to that series. We'll look at ways God speaks to us today. My goal is to have you more sensitive to God's speaking to you. I want you to be more alert to hear His voice so your relationship with Him will grow, and so you'll know and follow His will in all areas of life.

There is a real need for that among Christians today. I read one author who said that 90% of Christians are more concerned about so-called "church-work" than about praying, and of the 10% left, 9% of those are much more willing to talk to God than listen to Him. In our

relationships with others we are often more interested in talking and listening, and unfortunately we are often that way with God, too.

Which is more important: what you have to say to God or what God has to say to you? Which do you focus on more, talking to God or listening to God? Yet we know He already knows what we are going to say before we say it, but we don't know what He wants to say to us unless we listen to Him.

I. DOES GOD REALLY SPEAK TO ME TODAY?

I'm convinced He wants to speak to us. He does speak to us often. He wants us to listen to Him. Psalms 81:13 "If my people would but listen to me..." Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' Ps 50:3 Our God comes and will not be silent; 1 Samuel 3:1-10 God spoke to Samuel as a boy (told he will replace Eli).

God wants to fellowship with us, to communicate with us. He created us to have a personal relationship with Him.

Not only does God desire to communicate with man, but man desires to communicate with God. Ps 83:1 O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still.

We know communication from God is possible for He is God. If He can hear us speak to Him, He can certainly speak to us as well. Not only is it possible, it is probable for He made us to relate to Him. Even more, it is necessary for it is the only way man can know God.

So man desires to speak to God just as God desires to speak to man. The Bible is full of examples of this in the past. When we see how common it was in Bible times we'll realize it can be just as common today.

II. TO WHOM DID GOD SPEAK IN THE PAST?

In the Old Testament God walked and talked with Adam in Eden, He spoke to Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Job. He spoke to Moses at the burning bush, in Egypt, in the desert and at Mt Sinai. We read that God spoke from the cloud as well as the Ark. He even spoke through a donkey to Balaam. It is recorded that God spoke to Samuel, David, Nathan, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Jonah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah and other prophets. Kings like Ahaz, Manasseh and Jehu heard from Him as well.

God spoke often to Jesus. He spoke to the leaders of the early church. Philip was told to go to the eunuch, Paul heard Him on the road to Damascus, Peter was told to go to Cornelius, Ananias to Paul and Paul to Macedonia. These and many other examples are listed on your handout if you want to look up any of them.

Thus we see that God did indeed speak in the past, often and to many different people. Therefore it is only natural He would do the same thing today. Charles Stanley says, "God not only speaks in general and absolute terms to all people, but He speaks to each one of us personally. We can hardly comprehend that possibility with our finite minds. God is an infinite God, and He is capable of communicating with each one of us, right where we are – in the midst of our current circumstances of crises – in very personal, direct and explicit terms."

Now that we've established that God does indeed speak to man let's look at various ways God communicates with us.

III. THROUGH WHAT MEANS DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME TODAY?

When we communicate with each other we use verbal words, body language, or written words. God uses various means to communicate with us, too.

The man whispered, "God, speak to me"

And a meadowlark sang.

But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled "God, speak to me"

And the thunder & lightning rolled across the sky.

But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God, let me see you." And a star shined brightly.

But the man did not see.

And, the man shouted, "God, show me a miracle"

And a life was born.

But the man did not notice.

So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me, God, and let me know you are here"

Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man.

But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

I found this to be a great reminder that God is always around us in the little and simple things that we take for granted. .even in our electronic age . . . so I would like to add one more:

The man cried "God, I need your help" . . .

And an e-mail arrived reaching out with good news and encouragement.

But the man deleted it and continued crying.....

The good news is that you are loved.

Don't miss out on a blessing because it isn't packaged the way that you expect.

First, let's look at some of the ways God communicated to man in Bible times but doesn't use to communicate to us today. We want to mention these so you don't expect God to speak to you in these ways.

The first is God speaking in an audible voice, as He did to Adam and Eve in Eden and Moses at the burning bush. Isaiah states, *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying ... "(6:8).*

If God ever does speak audibly today, it is very rare and just for a very special reason.

In Bible times God sent angels to speak to Mary, Zechariah and the shepherds. They ministered to Jesus in Gethsemane before His arrest as well.

Nor does God speak to us today in dreams or visions. Both Josephs, Pilate's wife and others received messages from God in dreams. Abraham, Isaiah, Peter and John on Patmos were given visions. Don't expect God to you in these today. He may use a dream to get your attention, but His message will be communicated to you directly.

Another method of communication no longer used is casting lots, as when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas.

The last method no longer in operation is the use of the Urim and Thummim by which God communicated His message to the priests.

While these are ways God spoke in the past but not today, there are ways He then spoke and still does speak today. These apply directly to us today.

For example, God still uses nature to reveal Himself to those who have never heard of Him. He shows His greatness to all of us through nature.

God speaks through other people, especially mature believers who know us, to give good guidance and advice. He puts the wisdom in their minds and the compulsion to pass it on to us. We must recognize this as one of the ways God speaks His will to us today.

Then there are circumstances and experiences which God uses to reveal His plan and will to us. Often we aren't sensitive enough to hear God as He speaks in these ways.

I love the story a friend shared with me several years ago about this. A man was caught in a flood and ended up floating on the roof of his destroyed home. He prayed desperately for God's help. In time a rescue team came by in a boat. "We've come to help you," they shouted. "Get in our boat and you'll be safe." "No," the man shouted back. "God's going to save me." It grew dark and scary and the man prayed harder. The beat of a helicopter's blades could be heard coming from the distance growing louder and louder, until they were thumping overhead. A bright light framed the house wreckage and the man. The loudspeaker boomed, "Take the rope, you'll be safe." "No, thanks," the man shouted as he waved the helicopter away, "God's going to save me." Shortly thereafter, the roof disintegrated and the man drowned. He was grateful to arrive in heaven, but irritated that God hadn't answered his prayers. When he stood before Jesus, he complained. "Why didn't you save me as you promised that you would?" "Whatever do you mean?" the Lord said, "I sent a boat and a helicopter!"

Many times God is shouting to us through our circumstances, but we are so intent on just one option that we fail to hear Him. We can be so fixed in our point of view that we cannot see what He is doing or saying.

Paul's thorn in his flesh is an example of that. David Jackson tells about how God used a tree falling on his house to help him straighten out some priorities in his life. We came to this church because God spoke through another person, a pastor, to lead us here. God used a series of circumstances to show us this was where He wanted us.

Another time God used circumstances to speak to me was when we were on vacation at the Gospel concert we go to the end of August. It was several years ago and I had planned to stay there for the whole 10 days. Before I had been coming home during the week with Nancy. They announced that the man who had been doing the morning Bible study during the week would not be able to do it and if anyone would be willing to let them know. Otherwise they would have to cancel it. While it would really stretch me to do it, God put a strong desire in my heart to volunteer. I told them I'd do it if they didn't have anyone else and so they asked me to do it. It was a very rewarding experience and I've been asked back each year to do it. I look forward to it and really enjoy the experience. The people seem to appreciate it, and I get a donation that covers our expenses for our 10 days there! That's an example of God using circumstances to 'open doors' to minister.

When has God used circumstances to speak to you in the past? How might He be using current circumstances to speak to you today?

So God spoke in the past and still speaks today through nature, other people and experiences we face. He also speaks to us through prayer.

Prayer, as we all know, includes listening as well as talking. Communication implies listening as well as talking – giving out information and taking in information.

When you pray, first pray to listen, pray you will be open to and able to listen. Then listen to pray. Ask God how you should pray about certain things and listen for His guidance. It's while we are listening that we suddenly become aware of a flash of revelation, an insight in the form of a picture, an inner inaudible prompting, a thought that comes to mind, a word or phrase of Scripture that is continuously repeated, a growing conviction or awareness of what needs to be done, or an increasing consciousness of what God desires that just does not go away.

Jesus is a prime example of this. Since He set aside those attributes that would have made His earthly life easier, such as His omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, He needed wisdom and revelation, guidance and direction from God through the Holy Spirit, the same as we receive it. He prayed for long periods of time because that was when He connected with God. He didn't spend all that time talking but also must have been listening. A good example of this is when He chose the twelve to follow Him. He spent the previous night in prayer, obviously asking for and receiving guidance about whom to choose.

How much of your prayer time is spent talking? How much is spent listening? Try spending more time listening as you pray. We'll talk about this more in future messages.

So God speaks through nature, other people, circumstances and prayer. We can add to that list the written Word.

God's will, His purposes and plans, His very nature, all are clearly revealed to us through the pages of the Holy Scripture. *2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Hebrews 4:12 for the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

God uses His Word to speak to us when a familiar scripture just jumps off the page, when a promise that speaks to a situation we are in comes to mind and sticks, when a certain passage, story or verse pop into mind, when something comes alive in a new way or when something we hear goes deep into our soul and ministers to a need.

Do you pray before reading the Bible, asking God to speak to you through it? Do you read it carefully, slow enough to listen, so you can notice when He points something out to your spirit?

OK. Let's review. God speaks to us through nature, others, circumstances, prayer and the written Word. Often the way He speaks through them is by the Holy Spirit within communicating what He wants to say. Therefore we must make sure we add the Holy Spirit to our list of how God communicates to us today.

Since personal, face-to-face communication with God won't happen until heaven, God now reveals His guidance and direction to us through His Holy Spirit within us. It is His Spirit that speaks His message to our hearts.

John 16:6-11, 13 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. ...

13 but when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. Just as Jesus spoke God's message to the disciples when He was with them, so the Spirit will speak to them when Jesus is gone. The Spirit is Jesus' replacement, so we need to listen to Him as we would were Jesus Himself sitting here talking to us!

When we listen to Him, the Holy Spirit shows us how to pray. *Romans 8:26-27 in the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

It is the Holy Spirit who delivers our message, our thoughts and feelings, to God the Father. It is also He who delivers God's message to us. When we say that we 'hear' God's voice, it is really the Spirit within Who is speaking to us.

Do you recognize God's voice when He speaks to you through the Holy Spirit? We'll talk more about that in weeks to come, but start now trying to listen more carefully for His voice.

The final way God still speaks is through our conscience. Paul states: *"I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit."* Our conscience is not a perfect instrument, for it is programmed much like a computer, but as you grow as a Christian God sensitizes your conscience so it lines up with the Bible.

When I am given too much change by a clerk, when I try to avoid an opportunity to speak out for Jesus, when I am tempted to do something I know I shouldn't – then God's Spirit warns me by pricking my conscience.

So God continues to speak to us today through nature, others, circumstances, prayer, the written Word, the Holy Spirit and our conscience. In future weeks we'll focus specifically on God speaking to us by His Holy Spirit as we listen in prayer. That's where we are weakest and that's the key to hearing from Him.

Next week we'll talk about what God's voice sounds like and specifically what kinds of things God says to us. Until then we need to become more aware that God is indeed speaking to us. We need to be able to recognize and 'read' Him as easily as we do a mate or good friend. We need to spend more time listening.

CONCLUSION

What a tremendous privilege it is to be able to communicate with the Lord of the universe and to listen to what He wants to say to me!

I need to listen to His guidance concerning Glory's decision. I want to be aware of the insight and understanding He gives me during my classes this week. I await the special times when He reveals Himself to me in a special way so I can respond in praise and worship. I desire His leading in the decisions I make, large and small, concerning my own life, my family and the church. I'm sure there are times I'll need Him to speak peace, comfort and encouragement to me as well. I know He'll be speaking; I want to make sure I am listening.

What do you need to hear about from Him this week? What are you going to do to make sure you hear from Him?

Let's pray. Before I pray let me give you a few moments to sit quietly and listen to God speak to your heart and your spirit.

DOES GOD REALLY SPEAK TO ME TODAY?

Rev. Jerry Schmoyer, January 4, 2004, Main Street Baptist Church

I. DOES GOD REALLY SPEAK TO ME TODAY?

A. God Desires Communication with Man – Psalm 81:13; Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 50:3;
1 Samuel 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 1:9

B. Man Desires Communication with God – Psalm 83:1

II. TO WHOM DID GOD SPEAK IN THE PAST?

A. In the Old Testament

In Eden, God walked and talked with man *Gen 2:15-17; 3:8-9*

God Spoke to Cain *Genesis 4:6*

God Spoke to Noah *Genesis 6:13-14*

God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

Audible voice *Genesis 22:11-12; 15:1; 46:2; Acts 7:6*

God spoke to Job *Job 40:6*

God Spoke To Moses in the burning bush *Exodus 3:2-6; Deuteronomy 4:12, 15*

God will tell Moses what to say *Exodus 4:10-12*

God spoke to Moses in Egypt *Exodus 6:13, 28; John 9:29*

God Spoke to the Jews from Mt Sinai *Deuteronomy 5:23; Exodus 19:19; 20:1; Dt 4:33; 5:4*

God Spoke From the cloud *Deuteronomy 4:33; Exodus 33:9*

God Spoke From the Ark *Exodus 25:*

God spoke to Moses in the desert *Leviticus 16:1; Numbers 1:1; 9:1*

God spoke through various people in Moses' day *Numbers 12:2* God Spoke Through A Donkey
Who Talked to Balaam *Num 22:28-30*

Balaam Spoke what God told him to say *Numbers 22:38*

God Spoke To Young Samuel *1 Samuel 3:3-7; 15:10*

God Spoke to Samuel about anointing David *1 Samuel 16:7*

God spoke to David *1 Samuel 24:4*

God Spoke to Nathan *2 Samuel 7:4*

God Spoke to Solomon *1 Kings 6:11* *The word of the LORD came to Solomon:*

God Spoke to the Old Testament Prophets *Hebrews 1:1; 1 Kings 13:20*

God Spoke to an Angel *1 Chronicles 21:*

God Spoke To Isaiah, calling him to service *Isaiah 6:8-12; 2 Kings 20:4; Is 8:5, 11*

God Spoke to Jeremiah *Jeremiah 46:13; 50:1*

God spoke to Daniel

God Spoke to King Ahaz *Isaiah 7:10*

God Spoke to Manasseh *2 Chronicles 33:10*

God Spoke to Jehu *1 Kings 16:1*

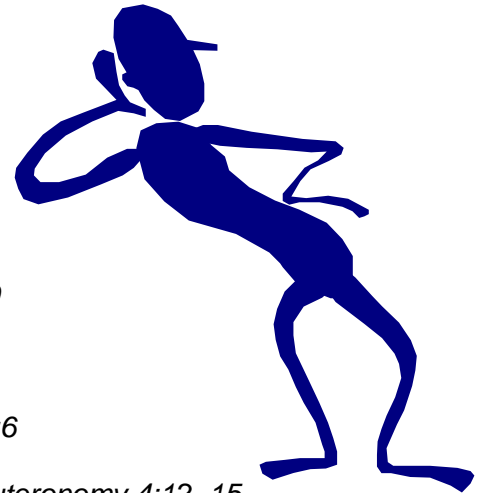
God Spoke to Elijah *1 Kings 19:9, 11-13*

God Spoke to Jonah *Jonah 1:1; 3:1*

God Spoke to Ezekiel *Ezekiel 1:1-3*

God Spoke to Haggai *Haggai 2:10, 20*

God Spoke to Zechariah *Zechariah 1:1, 7, 13*



B. In the New Testament

God Spoke at Jesus' baptism *Matthew 3:17*
 God Spoke to Jesus often Jesus prayed for hours, up all night in prayer
 The Spirit told Philip to go to eunuch *Acts 8:29-30*
 God Spoke to Paul on Road to Damascus *Acts 9:3-6*
 God Told Peter to go to Cornelius *Acts 10:9-16*
 God Told Ananias to go to Paul *Acts 9:10-*
 God Sent Paul to Macedonia *Acts 16:6-*
 God Spoke to Paul *Acts 18:9*
 The Pharisees believed God talked to people thru angels *Acts 23:9*
 God inspired the Bible writers *2 Peter 1:21*



III. THROUGH WHAT MEANS DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME TODAY?

A. Ways God Spoke in the Past but not Today

1. Audible Voice – Exodus 33:9; Isaiah 6:8
2. Angels – to Mary, Joseph, Zecharias, shepherds
3. Dreams – both Josephs, Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; Matthew 27:19
4. Visions – Abraham (Gen 15:1-5); Isaiah (1:1-8); Peter (Acts 10:9-14); John (Revelation 3 - 22)
5. Casting Lots – Acts 1:26; Proverbs 16:33
6. Urim & Thummim – by Old Testament priests

B. Ways God Spoke in the Past & Still Speaks today

1. Nature - Psalm 8:3-4; Job 38:8-11, 31-33; Mt 6:26,28; Rom 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-6
2. Other People – 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
3. Circumstances, Experiences – Acts 16:7; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
4. Prayer – Jesus Luke 6:12-14; 4:14
5. Written Word – Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16;
6. Holy Spirit - John 16:6-13; Romans 8:26-27
7. Conscience – Romans 9:1



2. “What Does God’s Voice Sound Like?”

from a sermon series by Rev. Jerry Schmoyer
delivered at Main Street Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA,
Jan & Feb 2004 ©

In the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral there is what is known as the “Whispering Gallery.” Through the peculiar construction of the dome a whisper by a person at one side travels round and can be distinctly heard by another person standing at the other.

An even more remarkable whispering gallery is that known as the “Ear of Dionysius” at Syracuse in Sicily. This is a vast cave, which externally bears a resemblance to a human ear. Entering by a low doorway, the visitor finds himself in a huge cavern. High up, concealed in the roof, is a chamber, which can only be entered by a concealed path at the top. The faintest whisper uttered below is distinctly heard by those concealed above. In this chamber the tyrant Dionysius used to sit listening to his slaves working or to his captives imprisoned below. All their plots against him were thus, to them, mysteriously discovered and circumvented. From this historical fact the cave has received the name of the “Ear of Dionysius.”

We, too, can learn to hear everything God says – if we know how to listen.

We saw last week that God really does speak to us today. He desires communication with us and we desire communication with Him. We saw that hearing from God is probable, possible and even very necessary.

Then we saw examples of those whom God spoke to in the Old Testament. These include Moses, Samuel, David and the prophets. In the New Testament we see Him speaking to Jesus quite often, to Paul on the road to Damascus and to many others.

We also looked at some of the ways God speaks to man. Some of the means God used to communicate to men in the past but which He no longer uses include audible voice (although there may be some times He still speaks audibly to people today), angels, dreams, visions, casting lots and the Urim an Thummim. We observed more closely some of the ways God spoke in the past and still speaks today. He speaks through nature, other people, circumstances and experiences, prayer, the written Word, the Holy Spirit and our conscience.

Thus we have established that God wants to speak to us and in deed does. Now we want to look at how He speaks and what He says.

I hope you’ve been learning to listen to Him this past week. Have you taken time to let Him speak and to sit and listen? Have you become more aware of when and how He speaks to you? I hope so. The whole purpose of these messages is for you to take this information and apply it to your own lives during the coming week.

I. WHAT DOES GOD’S VOICE SOUND LIKE?

Out of the several ways God uses to communicate His messages to us today, we will be focusing on His speaking to us by the Holy Spirit. He speaks to us today and we can hear His voice. It’s not a sound, it’s a voice. It’s not something you hear with your ears but in your mind. Once you learn to recognize and respond to this voice you’ll recognize it often.

There is an old story about two men walking down a busy, loud New York City street. Horns honked, engines roared, PA systems blasted advertisements. All of a sudden one of the

men, who had been an outdoorsmen all his life, stopped and said, "What's that?" The other man couldn't imagine what he was talking about with all the noise and confusion all around. The first man went over to the side of a building and picked up a cricket he had heard. The friend was amazed that the outdoorsman had even heard it, but his ears were attuned to that sound and could pick it out of the din around them. That's how our spiritual hearing needs to be. We need to be able to pick God's voice out of all the other voices clamoring for our attention. Hopefully this message will help you to be able to do that.

First we'll look at what God's voice sounds like, and then we'll talk about some of the things He says. The first clue we have to what God's voice sounds like is in I Kings 19 where we see it is a still, small voice – a gentle whisper.

Kings 19:11-13 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

In the still, small voice of God we are given a message that bears the stamp of His personality quite clearly and in a way we will learn to recognize.

There is a speaker system at the Ontario Motor Speedway in California that has an output of 30,800 watts connected to 355 speakers and able to communicate to 230,000 people above the noise of the car races. God could outdo that, but instead chooses to speak quietly. Therefore if we want to hear Him we can't wait for Him to shout over the noise in our life but we need to learn to be quiet and listen for His still, quiet voice.

I remember several years ago I was marrying a couple that I had known for a long time and had been coming to church and Bible studies for quite some time. They had some major 'issues' it seemed that had worked through, but the day before the wedding the groom did something that was part of his old pattern. I clearly heard God's voice in my spirit telling me not to marry them, so I didn't. The bride and both families really put a lot of pressure on me to go ahead with the wedding but I knew that God had spoken.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones writes: "God sometimes answers directly in our spirit. The prophet said, 'I will watch and see what He will say in me.' God speaks to me by speaking in me. He can so lie something upon the mind that we are certain of the answer. He can impress something upon our spirits in an unmistakable manner. We find ourselves unable to get away from an impression that is on our mind or heart; we try to rid ourselves of it, but back it comes."

Remember, this is not verbal voice, a sensation or an emotional experience. In fact, it can be very easy to overlook His voice or just think it's a thought of our own.

Try an experiment: Be as still and silent as you possibly can for the next 30 seconds or so. Listen as intently as you can, noticing the sounds you hear. How many sounds? What are they?--Close your eyes and begin to listen. Pause: Did you hear 1 sound-- 2? 3? 4? 5? Did you hear the ticking of the clock? Heater noise? Birds? Traffic? Voices? Your own breath? Your heartbeat? Ringing in your ears?

We are seldom still enough to hear the subtle sounds. Most of us suffer from a steady dose of noise pollution: TV, radio, conversation. Constant sound bombards us until the naturalness of silence sounds foreign, unnatural, threatening, and we'll do just about anything to cover it up. In a significant way, we are in fact addicted to noise. The constant blaring of the TV

is for many an electronic companion whose presence we take for granted; Muzak fills the elevator; we jump in the car and switch on the radio to fill the uncomfortable void; even a lapse in social conversation is viewed with alarm, and someone has to rescue the moment by talking. Even in church, if a few moments of silence are called for in worship, most church members have this internal response: "When will this be over?"

We need to learn to hear God's still voice as He speaks to us. I can think back on times He told me to talk to someone about Him and I didn't. Those still haunt me. Better memories are the times when God put it on my heart to speak to someone and I obeyed.

Writer Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He got nervous and tense about it. "I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day," he recalled in his book *Stress Fractures*. "Before long, things around our home started reflecting the patter of my hurry-up style. It was become unbearable.

"I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, 'Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin' and I'll tell you really fast.' Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey, you can tell me -- and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.' I'll never forget her answer: 'Then listen slowly.'"

That's good advice for all of us. Listen slowly; listen intently, for His voice is often a gentle whisper, a still, small voice. When we learn to listen for it we recognize that He speaks rich and enlightened thoughts to our spirits.

God can put a new idea directly and immediately into our mind. He can give us a new perspective in which to view something. He can put new desires into our hearts. He can stimulate certain memories stored within our mind just when they are most needed.

Martin Luther wrote: "If the Holy Spirit should come when these thoughts are in your mind and begin to preach to your heart, giving you rich and enlightened thoughts, then give Him the honor, let your preconceived ideas go, be quiet and listen to Him Who can talk better than you; and note what He proclaims and write it down."

James Dobson has given some of the best practical advice I have ever heard on how someone who really wants the will of God and who has a basically correct understanding of it should proceed. Describing how he does it himself, he says, "I get down on my knees and say, 'Lord, I need to know what you want me to do, and I am listening. Please speak to me through my friends, books, magazines I pick up and read, and through circumstances.'"

Often God's still, small voice takes the form of thoughts that are our thoughts, though they are not from us.

When God speaks in your heart it doesn't matter where your mind has been going; He blocks and overrides all circuits. You are captivated by His voice speaking to you. He commands your undivided attention. There is absolute certainty in what He says. What He says is right. His word has perfect balance and proportion. Everything He shows us fits together seamlessly. The word He gives us is complete. Everything He says compliments everything He's been showing us.

It's true that Satan can counterfeit this, but that just proves that God does speak to us in this way. A little later we'll have a whole message on how to tell God's voice from Satan's counterfeit leading.

When I study, when I prepare sermons and lessons, I try to be very aware of the rich and enlightening thoughts that God sends me by means of His Spirit. When I counsel I always try to

be sensitive to His leading and direction. When we are involved in spiritual warfare it is essential to be in tune to hear what thoughts God gives me.

Often this still, small voice speaks rich and enlightening thoughts by causing a burning within my heart.

The disciples who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus that first Resurrection Sunday experienced this. Luke 24:32 says, “They asked each other, ‘were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’”

Psalm 39:1-3 talks about this as well. “My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned.”

One of the more familiar quotes about this comes from the journal of John Wesley for May 14, 1738. “In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Haven't you found yourself moved by something you sense in your spirit? Perhaps it happens during a song or sermon, when listening to a testimony or out in nature? This stirring is God speaking to our hearts through His Holy Spirit, putting His fire within us to highlight something of importance.

Charles Stanley writes: “As you pray and read, trust the Holy Spirit to quicken your spirit to His truth. You may feel this as warmth inside, or you may feel a great sense of absoluteness about a particular verse. Sometimes the words on the page of your Bible may seem to stand out to you as if they were written in bold headlines. Sometimes you may not be able to get away from a particular passage. It comes repeatedly to your mind, and you can't seem to shake it from memory.”

So we see that this still, small voice speaks rich and enlightening thoughts by causing a burning within our hearts. How He speaks is by a gentle, quiet whisper. Where He speaks is to our thoughts and to our hearts. He touches our rational mental capacity (enlightened thoughts) as well as our emotional feelings (burning hearts).

II. WHAT DOES GOD'S VOICE SAY?

Hopefully that makes hearing God's voice a little clearer, but there is one more part I want to add which can be very helpful. What does His voice say? What can we expect to hear from God? What sort of things does He communicate to those who are listening?

To Ezekiel God complained that “these people have ears to hear but they never hear, eyes to see but they never see” (12:2). Jesus repeated this complaint several times as well.

We saw last time the many different people that God spoke to in the Old Testament. Often He spoke to them many times. We see throughout the Bible phrases like “the voice of the Lord” (14 times), “the voice of God” (3 times), “the Lord spoke” (24 times), “God spoke” (6 times), and “the word of the Lord came to...” (99 times). There is no way of knowing how many times this was a verbal voice and how many times it was God's still, small voice speaking rich thoughts to their mind or heart (or both). If it was verbal or not, however, the result was still the same – God spoke to them and they heard Him.

When we look at these occurrences we see they can be grouped into five areas of revelation. God spoke conviction, information, encouragement, enablement in ministry, and revelation of Himself.

For most of us, the first time we heard God speak to us He was convicting us of sin, showing us our need of salvation. Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me" (John 16:A7-11). I Thessalonians 1:4-5 says the gospel comes to us with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

Of course we all know that how we respond that that conviction is a free will choice each will need to make.

In the 1640s George Fox, founder of the Friends or Quaker movement, wandered the fields and lanes of the English countryside, seeking someone who could show him the way to peace with God. He finally became convinced that "there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do; then, oh! Then I heard a voice which said, 'here is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition'; and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory."

One way in which God speaks to us is to show us the sin in our life. He does this before salvation so we will see our need of Him. He also does this in the lives of those who have freely received His free gift of salvation. He shows us sin so we can confess and remove it.

Charles Stanley wrote: "As we read God's Word, we nearly always come to what I call a 'gulp point.' Something we read challenges us to change something in our lives, to gulp and say, 'Wow! That really hit me. I need to do something about that.' Sometimes it's a conviction about sin in our lives. Sometimes it's a correction in the way we have been taught or the way in which we act toward others. Sometimes it's a clear call to engage in a new discipline or area of ministry."

The problem is that we have a tendency to only listen to what we want to hear. A doctor can give us good advice about diet changes or needed exercise, but it's very easy to ignore his counsel if it means changes we don't want to make.

I've learned to recognize God's Spirit when He convicts me of sin. He warns me ahead of time through my conscience. He also censures me after I have sinned. While we may not want to hear these things from Him, we can thank Him for faithfully bringing sin to our attention. Suppose He didn't?

A second type of content God speaks to us is information and guidance.

Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13).

The Bible abounds with examples of this. Paul said the Holy Spirit warned him of what was to come when he went to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23). He reminded the church in Corinth that they had the "mind of Christ" (2:16). Joseph heard of Pharaoh's dream and God told Him the contents and their meaning. Daniel heard Nebuchadnezzar's dream and God gave him the interpretation. Jacob (Genesis 46:2) and Samuel (2 Samuel 23:2) both said God spoke His guidance to them. Simeon was moved by the Spirit to find Jesus with His parents in the temple

(Luke 2:25-28). Several times the Bible tells us that God guided Him by directing His spirit (Mark 2:8; John 13:21). God spoke to Ananias and told him to go to blind Paul (Acts 9:11-15).

An analogy I like which explains this is the shepherd-sheep illustration. He said that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:4, 16, 27). Jesus' definition of a disciple is one who follows Him, who hears His voice and responds.

St. Augustine tells of a time God's voice guided him. "I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, changing, and oft repeating, 'Take up and read. Take up and read.' I could remember no child's game with these words. So, checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God, to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find." Thus he came upon Romans 13:13-14 which led to his salvation and transformation.

Twenty three years ago I was between churches and seeking where God would have me minister. A church in western Pennsylvania invited us to come speak and apply so we did. We weren't sure if God wanted us to go there or not, but they went ahead with their procedure and voted on us. The vote was 100% - unanimous. I remember agonizing over the decision, awaiting their final call to see if we were coming or not. When the phone rang I still wasn't sure, but as I talked I knew God was telling me to turn it down. I really wanted to get back to pasturing. I hadn't ever heard of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown. Six months later God led us here, and the church vote was 51% in our favor. Denominational leaders urged us to turn down what was then a hot-bed of conflict and strife, but I knew God was leading us to come here so we did.

That's why it's so important to be listening to God and letting Him guide and direct.

A very remarkable illustration of this concerns Peter Marshall, the Scot who in the middle of the twentieth century became one of America's most widely acclaimed ministers. Through his outstanding qualities as a man and a minister, he brought the office of the chaplain of the United States Senate to a new level of prominence.

Back in Britain, on one foggy, pitch-black Northumberland night, he was taking a shortcut across the moors in an area where there was a deep, deserted limestone quarry. As he plodded blindly forward, an urgent voice called out, "Peter!" He stopped and answered: "Yes, who is it? What do you want?" But there was no response.

Thinking he was mistaken, he took a few more steps. The voice came again, even more urgently, "Peter!" At this he stopped again and, trying to peer into the darkness, stumbled forward and fell to his knees. Putting down his hand to brace himself, he found nothing there. As he felt around in a semicircle he discovered that he was right on the brink of the abandoned quarry, where one step more would certainly have killed him.

It's not just the big things, but little things He leads us with as well. Many times I've not been able to find my keys or something I've misplaced. After frantically looking everywhere I finally stop and pray, and then soon after that their location pops right into my mind!

Charles Stanley adds excellent counsel to this. "In the Old Testament when men such as King David inquired of the Lord, the question was nearly always put to the Lord in such a way that the answer was yes or no. I believe this is the foremost way that the Holy Spirit speaks to us hour by hour as we walk through our particular set of circumstances. We can never ask too many times of the Holy Spirit, 'Should I do this – yes or no?' We will sense in our spirits His word of reply to us. Generally, it will be a sense of enthusiasm and eager desire marked with great joy and freedom, or it will be a sense of foreboding, danger, caution, or need for silence. I

find that it is much easier to receive the direction of the Holy Spirit by asking for yes-or-no counsel than to say to Him in general terms, 'What do you want me to do?'"

So when we talk about the content of what God speaks we find He speaks conviction, information and guidance, and also encouragement.

God doesn't just speak information to us; quite often He speaks words of encouragement, peace, comfort and strength. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

God has given me encouragement and peace about our church. Despite the numbers and financial difficulties, I know He wants me to persevere here.

So God speaks conviction, information and encouragement to us. He also tells us how to carry on the responsibilities and ministries He has given us.

His voice calls people into ministry (I Timothy 1:12; 2:6-7) and then tells those whom He has called what to say. Moses is an example of this (Exodus 4:10-12). I'm sure you've noticed times when you were talking to someone about spiritual things and all of a sudden the right thoughts came to you and you were able to explain something in a way you never thought you could.

When I teach and preach I depend on God to give me the right things to say. That's why I always pray before I start, asking Him to give me His words to speak and that everyone would hear Him and not me. I need to listen to Him and you need to be hearing from Him as you hear me.

The final form His communication may take is that of revelation of Himself. Often it will just seem to 'hit' us how wonderful, powerful or majestic God is. This is Him revealing Himself to us by His Holy Spirit. He does this so we will respond in praise and worship.

That happens to me when I listen to my son Dan play the piano or when I listen to Southern Gospel Music.

Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed with God's love in our soul that we find ourselves enraptured in an immense feeling of being loved deeply, of God telling us how much He loves us. Our natural response is to worship, to love Him back.

So we've seen this morning that God speaks to us in a gentle whisper. When He does, He speaks rich and enlightening thoughts to our minds. Or He may cause a warm burning in our hearts as He speaks to our emotions and feelings.

The content which He communicates to us consists of conviction, information and guidance, encouragement and peace, enablement in ministry, and a revelation of Himself to cause us to worship Him.

In which of these areas has He been speaking to you during the last week? In which is He speaking to you now? Where do you need to hear Him speaking in the coming week?

Now that you know a little better what God's voices sounds like and the kinds of things He talks about, make sure you are listening for them this week. Many people like to write down these things so they remember and follow through with them.

Make sure you are always listening, for God will be speaking. He will speak to you this week, will you hear Him?

I'd like to close with a story I shared on a Wednesday evening several years ago. It's a great example of listening to God speak.

A young man had been to Wednesday night Bible study. The Pastor had shared about listening to God and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man could not help but wonder "Does God still speak to people?" After service, he went out with some friends for coffee and pie and they discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in different ways. It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God... If you still speak to people, speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey." As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought to stop and buy a gallon of milk. He shook his head and said out loud, "God is that you?" He did not get a reply and started on toward home. But again, his thought still reminds him to buy a gallon of milk. The young man thought about Samuel and how he did not recognize the voice of God, and how little Samuel ran to Eli. "Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It did not seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk and started toward home. As he passed Seventh Street, he again felt the urge, "Turn down that street."

This is crazy he thought and drove on past the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down Seventh Street. At the next intersection, he turned back and headed down Seventh. Half jokingly, he said aloud, "Okay, God, I will".

He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. He was in a semi-commercial area of town. It was not the best but it was not the worst of neighborhoods either. The businesses were closed and most of the houses looked dark like the people were already in bed. Again, he sensed something, "Go, and give the milk to the people in the house across the street."

The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. He started to open the door and then sat back in the car seat. "Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad and I will look stupid." Again, he felt like he should go and give the milk. Finally, he opened the door, "Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door, and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something but if they don't answer right away, I am out of here." He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside. A man's voice yelled out, "Who is it? What do you want?" Then the door opened before the young man could get away. The man was standing there in his jeans and T-shirt. He looked like he just got out of bed. He had a strange look on his face and he did not seem too happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. "What is it?" The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, "Here, I brought this to you." The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway speaking loudly in Spanish. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying.

The man had tears streaming down his face. The man began speaking and half-crying, "We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We did not have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk." His wife in the kitchen yelled out, "I ask him to send an Angel with some. Are you an Angel?" The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put it in the man's hand. He turned and walked back toward his car and the tears were streaming down his face. He knew that God still answers prayers.

WHAT DOES GOD'S VOICE SOUND LIKE?

Rev. Jerry Schmoyer, January 11, 2004, Main Street Baptist Church

I. WHAT DOES GOD'S VOICE SOUND LIKE?

A. Gentle Whisper (still, small voice)

1 Kings 19:11-13 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"



B. Rich & Enlightened Thoughts

John 2:22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

C. Warm, Burning Heart

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

*Ps 39:1-3 I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence." 2 But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased. 3 **My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned;** then I spoke with my tongue:*

II. WHAT DOES GOD'S VOICE SAY?

"these people have ears to hear but they never hear eyes to see, but they never see" (Ezekiel 12:2).

A. Conviction

John 16:7-11 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;

1 Thess 1:4-5 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

B. Information, Guidance

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Acts 20:22-23; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Samuel 23:2; Genesis 46:2; Luke 2:25-28; Mark 2:8; John 13:21; Acts 9:11-15

John 10:4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ... 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ... 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

C. Encouragement, Peace

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Phil 4:6-7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

D. Enablement in Ministry

E. Revelation of Himself = Worship



3. What Can I Do to Hear God's Voice?

from a sermon series by Rev. Jerry Schmoyer
delivered at Main Street Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA,
Jan & Feb 2004 ©

It's widely felt that God only speaks to us in the way a conductor would lead his orchestra in the William Tell Overture – by blowing us out of the saddle! That's because we tend to look only at the Oscar-winning examples: Moses at the burning bush, Paul blinded on the Damascus road, Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Jonah swallowed by a great fish, Daniel and the den of lions, Shadrach and the fiery furnace, and the countless miracles of Jesus.

What a sad misconception! Just because you haven't had an earth-shattering experience doesn't mean God isn't talking to you. It's a lie from Satan to think that we aren't important enough to have Him communicate with us.

The problem isn't with God speaking to us; the problem is with our listening to God. Either we are too busy and distracted or we haven't learned how to listen to God. Learning to listen to God is one of the most important skills we can learn in life.

When you feel like you aren't as close to God as you once were, like you are drifting from God, it's not always a matter of just praying more. It's often more a matter of listening to what He is saying.

We've already seen that God does indeed speak to man today. We looked at lots of Bible examples. The ways God spoke to people in the Bible and still speaks to us today include nature, other people, conscience, circumstances and through the Holy Spirit.

Last time we saw that God speaks to us in a gentle whisper, a still, small voice. Some times He speaks rich and enlightened thoughts to our minds. Other times it is a warm burning in our heart that lets us know it is Him speaking to us. Sometimes it can be both at once.

Usually the first time we hear Him speak it is convicting us of our sin and need of Him. He continues to warn us about sin and point out sins we have committed. He also communicates information and guidance when we need that. At other times He may speak encouragement and peace to us. When He has a special service of ministry to do He gives us direction and ability to do that. Then, too, there are times He reveals Himself to us so we will respond in worship.

Now that we've covered the topic of God speaking to us, we need to turn to our side – man listening to God. Since God does speak to me, what can I do to hear God's voice?

I. WHAT CAN I DO TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

Hearing God's voice is more than just reading a couple Bible verses each morning. Deion Sanders, the famous athlete, tried that. He tells how each evening he'd be deeply involved in all kinds of sin, but in the morning he'd always read his Bible. That was a habit built into him by a devout grandmother. He said he did it regularly just like brushing his teeth, but five minutes after he was done he had no idea what he read. It wasn't until he accepted Jesus as his Savior that he started hearing God when he read.

The first requirement to hear God's voice is salvation. While our sin still separates us from God we are not only spiritually blind, we are also spiritually deaf. Since it is God's Spirit

within us that communicates God's messages to us, we don't have a 'receiver' or 'transmitter' until we have God's Spirit.

However, just because we have accepted Jesus as Savior and have the Holy Spirit inside doesn't mean we are always attuned to Him. Sin, rebellion, disobedience, self-centeredness, laziness, these and many other things can quench His Spirit. We don't lose the Holy Spirit when we sin, but we do cut off the communication with God that comes through Him. So we need to be disciples who follow Him and live for Him in order to regularly hear from Him.

When we have accepted Jesus as Savior and have Him first in life, with no unconfessed sin, we will hear from God. God supernaturally opens our spiritual eyes so we can 'see' His truth. He also opens our spiritual ears so we can 'hear' His voice. Ezekiel 12:2 warns, "Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?" So important is this verse that it is quoted seven times in the Gospels and another seven times in the Book of Revelation.

These verses imply first of all a capacity to spiritually hear God and also a choice we can or cannot make to willingly listen to His voice.

A hardened unbeliever went one day to see—but not to hear—George Whitefield when he preached outdoors to a great throng. In order to have a good vantage point, he climbed a nearby tree. Putting his fingers in both ears, he began to watch the mighty preacher. Then a persistent fly lit on his nose. He shook his head, but the fly wouldn't move. Just as he removed a hand from an ear to flick the fly away, Whitefield quoted the verse, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). Then he spoke of the willful refusal of many to hear the Spirit's voice. The unbeliever was so impressed by what happened that he opened not only his ears to the gospel, but also his heart.

So before we can listen to God we must have His Spirit within and there can be nothing blocking our listening to Him. We must make that free will choice to listen to Him.

II. WHAT KEEPS ME FROM HEARING GOD'S VOICE?

If you are a user of the Internet then you know that you must first get your modem connected with a server before you can have access to the unlimited knowledge base known as the World Wide Web. You are out of luck if the server is busy, right? You have probably sat there in front of your computer screen many times biting your fingernails or pulling your hair out as you heard the phone line ringing and ringing and never connecting. Or you can connect and then all of a sudden find your connection broken. You must find what is causing the problem and fix it.

Lots of things can break the connection between us and God. One of the most common things is distractions that turn us from His voice.

Luke 10:340 says that Martha was too busy to hear Jesus because she was distracted by meal preparations. Several years ago newspapers told how a new Navy jet fighter shot itself down. Flying at supersonic speed, it ran into cannon shells it had fired only a few seconds before. The jet was traveling too fast! If we don't have time to spend with God, talking to Him and listening to His voice, we are traveling too fast as well. You better slow down before you shoot yourself down!

Sometimes when I am too busy during the day and neglect my relationship with God I find myself waking up during the night for no reason and just laying there. I'd learned to use that time to pray and reconnect with God. It's His way of calling me aside to be with Him. Nancy does the same when I neglect spending quality time with her. She doesn't wake me up during

the night, but she does let me know I have been neglecting our relationship. Is God trying to tell you right now that you've been neglecting Him? Listen to what He says!

I find my best time to spend with God is first thing in the morning, often before even getting out of bed. Once I go downstairs, bring in the paper and turn on the computer its much harder for me to give Him the full attention He deserves. Some find evenings work best for them. Whatever it is, just make sure you do it and not let business get in your way.

Martin Luther said, "I have so much to do today that I shall never get through it with less than three hours' prayer." Charles Spurgeon said, "I always feel that there is something wrong if I go without prayer for even half an hour in the day."

Even when times are busy, we must learn to listen. Many years ago before electricity, people had ice houses to store ice from the winter so they could use it in the summer. They would put layers of sawdust all around each block to insulate it and keep it from melting. One day a worker in an ice house lost a very special watch, given him by his father before he died. He and several others dug all through the sawdust but could not find it. After hours of labor they gave it up as lost. A young boy had heard of the problem and went into the ice house after all the others left. Five minutes later he came out with the watch, to the astonishment of all. When asked how he found it so easily the boy said, "I just went in t here by myself, closed the door, lay very still on the sawdust and listened real hard."

When do you best hear from God? What can you do to counter the noises and distractions that keep you from hearing from God?

A second interference that can block us from hearing God's voice is disappointment. The Psalmist cries, "O my God, I cry out day by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:2).

It is very likely that Jonah's family was killed by the Assyrians, so when God sent him to bring them a message that would spare them from judgment, he didn't want to listen to God.

When our prayers don't seem to be answered like we'd like, we sometimes stop praying and drift from God. When we feel hurt by someone, we withdraw from them.

I remember when, as a new Christian, I prayed for something very important to me. I believed God wanted me to ask Him for it and that if I prayed and believed God would answer that prayer. He didn't and I was confused and devastated. I had a decision to make: withdraw from God because I was disappointed in His will or trust Him anyway.

Daniel had to pray for three weeks before he received God's answer (Daniel 10:12-14). We may have to pray for three years, or thirty years.

Can you think of a time in life when you withdrew from God because you were disappointed in His will for you? Are you distant from Him now because you don't like something He is doing in your life?

Distractions can cause us to not listen to God, so can disappointment. Disconnection is something else to be aware of when God's voice isn't coming through loud and clear.

Jesus warned His listeners to watch out for "the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things" (Mark 4:18-19).

Sin will instantly disconnect us from receiving God's message. A group of dolphins got stranded on a beach near Boston. Scientists feel they may have run aground because of a hearing problem. The animals, which use sound waves to judge depths, were found to have worms clogging their sinus cavities and inner ears, making them hard of hearing. The dolphins

were unable to gauge the depth of water in which they were swimming. They thought they were in deep water, but found themselves stranded on the beach.

When we allow unconfessed sin in our lives, it blocks our ability to hear God speaking to us. On our own we can easily 'ground' ourselves.

If you found you have lost your connection to God, make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life.

Is there any sin you are aware of that you haven't admitted to God and asked for His cleansing? If so, stop and do so now.

Not only do distractions, disappointment, disconnection and disinformation make it so we don't hear God speaking, so does disinformation.

While Joshua and Caleb advised the Jews to enter the land, the other 10 spies spread disinformation which misled the people. Some of the information spread today about God and the Christian life is false information, disinformation, and can mislead many. This includes believing things like the saying that bad things don't happen to good people. Others include, "If I had enough faith, my prayers would be answered," "Christians shouldn't grieve," "only those who speak in tongues are really spiritual," "God wants all His people to be healthy and wealthy, if we aren't it's from our lack of faith," "I'm not good enough so God won't listen to me," and "God is sovereign so it doesn't matter if I pray or not."

Based on Judges 6:36-40 some say we should 'put out a fleece' to discern God's will, but that is not true. Others say we must have 'confirmation' on all God says. While it is true that God often does confirm what He says, He doesn't always do so. Also, Satan can say something and then act in such a way as if to confirm it.

A final lie that can hinder our listening to God is the one that says God will give his message for me through someone else, someone more 'spiritual' than I am. Be very careful when someone says, "God told me to tell you...." The Bible says we are to avoid mediums (Deut. 18:10-11) for Jesus is our only go-between (1 Timothy 2:5). God speaks directly to his people.

Believing these and other bits of misinformation will turn us from listening to God. What lies have you believed in the past? Ask God to show you which ones you may be believing now?

Similar to but distinct from disinformation is deception. We can be deceived by Satan's voice, or even our own, and mistake them from God's voice. We will look into this more completely in the last message of this topic. Pride can deceive us into thinking we don't need to hear from God.

Silently ask God to show you what baggage you are carrying around, what deceptions have kept you from listening to Him.

The final danger we will look at concerning ways our hearing from God can be blocked is disbelief.

Four times the Bible says, "Today, if you will hear his voice...." (Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7; Psalm 95:7). It's up to us if we hear Him. Do you believe He can speak to you, to you yourself and not just to others? If not, confess your unbelief and ask for forgiveness.

Distractions, disappointment, disconnection, disinformation, deception and disbelief all will block our reception of God's message. Which of these is keeping you from hearing Him? What can you do to remedy this?

III. WHAT DOES GOD DO TO GET MY ATTENTION WHEN I'M NOT LISTENING TO HIS VOICE?

God is faithful. He wants us to listen to Him. He even goes out of His way to get our attention when we aren't listening. My computer gives me a warning so I know I'm disconnected and not receiving signals. God sends warning notices to our spirit as well.

This message may come in the form of an unsettled spirit. When God wanted to get a message to King Ahasuerus he kept him from sleeping (Esther 6:1). If you feel restlessness in your spirit, an unsettled feeling, like something is wrong or missing, take that as God's warning that He wants your attention. Listen to what He has to say.

Another form this message can take is an unsolicited word from another person. This could be an admonition or a correction. God sent Nathan to David with such a message after David sinned with Bathsheba and then didn't confess his sin (2 Samuel 12:1). This could even take the form of complements and words of appreciation or approval which help us get our eyes off ourselves and onto God.

The third type of warning message from God is unusual circumstances, both good and bad. Paul alerted the Corinthians to the fact that, because of unconfessed sin, many of them were sick and some had died (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). Illness, accidents, bankruptcies, failures, divorced, disappointments – all these and other means may be used to get someone's attention and come back to God. This isn't to say that this is the only reason for negative things to happen, nor that all bad things are God's way of getting our attention, but it is certainly something to consider.

God not only uses negative things to get our attention, but also positive. Sometimes God sends blessing to get us to listen to Him again. "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

So we see that God gets our attention by giving us a restless spirit, an unsolicited word from another person, unusual circumstances, both good and bad, and also by unanswered prayer.

Sometimes, when it seems the heavens are closed and God isn't hearing us, God simply wants us to try harder to connect with Him. While this certainly isn't the only reason for what we call 'unanswered' prayer, sometimes God does use it to make us more desperate to hear from Him so we examine our lives for sin and listen all the closer to Him.

Do you notice any of these in your life right now? Could it be that God is trying to get your attention, to let you know you have lost your connection with Him and not listening to Him? If so confess any sin He points out and take time to open your heart and listen.

IV. WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

There is one more aspect of hearing God's voice that I want to talk about before we are done today. We've been talking about hearing from God and how to better listen. We haven't covered all we need to until we talk about the commitment we need to make in order to regularly hear God speak.

You see, hearing means commitment to obey. We must listen before we can obey, but we won't be able to really listen until we commit to obey.

“Listen” refers to more than hearing sound. When a parent says to their child, “Did you hear me?” they aren’t wondering if their voice was loud enough. They are pointing out the importance of doing what they just heard.

A missionary translator was endeavoring to find a word for “obedience” in the native language. This was a virtue seldom practiced among the people into whose language he wanted to translate the New Testament. As he returned home from the village one day, he whistled for his dog and it came running at full speed. An old native, seeing this, said admiringly in the native tongue, “Your dog is all ear.” Immediately the missionary knew he had his word for obedience.

We must make a commitment to obey God before He speaks, not wait until we hear from Him and then consider what He says along with our other options. He won’t speak His will to us just so we can mull it over. He must know our desire to want to do what He wants even before we know what it is. Hebrews 3:7-8 says, “so, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert.’”

Hearing means commitment to obey, and often when we do so there is a price to pay.

Hearing means commitment to pay. God often calls us to do things that don’t fit our agenda, our schedule or our idea of what should be done. Hosea committed himself to obey God and God told him to marry an adulterous wife (Hosea 1:1-3). Jeremiah was cruelly persecuted. Isaiah was commanded to go around naked and barefoot for three years (20:3-5). Hearing God means commitment to obey, no matter what the price we must pay.

Are you willing to pay the price to hear from God? Will you commit to obey Him no matter what He says?

So what have we learned about listening to God? First, we must be a Christian for it is through the indwelling Spirit that He speaks to us. In addition, we must make sure there is no unconfessed sin in our lives.

Then we must watch out for distractions, disappointments, disconnections, disinformation, deception and disbelief, for any of these can stop our reception of His communication. Are any of these keeping you from hearing from God?

Always be on the alert for anything God may be doing to get you to better listen to Him. Is He giving you an unsettled spirit, an unsolicited word from another person, unusual circumstances (both bad and good), or unanswered prayer? Do you notice any of these in your life right now? Is God trying to get your attention so you’ll listen?

Make sure you are willing to obey what He says, even before He tells you. Some things may be pleasing and easy, but others may be hard and very difficult. Often there is a price to pay. Are you willing to pay the price to hear from God? Will you commit to obey Him no matter what He says?

(Bulletin Insert)

WHAT CAN I DO TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

Rev. Jerry Schmoyer, January 18, 2004, Main Street Baptist Church

I. WHAT CAN I DO TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

REQUIREMENTS TO HEAR GOD:

1. **SALVATION**, Holy Spirit within, sin problem removed
2. **DISCIPLESHIP**, commitment to connect with Him, know, grow, obey



Mark 8:18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?

II. WHAT KEEPS ME FROM HEARING GOD'S VOICE?

A. Distractions

Luke 10:39-40 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

B. Disappointment

Ps 22:2 O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.

C. Disconnection

Mark 4:18-19 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

D. Disinformation

Judg 6:36-40 Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised- 37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." 38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew-a bowlful of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew." 40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

LIE: MUST HAVE 'CONFIRMATION' FOR ALL GOD SAYS

LIE: INSTEAD OF TELLING YOU, GOD WILL TELL SOMEONE MORE 'SPIRITUAL' SO THEY PASS IT ON TO YOU

E. Deception

Psalm 138:6 "Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar."

F. Disbelief

*Hebrews 3:7, 15. 4:7; Psalm 95:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says:
"Today, if you hear his voice,*



III, WHAT DOES GOD DO TO GET MY ATTENTION WHEN I'M NOT LISTENING TO HIS VOICE?

A. UNSETTLED SPIRIT

Esther 6:1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.

B. UNSOLICITED WORD FROM ANOTHER PERSON

2 Samuel 12:1 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

C. UNUSUAL EVENT

*"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep." – 1 Cor. 12. 29-30
Romans 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

D. UNANSWERED PRAYER

sometimes have great need and heavens seem iron, no answer or help from God makes us more desperate to hear, listen all the closer

IV. WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

A. Hearing Means Commitment to Obey

JESUS in Gethsemane - "NEVERTHELESS"

Ex 8:19 The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

B. Hearing Means Commitment to Pay

*HOSEA: "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, 1:1-3
ISAIAH: "Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, Isa 20:3-5*

4. How Can I Learn to Hear God Better?

from a sermon series by Rev. Jerry Schmoyer
delivered at Main Street Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA,
Jan & Feb 2004 ©

ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder, is mostly an organic problem which tends to run in families. It is characterized by the inability to sustain focused attention. Symptoms include distractibility, inattention, impulsiveness, insatiability and hyperactivity. Many Christians suffer from a kind of spiritual ADD. We don't hear from God as clearly as we might because we are distracted, inattentive and hyperactive.

We all hear from God much easier when we are quietly spending time with Him. But in our lives today there always seems to be some sound to distract, some interruption to interfere or some activity to get involved in. God doesn't shout over everything else in our lives. A five-minute devotional in the morning while rushing to get ready for work is no solution.

So far in this series we've seen that God does indeed speak to us today. He speaks in a gentle whisper and communicates rich and enlightened thoughts to our mind or a warm burning to our heart. Sometimes He speaks conviction, other times information and guidance. He may give us encouragement and peace, enablement in ministry, or a revelation of Himself so we can respond in worship.

In order for us to hear Him we saw that we must have accepted His free gift of salvation so that His Holy Spirit dwells in us. It is His Spirit that speaks God's thoughts to us. Of course we must be living for Him with no known sin in our lives for sin separates us from Him and breaks our contact, making us unable to hear from Him until the sin is confessed.

Then we must be aware of other things that interfere with our hearing from Him. These include distractions, disappointments, disconnection, disinformation, deception and disbelief.

When we get away from Him and don't take time to listen He gets our attention by giving us an unsettled spirit, by an unsolicited word from another person, by unusual circumstances, both good and bad, and by unanswered prayer.

Finally we saw that there is a price to be paid to hear God's voice. Hearing means we must be committed to obey Him even before we hear what He has to say. It also means being willing to pay the price that comes with obeying, for it isn't always easy or comfortable.

I hope you've been applying these things and that you are having a closer walk with the Lord because you've practiced listening to Him. As you continue to do this you can better recognize and follow His voice.

Today we want to talk about how to hear God's voice better. What can we do to better hear Him?

I. HOW CAN I LEARN TO HEAR GOD BETTER?

Charles Stanley says, "As we walk in the Spirit daily, surrendered to His power, we have the right and privilege to expect anything we need to hear from God. The Holy Spirit living within us and speaking to us ought to be the natural lifestyle of believers. We claim His presence, direction, and guidance by faith."

Listening means viewing prayer as dialogue. Communication is not just talking but listening. Prayer is a dialogue between two people, not a one-way monologue. Unfortunately we are much better at talking than at listening. We need to develop better listening skills in all our relationships. Talking to God is entirely different from listening to God. Real communication is an endless loop of transmitting and receiving thoughts and ideas.

Too often our prayers are 'prayer speeches' to God – we do all the talking and don't let Him communicate with us. If we are to truly have a relationship with God we must listen as well as talk, for that is the basis of all relationships.

Listening means using frequency, intensity and time. How does your communication with God stand up to the "F-I-T" test? Frequency, Intensity, Time – all are necessary.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Jesus calls to us, His voice is there if we will but open the door and listen. He wants a continual dialogue, not just a Sunday-morning chat. In any relationship, the more time spent listening the better we understand the other person and the easier we can grasp what they are saying. That's why we can understand our friends better than strangers. Is God a friend you are familiar with or a stranger to you? The more you listen to God the easier it will be to recognize and understand His voice. Children learn to recognize their parent's voice; mates can read much meaning into simple statements by each other. That happens as we spend frequent time listening to God.

God says through Jeremiah (29:12-13), "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." My radio has a dial where I can choose what station I want to receive. Those I don't want I reject, those I want to listen to I focus in on. The same is true of us listening to God. We must tune out the voices that come from self, the world, the flesh or Satan and tune into God's frequency only. As with a radio, we can only be tuned to one station at a time! We need intensity in our seeking to listen to God, as the Psalmist describes in Psalm 42:1-2: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

We also need to spend time in communication with God. Mary chose to spend time with Jesus despite all the other things that needed doing in her life (Luke 10:41-42) and God blessed her for that choice. I read one author that said God would speak to us in one of two ways. He will whisper in our ear or hit us on the head with a brick. We can listen for the whisper or wait for the brick. More often than not, the brick comes because we haven't been listening for the whisper.

So we see we must view prayer as dialogue. We must make sure listening to God is done frequently, intently and given enough time. This includes spending time meditating.

The place of meditation in listening to God. Meditation is a time to think, contemplate, reflect, ponder and consider spiritual things in God's presence. The Psalmist says: "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways" (Psalm 119:15). "I meditate on your decrees" (Psalm 119:48). God promises us: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

While it is true that groups such as Catholics and more traditional Protestant denominations emphasize meditation more than Baptists. We focus on talking to God in praise, prayer, testimonies and preaching. Others put more emphasis on listening to God in times of meditation. We need a balance between both of these.

Don't confuse what I am talking about with meditation as practiced by Eastern religions and New Age cults. We're not talking about emptying our mind and altering our consciousness to blend with 'reality'. We're quieting our mind and heart so we can be more filled with God's presence.

Listening means communicating like with a friend/mate. In order for me to truly communicate with my wife Nancy I need to relax, give her my full attention, and focus on her and what she is saying. I must make sure there are no offences or hurts between us that need to be confessed and removed. I must listen between the lines and read her moods. I respond to what she reveals with affirmation, encouragement or requests for further clarification. The more we really communicate, the easier it is growing in our relationship and improve our connection. Moses spoke to God face to face, "as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Perhaps that's one reason he was so close to God.

Listening means asking questions. When we talk with a mate or friend we often ask questions or request more information about a certain subject. Jehosaphat asked God what he should do about the enemies approaching Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 20:12). God wants us to ask Him questions so He can give us His answers. Sometimes one of the best ways to find God's will is to ask Him a question that has a "yes" or "no" answer. We often do that with others; ask them a question with a yes or no answer so we can find out what they want. Do the same with God.

When we see communication with God similar to communicating with a friend or mate we can better understand it.

Listening means to listen actively. I do my best listening with a pencil and paper nearby. I write down things to make sure I get them right and also to know what questions to ask. Usually I start with some impressions, ideas or thoughts that I've learned to recognize as coming from God, not me. I do this when working on sermons or lessons. I also do it when counseling. I journal some of these things that are of a more personal nature. I like to write down prayers and what I feel God is telling me to pray for.

This means we must listen expectantly, in eager anticipation of hearing from God. "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

We must also listen quietly. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Find a time and place when you can be quiet within and without, then listen to God.

Then, too, we must listen patiently. God doesn't tell us everything all at once. As one part is understood and applied then He'll communicate more. We are usually in a hurry. We often spend more time telling God what to do than listening to what He wants to tell us to do. "Wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7). "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord" (Psalm 130:5-6). Patience is a fruit of the Spirit and we need to depend on God to produce it in us.

Another way we must listen is confidently. We need to trust we will receive from Him what He feels we need, not just what we want. We can't listen just for a certain preconceived idea from Him but be open to whatever He says. This faith means we trust that God will lead us in the way that is right, even if it's not the way we want. "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him and He will do this" (Psalm 37:5-6). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

In addition we must listen dependently. Listen as if your life depended on it, for it does! Listen in reliance, as a child listens to an adult (Matthew 18:2-4).

Listen openly. Be open to receive whatever He says. Have no agenda but His agenda. Be open to words of reproof or correction. "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me" (Psalm 25:4-5).

When we listen we must also listen attentively. When I am preaching I can usually tell who is paying attention and who isn't. There is no time that is more important to pay attention than when God talks! "Be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Peter 4:7).

Also listen carefully. "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Don't miss anything God says. Focus. Don't run ahead and add things, nor let your mind wander and miss what He might want to say.

Make sure you listen submissively. Agree to do it before hearing it. Listen with the full intent of obeying. When Mary heard from the angel about God's humanly-impossible task for her, her response was "I am the Lord's servant. ... May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). That's how Jesus obeyed God's will for Him to go to the cross (Matthew 26:39).

Finally, make sure you listen reverently. Stand in awe of God, never take Him for granted. Don't think God is here to do our bidding and pleasure. We are here for Him, He isn't here for us. "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations" (Psalm 22:27-28). "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

Charles Stanley says we need to make these declarations in our inner spirit by faith as we listen to God. Rate yourself on how you stand on these:

1. I'm eager **to** hear what You are going to say to me (expectant).
2. I'm listening, Lord (quiet).
3. I'll wait until I hear from You (patient).
4. I'm confident that You are going to tell me what I need to hear (confident).
5. I depend upon You completely to tell me who I am to become **,** what I am to say, and what I am to do (dependent).
6. I want to be open to all possibilities, Lord (open).
7. I am listening keenly to every word (attentive).
8. I am trusting You, Holy Spirit, to confirm to me that what I am hearing is, indeed, from God (careful).
9. Not my will or way, but Yours, Lord (submissive).
10. I am in awe and thanksgiving that You would speak to me, Lord (reverent).

So we see that listening means viewing prayer as dialogue not monologue. It means communicating as you would with a friend or mate, using frequency, intensity and time. Asking questions is a good way to find God's guidance. When you listen, listen expectantly, quietly, patiently, confidently, dependently, openly, attentively, carefully, submissively and reverently.

In addition, listening means having a sensitive spirit. The basis of God speaking to us is His Holy Spirit speaking to our human spirit. God lives in our spirit after salvation. He speaks

from there. This is how God the Father communicated to His Son when on earth as well. “Immediately Jesus knew in His spirit that ...” (Mark 2:8). We must learn to be sensitive to His voice, recognizing and obeying it whenever He speaks to us.

Finally, listening requires focus and sacrifice. One of the ways we can help focus on our communication with God is through fasting. “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2).

Fasting is often neglected today, but when done out of a right motive it can be a real help in spiritual warfare. Jesus fasted often (Matthew 4:1-11, etc.). Jesus assumed His disciples would fast (note the “when,” not “if” in Matthew 6:16). Fasting is a spiritual exercise distinct from prayer, although often done in connection with prayer. It is still something for us to do today (Matthew 9:15). Usually fasting is done from food (all or a certain food group, like sweets, or a certain meal a day, or no food all day). Sometimes drink is abstained from, other times not. Sometimes sleep (II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27) and/or sex (I Corinthians 7:3-5) are included. Be sensitive to how and when God leads you to fast.

The motive in fasting is not to punish self for sin or prove sincerity to God so He will smile with more favor in a certain situation. Hunger pictures humility (Psalm 69:10; Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 11-14; Hosea 13:6). Enduring hunger teaches self-discipline and works against pride (Ezra 8:21; Isaiah 58:3). It provides an attitude of submission. Fasting also opens up more time to be available to pray and seek God. It shows a willingness to sacrifice anything to get closer to God. It serves notice to demonic forces that you are serious in your pursuit of God's will and glory (Jeremiah 29:13-14). A side benefit of fasting is that one can learn to depend on God for self-control and thus better control their appetite (I Corinthians 6:12-13; II Peter 2:19). This also helps with self-control over sexual sins as well.

Fasting brings humility which helps us better connect with God. Psalm 35:13-14 says “Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.” Daniel 9:3 says “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”

II. WHAT BENEFITS DO I ENJOY WHEN I LEARN TO HEAR GOD BETTER?

One thing we haven't talked about yet is the good things that happen to us to us when we learn to listen to God.

When we listen to Him, He shows us the path to travel. He provides guidance, leading, directions and instruction we need. “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it’” (Isaiah 30:21). You can see this in the lives of Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, David and many others.

Another benefit of listening is the peace within that we get when we listen to Him. That peace comes from an intimate relationship with Him. Knowing we are in God's will and that He will lead us gives us peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). God will give you a deep assurance and abiding sense of rest. You won't feel pressured or confused when you know you are listening to Him.

A positive attitude comes from listening to God as well. This is an all-encompassing attitude that God is in charge and in control. “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered

them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). “Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished” (Luke 1:45).

Also personal intimacy comes when we learn to hear God better. When we share ourselves with God and He with us, there is a deep connection that comes. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8-9).

Of course we can’t miss the fact that when we listen to God we feel purification. We feel clean inside when we confess sin He points out. We feel companionship and closeness to Him which makes us feel wholesome and accepted.

Listening develops in us a passion to obey God. God works from the inside out and refreshes us. He gives us an earnestness to get up and get moving to do what He wants. He increases our zeal and enthusiasm.

Finally, listening to God promotes listening to others. When God talked to the boy Samuel, it took the more experienced Eli to help teach him how to recognize and respond to God’s voice (1 Samuel 3:8-9).

With wonderful benefits like these, who wouldn’t want to spend time listening to God? What better use of time is there than communicating with the Creator of the Universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Have you been better learning to recognize and follow His voice? Have you been spending time with Him listening as well as talking? Commit yourself to take some extra time this week to listen to Him.

HOW CAN I LEARN TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE BETTER?

Rev. Jerry Schmoyer, February 15, 2004, Main Street Baptist Church

I. HOW CAN I LEARN TO HEAR GOD BETTER?

A. Listening Means Viewing Prayer As Dialogue

PRAYER NOT JUST TALKING BUT LISTENING, we are better at talking than listening - Need to develop listening skills!



B. Listening Means Frequency, Intensity & Time

FREQUENCY - Revelation 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

INTENSITY - Jeremiah 29:12-13 *Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, & I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

TIME - Luke 10:41-42 *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

THE PLACE OF MEDITATION IN LISTENING TO GOD

Psalms 119:15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

C. Listening Means Communicating Like With A Friend/Mate

Exodus 33:11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

D. Listening Means Asking Questions

JEHOSOPHAT Jerusalem enemy armies coming - God what shall we do? II Chron 20:12

E. Listening Means to Listen Actively

PLAN how best to listen, keep a journal

LISTEN EXPECTANTLY – Jeremiah 33:3

LISTEN QUIETLY – Psalms 46:10

LISTEN PATIENTLY – Psalms 37:7

LISTEN CONFIDENTLY – Psalms 37:5-6

LISTEN DEPENDENTLY – Matthew 18:2-4

LISTEN OPENLY – Psalms 25:4-5

LISTEN ATTENTIVELY – 1 Peter 4:7

LISTEN CAREFULLY – 2 Corinthians 13:5



LISTEN SUBMISSIVELY – Luke 1:38**LISTEN REVERENTLY – Psalms 22:27-28**

Make these declarations in your inner spirit by faith as you listen to God

1. I'm eager to hear what You are going to say to me (expectant).
2. I'm listening, Lord (quiet).
3. I'll wait until I hear from You (patient).
4. I'm confident that You are going to tell me what I need to hear (confident).
5. I depend upon You completely to tell me who I am to become what I am to say, and what I am to do (dependent).
6. I want to be open to all possibilities, Lord (open).
7. I am listening keenly to every word (attentive).
8. I am trusting You to confirm to me that what I am hearing is, indeed, from God (careful).
9. Not my will or way, but Yours, Lord (submissive).
10. I am in awe and thanksgiving that You would speak to me, Lord (reverent).

F. Listening Means Having a Sensitive Spirit

Mark 2:8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

G. Listening Requires Focus & Sacrifice

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

II. WHAT BENEFITS DO I ENJOY WHEN I LEARN TO HEAR GOD BETTER?

Path to travel - *Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

Peace within - *John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Positive attitude - *Luke 1:45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"*

Personal intimacy - *Psalms 32:8-9 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you*

Purification**Passion to obey**

Promote Listening in Others - *1 Samuel 3:8-9 The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*



5. “How Can I Tell the Voice is God’s and Not Satan’s?”

MAIN IDEA:

TO KNOW: Satan tries to counterfeit God’s voice to deceive and mislead us. We must know how to tell the difference by remembering that Christ convicts while Satan condemns, Christ clarifies while Satan confuses, Christ confirms while Satan contradicts, Christ chooses while Satan captures, and Christ constrains while Satan constricts.

TO DO: Become more aware in own life of how God’s voice sounds compared to Satan’s voice and make sure we don’t get misled by Satan.

I. WHAT ‘VOICES’ DO I HEAR?

SOURCES OF WHAT WE ‘HEAR’

II. HOW CAN I TELL THE VOICE IS GOD’S AND NOT SATAN’S?

SIGNS OF WHOM WE ARE ‘HEARING’

- A. Christ Convicts – Satan Condemns
- B. Christ Clarifies – Satan Confuses
- C. Christ Confirms – Satan Contradicts
- D. Christ Chooses – Satan Captures
- E. Christ Constrains – Satan Constricts

Introduction

Impersonators make good money entertaining and impressing audiences with their ability to look and/or sound like someone famous. They can make good money cashing in on someone else’s fame and good name.

Satan does the same thing. He pretends to be God speaking to man – but not just for entertainment and amusement. The results are deadly if we listen to the wrong voice.

In World War II the Japanese found ways to broadcast on American airwaves to soldiers, giving commands and orders to deceive and defeat our troops. Soldiers had to make sure they were taking orders from the right source. As God’s soldiers in a deadly war with Satan, we must make sure that we are hearing from Him and not our enemy. Sometimes that isn’t so easy.

We’re finishing a series of messages on listening to God speak. We’ve talked about how He speaks in a still, quiet voice so we must take time to be still and listen to Him. We’ve seen how through the Spirit He speaks rich and thoughts to our minds and/or puts a warm burning in

our hearts. He convicts of sin, gives guidance or information, encourages or gives peace, helps us to carry out ministries He assigns us, and reveals Himself to us so we can respond in worship.

As with a friend or loved one, we must take time to listen. As we learn to identify His voice and commit to responding to what He says, we will find we hear from Him quite often. Our relationship with Him will grow and we'll be much better servants of His.

However sometimes it's hard to know if it is really God who is speaking to us or another voice which is counterfeiting and confusing us.

I. WHAT VOICES DO I HEAR?

There are actually three counterfeit 'voices' that can confuse or mislead us. The first is the voice of the flesh. As Paul says in Romans 8:5-8, the flesh is, in essence, the part of us that tends to sin. It is in opposition to the Spirit in us and leads us to disobedience of God (James 1:13-14). The desires of the flesh can be strong, especially if they have been given free reign in the past.

By knowing what God's Word says and by listening to the convicting voice of the Spirit within, we can learn to recognize this voice for the self-centered temptation it is.

A second 'voice' is the voice of the world. The world system, with its values and goals, can have a strong appeal to our sin nature (flesh). John warns us not to the system around us that is not based on love of God and His Word (I John 2:15-17). Its 'voice' comes to us through what we see, hear and read in our daily lives. It can come through others, the media, or our own envy of those who seem better off than we are. Inputs from the world around us can be very persuasive, effecting how we think and therefore behave. They can sound very appealing, so we need to carefully study God's will as revealed in the Bible and be sensitive to the Spirit's promptings and warnings. When the voice of the world lines up with the voice of the flesh, the temptation can be very strong.

The most dangerous voice, however, because it is most subtle, is the voice of Satan. Ananias obviously listened to Satan's voice instead of God's when saying he was donating all he received for the sale of his land when it was, in fact, only part of the amount (Acts 5:3).

Satan does communicate with man. He did so with Jesus when He was tempted after forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4). Paul says Satan sows deception in the hearts of people (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Jesus says that everything Satan says is a lie, for that is his nature. "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" John 8:44.

The Bible doesn't give details about just how Satan does this, but we do know he can put thoughts into a person's mind. "But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" Mark 8:33.

In addition, Satan can take thoughts out of a mind. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road" Matthew 13:19.

As with Adam and Eve, Satan's communication with man is always deceitful and destructive. He can make suggestions about how we may meet a legitimate need on our own without waiting for God's provision. He can put thoughts of guilt and failure into our minds. He can provide excuses to justify a sinful course we are taking. He can undermine God's goodness and the Bible's authority.

Satan is willing to speak as much as a man is willing to listen. He uses various forms of the occult to communicate with man, such as tarot cards, Ouija boards, séances, and other means. He can and will speak directly to a person much as the Holy Spirit does. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Because Satan is the most dangerous of the counterfeit voices we hear, we will focus on him for this message.

Satan is a counterfeiter. He tries to counterfeit all God does for His people. Judas heard Satan's voice and betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). Peter heard Satan's voice and did not believe the voice of Jesus (Mark 8:31-33). A leper was healed by Jesus and told not to tell anyone who did it but he heard Satan's voice and disobeyed (Mark 1:40-45).

While we know Satan is limited to one place at a time, we must recognize that he does his work thorough demons. It is highly unlikely that Satan will ever speak to us directly, but by assigning certain demons to harass and impact us the result is the same. Thus when we say that 'Satan speaks to us' we are really recognizing that all demonic forces work together for Satan.

David's thought to take a census of the people was demon-inspired (1 Chronicles 21:1ff; 2 Samuel 24:1ff). Saul's jealousy and anger at David was as well (1 Samuel 16:14-23). Ananias and Sapphira's greed was demon stimulated as well (Acts 5:3). When God didn't speak to Saul, he went to a medium to connect with a supernatural power (1 Samuel 28:4-7). For this reason John warns, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Therefore it is essential to make sure you can tell Satan's voice from God's voice. Let's look at how to do that.

II. HOW CAN I TELL THE VOICE IS GOD'S AND NOT SATAN'S?

The first way we can tell the difference between God's voice and Satan's voice is that God convicts while Satan condemns. When God speaks to us about sin we feel guilty and sinful but still loved. When it is Satan condemning us we don't feel loved but rejected and hopeless.

Jesus forgives and restores, as with the woman taken in adultery. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:10-11).

By contrast Satan accuses and focuses on our guilt. That's why he's called the 'accuser of our brothers' (Revelation 12:10).

God will expose the sin and focus on it, but only for the purpose of us confessing and removing it. He offers hope of restoration. He doesn't emphasize our guilt, failure and unworthiness in that area and as a person in general, but Satan does.

When Jesus convicts we know specifically what He is talking about and what to do about it. When it comes from Satan we just have a nagging sense of unspecified guilt and failure to

discourage and defeat us. Or Satan will point to past sins which have been confessed and forgiven and try to get us to feel miserable about them, ignoring the fact that God has forgotten them.

So God convicts but Satan condemns.

A second way of telling the difference is to remember that God clarifies but Satan confuses. When God speaks to us it is to clearly show us sin in its true, deadly light. The 'pleasure' and deception is removed and the awful deadliness is revealed. Satan, however, tries to perplex us with worldly logic and explanations. He feeds us excuses, justifications, thoughts of how it is another's fault and general confusion over it (James 3:15). When God speaks there is a sense that everything is under control (1 Corinthians 14:32). Satan's purpose is to ensnare and take captive (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

God's voice brings peace (Philippians 4:7) but Satan's voice brings uncertainty for what he tells us conflicts with what the Spirit is also telling us. Thus we feel perplexed.

If the voice you are hearing brings a nagging, gnawing feeling of frustration in your spirit, it's not from God. God brings a deep calmness in your spirit.

Thus God convicts while Satan condemns. God clarifies while Satan confuses. There's another way to tell the difference: God confirms while Satan contradicts. When its God's voice speaking to us we know it lines up with the Bible and advice Godly believers would give us. It passes Paul's test of making sure everything is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Philippians 4:8-9). However when Satan speaks his words don't agree with the Bible or advice of mature Christians. When we desire it so much we ignore the warnings in our spirit we are headed to sin.

So God convicts while Satan condemns, God clarifies while Satan confuses, and God confirms while Satan contradicts.

Further, God chooses while Satan captures. God's voice brings us freedom, there are no strings attached. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Following Satan's voice brings bondage, we are trapped and taken prisoner (2 Timothy 2:26).

Satan says, "Do your own thing, do what you want to do." God says, "Consider the effects of your behavior on others. Live a selfless, self-giving life." Satan says, "Live for the moment." God says, "Live with an eye on eternity." Satan says "Don't concern yourself with what others say." God says, "Receive godly counsel." Satan says, "You're as mature as you ever need to be. You're grown up." God says, "Continue to grow and mature and to become more and more like Jesus." In all these Satan's advice, while appealing to our flesh, leads to bondage and defeat. God's will, instead, brings freedom and life.

God convicts while Satan condemns, God clarifies while Satan confuses, and God confirms while Satan contradicts. God chooses while Satan captures.

In addition, God constrains but Satan constricts. God draws us by His love and gives us a desire to want to live for Him. "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Moving from sin to following God is like taking a shower when we are really dirty because we know how good we'll feel afterwards. Satan's communication does not bring that. It constricts, limits, makes us feel dirtier and ineffective. We feel discouraged and hopeless.

Satan is like the salesman trying to force us to make a decision we aren't quite sure of, telling us if we don't buy now it'll be too late. God respects our free will and doesn't force us. He gives us time to think the alternatives through. When we feel forced, pushed or in a hurry we can know Satan is speaking, not God. God is never in a hurry/

So in summary we see that God convicts while Satan condemns, God clarifies while Satan confuses, and God confirms while Satan contradicts. God chooses while Satan captures. God constrains but Satan constricts.

The way to tell Satan's voice from God's voice is to run what you hear through the following test:

1 - **Is it consistent with the word of God?** Does this solution fit the principles that are in the Bible? Does it violate anything in the Bible? Would Jesus do it?

2 - **Is it a wise decision?** In your own heart and mind is it the type of solution that Jesus Christ himself would agree with? Would Jesus implement this solution himself?

3 - **Are you confident in asking God to enable you to achieve this solution?** Can you look upon this solution as one that God would send into your life?

4 - **Do you feel that it is a God given solution?** Deep within your heart do you feel or sense that this solution is the will of God?

5 - **Does this solution fit a child of God?** From all that you know about God, does this solution or this answer fit a person that truly loves, believes, and trusts God?

6 - **Does the solution fit God's overall plan for your life?** Does this solution fit in with God's guidance and direction of your life?

7 - **Does this solution honor God?** Does it bring glory and praise to Almighty God?

Have you been able to recognize any of these traits of Satan's voice in communication you have been hearing? Make sure you don't follow anything that doesn't come from God!

Are you now better able to discern God's voice from Satan's voice? If you really want to hear from God only and not be deceived, He'll make sure you have the discernment you need. Just ask Him.

(Bulletin Insert)

HOW CAN I TELL THE VOICE IS GOD'S & NOT SATAN'S?

Rev. Jerry Schmoyer, February 22, 2004, Main Street Baptist Church

I. WHAT VOICES DO I HEAR?

The 'Voice' of the Flesh Romans 8:5-8

The 'Voice' of the World 1 John 2:15-17

The 'Voice' of the Enemy Acts 5:3; Matthew 13:19

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.



II. HOW CAN I TELL THE VOICE IS GOD'S AND NOT SATAN'S?

A. GOD CONVICTS – SATAN CONDEMNS

God – feel guilty and sinful but loved anyway

Satan – feel guilty and sinful, also rejected by God

JESUS FORGIVES (focus on restoration)

John 8:10-11 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

SATAN ACCUSES (focus on the guilt)

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his God. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."

B. GOD CLARIFIES – SATAN CONFUSES

God – clearly see sin in its true, deadly light

Takes away the deception and 'pleasure' of it

Reveals deadliness, awfulness of the sin itself

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Satan – perplex us with worldly logic and explanations

Wrong, but justifiable, not all that wrong, good reason for it...

James 3:15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.

C. GOD CONFIRMS – SATAN CONTRADICTS

God – ‘agree’ with what God telling us inside, Spirit agrees, what others have said agrees,
Agrees with word of God

Phil 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. ... And the God of peace will be with you.

Satan – doesn’t agree with Bible, advice of others, etc.

Blinded to it by own wanting it to happen

Feel convinced we are an exception, can break God’s law for ‘spiritual’ reason

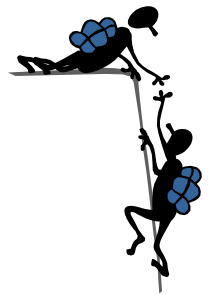
D. GOD CHOOSES – SATAN CAPTURES

God – brings us into freedom, no strings attached

You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

Satan – brings bondage, captures us, can’t let go, end up in bondage

2 Timothy 2:26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.



E. GOD CONSTRAINS – SATAN CONSTRICTS

God – draws us for positive reason, love, etc

2 Corinthians 5:14 For God's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Satan – constricts, limits, makes feel hopeless and ineffective, discourages

The seven questions

1 - **Is it consistent with the word of God?** Does this solution fit the principles that are in the Bible? Does it violate anything in the Bible?

2 - **Is it a wise decision?** In your own heart and mind is it the type of solution that Jesus God himself would agree with? Would Jesus implement this solution himself?

3 - **Are you confident in asking God to enable you to achieve this solution?** Can you look upon this solution as one that God would send into your life?

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