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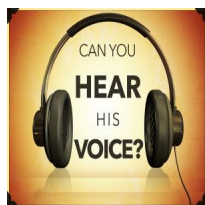
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How Does God Speak to Us Here and Now? (Part II)

Acts 2:17: (NASB) *And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*



A few weeks ago, we began to talk about how God communicates to us in our day. We began by looking at the biblical history of God and humanity and spent most of our time talking about how He does NOT communicate with us now. This week we will focus on what we believe to be the provable and scriptural ways in which God Almighty communicates to us as His Christian children here in the 21st century.

If we want to really communicate with God, it is important we learn the established ways of doing so instead of making up our own! To recap, please refer to the program “How Does God Speak to Us Here and Now (Part I).”

God opens your Bible, *Discerning Between the Three Voices You Hear in Prayer*

- *I think it's just a matter of trusting that God will open that Bible to the right page. It's a childlike trust. It doesn't come easily for us because we're so mental and so controlling. The whole idea of letting go of control and allowing something to open to the right thing is just real scary and alien to us, but it's a matter of letting go and taking daddy's hand.*

While we possibly could open our Bible to the exact right page for our circumstance, is that the way God means to communicate with us on a daily basis? We believe there are better methods of communication in place.

What about visions?

- Visions were absolutely used in the context of Christianity (dreams were not used in the New Testament).
- Visions were a tool to prepare specific individuals for specific and dramatic changes.
- Visions were apostolic tools of specific instruction to aid in the spreading of the Gospel.
- Visions were not an everyday part of every Christian life.

How do we hear the voice of God? We can hear through our experiences.

Gideon was a faithful servant of God. He asked God to verify His direction and God did!

Judges 6:36-40: What about me? Can I, or should I, be “putting out the fleece” to determine God’s will in my life? Can God speak to us through our experiences? God can and does speak to us through our experiences - BUT - we need to clarify how He does it and how He does NOT do it! We are NOT Gideon! Consider the following that led Gideon to this point:

Observations about the context of Gideon’s actions from Judges 6:

- Israel sinned mightily while under the dominance of the Midianites for seven years (vs. 1-10).
- An angel tells Gideon that he will deliver Israel - Gideon is the youngest and therefore not in a position of authority, so he questions this (vs. 11-16).
- Gideon asks for a sign and the angel consumes Gideon’s sacrifice miraculously (vs. 17-24).
- Gideon follows God’s command and destroys the altar of Baal by night (vs. 25-33).
- Gideon gathers the men of Israel to fight for God (vs. 33-35).
- Now he again asks for a sign for this next phase - rising up against a mighty army (vs. 36-40). (This is when he asks for the fleece.)
- His army goes from 30,000 to 300; his fears are quelled by another sign among his men and victory (Chapter 7).

He had dramatic experiences including a visit by an angel and miracles happening around him. This was an “act by sight, not by faith” experience for him. It is as if God was walking him through it, with God reassuring him all along the way.

Though we are not Gideon, we can have the faith and courage of Gideon and like him, follow the voice of God in our own experiences! Gideon saw God’s will and he ran to do it.

Proverbs 3:5-7: We put all of our trust in God. We do not lean on our own ways of understanding. In everything we do and everything we think about, we acknowledge Him.



And THEN after all of that, He can direct your path. Our minds must be bent towards the will of God in order to hear Him.

Psalm 32:8: There is great comfort in a promise like this! We must be in tune with Him in order to hear Him in our experiences.

We need to understand our legitimate needs from our wants and preferences. Humility is implied throughout our whole discussion as a basic key to hearing God's voice in our experiences.

Notice the voice of God commanding us as His children to be protected under His hand:
1 Peter 5:6-9:

Notice the voice of God promising us victorious results through humility and faith:
James 4:7-10: Having a humble attitude is so important in order to have a godly perspective in our actions.

So, if we are God's, then we need to act like it - in our case (and unlike Gideon) we act by faith and not by sight: **James 4:13-17:** We get in the way of the Lord's will all the time!

How do we hear the voice of God? We can hear through our study of the word!

Proverbs 30:5: (KJV) *Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.* This is a great test to see if the voice is from God or from another source. God has spoken! What He said, what He wants for those who believe and what He promised to believers are recorded for our benefit - we now have to learn how to understand it all!

Look at how many times in the next text we are led back to the word! **Psalm 119:105-112:**
To obey these things is to know them!



Illegitimate Wants, How Does God Speak to Us, Matthew Kelly

- Most of us don't even have the foggiest idea of what our legitimate needs are because our culture, our world and our lives are almost completely focused on our illegitimate wants. We spend most of our time, most of our energy focused and chasing our illegitimate wants. We think if we can have more of these things that we want that then we'll find happiness, that then we'll find peace in our hearts, in our lives, and so we chase and we chase these illegitimate wants all the time ignoring our legitimate needs, which are in fact the key to the balance and happiness that we desire and that God desires for us.*

God is not going to cater to our wants; He will show us how to fulfill our basic needs, especially spiritually.

Satan wants us to focus on our wants, turning our wants into needs. When that happens, we can start to justify it as a need instead of a want.

To be given faith is to know God's word and learn to hear His voice: **Romans 10:17**

To walk in faith is to embrace God's word (God's voice) as higher than any words of any man: **1 Thessalonians 2: 12-13** believe.

To work in faith in God's service is to delve deeply into God's word (God's voice) for our instruction: **2 Timothy 2:14-16:** The more fully focused we are on His word and the footsteps of Jesus, the more His voice becomes much clearer.

To be faithful in our faith requires fidelity to God's truth (again through His voice):
2 Peter 1:10-13

How do we hear the voice of God? We can hear it through prayer!

Prayer has been said to be our *lifeline* and that is very true. So, why does one cling to a lifeline? It is not to get everything that we always wanted in life; it is to be drawn in to the individual on the other side of the line so we can be given life! Prayer is not about wanting things for ourselves; it is about wanting to be Christ-like. We want to learn direction within God's will.

The Apostle Paul is a great example: **2 Corinthians 12:7-10:** He is reporting this after the fact, saying, "I now know why this thorn in the flesh (which we assume was poor eyesight) was



given me." He was handicapped for his best spiritual benefit. ⁹*And he has said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness...* Was Paul crushed? No, rather he was made *stronger* for he had heard the voice of God through His son Jesus. Nothing had changed and yet everything had changed. His attitude was now in line with the "why" of the experience. *...Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* ¹⁰*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak (physically), then I am strong (spiritually).* He not only accepted the handicap, but he understood the lesson. All the negative things of his life were cause for spiritual rejoicing.

Whenever we hear the voice of God, (in Paul's case it came through Jesus and seems to have been an actual voice) it should serve as a reaffirmation of what our life *should* truly be about. The Apostle Paul lived a life of service and sacrifice.

In seeking to hear God's voice through prayer, we need to be careful that our spiritual hearing is set on things above - this is harder than it may seem! James 4:1-3: Who is he talking to? Dedicated Christians arguing among themselves. We cannot hear the voice of God when it is crowded out by our own voice of desire! Selfishness is very deceptive.

One more example of being offered up in prayer: Habakkuk 1:2: Habakkuk is crying out that the world is a chaotic mess - the world is so out of balance. (It sounds like he lives next door to us!) God, where are you in the midst of what is happening? Why does evil prevail? Why don't you DO something? How did Habakkuk prepare for the answer? Did he cower in the corner afraid of the world?

No, he positioned himself to hear the voice of God and be of value and use to His cause: Habakkuk 2:1-3: This showed great faith, even though he was living in a time where it was often a walk by sight.

It was only then that he received his answer: *...Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run.* ³*For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

The answer? It was not exactly what Habakkuk wanted to hear, but it was exactly what was needed to be heard. God's answer: The vision was not lost or late - it will be manifest - it simply must wait for My time. Meanwhile, write it - show it - inspire with it! The written vision IS the voice of God!

How do we hear the voice of God? We hear through the very power of God in our lives - His spirit!

John 16:13: How often when we read verses in the Bible, all of a sudden something connects with another verse, another concept - you have been enlightened! This is an example of how the spirit really works in terms of focusing us on learning and applying the word. God's spirit is a powerful influence and force for His voice.

We need caution here as our own spirit and our own influences can get in the way and be counterfeit: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16: What is our life focused on? What are our most important things? Lesson: God's voice through us can easily be the subject of criticism for those of this world! Your principles and priorities will be completely different.

How else do we hear the voice of God? We can hear when we meditate upon all of these things.

We do not pray and then run out to the mailbox and expect an answer. That is where meditation becomes a powerful part of this. Never underestimate the power of reflective thought. So, how do we put our reflective thoughts into the place where we can hear the voice of God?

First, we need to check our *outward* attitude: Philippians 4:4-9: To get into the mental capacity to truly be able to reflect upon godly things, we should have a gentle, Christ-like spirit.



Second, we need to check our *inward* attitude: While you struggle, let the peace of God reign in your life. Trust our Heavenly Father. When we find peace, we do not need the immediate answer because we have the strength to sustain us until the answer is appropriate. That takes away anxiety.

Third, we can now reflect, for having passed the two previous tests of our inward and outward attitudes, our spiritual hearing should be in good order: *Dwell on these things* - this is a way of meditating. We do not want to get so caught up in the business of life and cares of this world that we become anxious. The voice of God really comes through the quietness of our lives if we can be quiet long enough for Him to be heard! Satan's voice, on the other hand, works through the noise, ego, wants and desires.

Fourth, live these reflections, knowing these things brings us within hearing distance of God's voice: The repetitious practice is the secret!

God's voice wants to be in us and it can get there through Christ - we have to open the door to *let* it in: Colossians 3:15-16: Thankfulness is an important part of all of this.

Choose today what will rule in your heart. Will it be the turmoil of life or the peace and voice of God through Christ? If the peace of God has roots in your heart, the voice of God can have roots in your heart as well. Choose today whose words will guide you - the words of the world, flesh and devil or the words of Christ? Observe, think, reflect and act!

How do we hear the voice of God? We can hear it through the voices of the brotherhood.

Colossians 3:16-17: We are to pour spirituality into each other; there is a synergy that comes from this. We can find answers among each other.



Can't get enough, How Does God Speak to Us, Matthew Kelly

- *Illegitimate wants, illegitimate desires. Funny thing is you never can get enough of what you don't really need, and we keep chasing these things that we have no need for. We keep filling our lives with these things that we have no need for - they're just the fruits of our illegitimate desires.*

Our world now is all about “what I want.” We have forgotten what we *need*. If your want has become expectation, you will never be satisfied. However, the voice of God will always satisfy and it can come through fellowship.

God's voice is reflected in us as we relentlessly pursue and desire fellowship in Christ with others:

Romans 1:9-15: The Apostle was fixated on contributing to their spiritual life. Do we deeply seek that kind of fellowship with others? Do we realize how we can give and receive to the spiritual benefit of all? Do we listen to God's voice even if it is delaying some good spiritual experience? Do we rejoice in His voice when He does that?

God's voice through Jesus is reflected in us as we truly reach out to another for their benefit: Galatians 6:1-2: We have a responsibility to help others who are struggling.

God's voice through Jesus is reflected in us as we intervene in the deep and damaging issues of life of another: James 5:19-20: We can be the voice of God for others.

Bottom line: We can hear the voice of God through the many diverse members of the body of Christ: 1 Corinthians 12:18-26: If we are not listening for God's voice through the brotherhood, then how much are we missing? We have to study the word, be focused on what is right in God's eyes and understand the value of others who support the principles of Scripture. The voice of God may come to us in an everyday way. Make meditating on His word a part of our lives.

***So, how does God speak to us here and now?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***