



Hearing From God

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Introduction:

For the next few Sundays I want to share with you some things I have learned about hearing from God, trusting God and how we can stay on course in our spiritual journey through life. Today we are going to look at learning to hear from God. How does God speak to us? When and where can we hear Him? Next Sunday we will be talking about how to trust God more. What does it really mean to trust God? And then we want to talk about learning to stay on course. What are some of the things that distract us in our journey through life and can derail our faith walk if we are not careful?

Does God still speak today? You bet He does. Does God still encourage and direct and correct and warn and lead? You bet He does. **Hebrews 1:1-3-In the past God spoke to our ancestors at many different times and in many different ways through the prophets. In these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. God made his Son responsible for everything. His Son is the one through whom God made the universe. His Son is the reflection of God's glory and the exact likeness of God's being. He holds everything together through his powerful words. After he had cleansed people from their sins, he received the highest position, the one next to the Father in heaven.**

We have just come through the Advent season where we have been reminded that Jesus is the living Word; the Word of the Father in flesh. The text we just read indicates that in the past God spoke through the prophets but in these last days, God speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Our ability to please and obey God, to respond to Him, depends on our hearing from God. It is critical that as God's people we learn to know God's voice. How

well do we listen? How well do we act on what we hear? How do we know it is God who is speaking to us? God speaks to us for many reasons. These include to warn, to direct, to encourage, to correct, and to lead us. When God originally spoke, everything we see was created. God's words are powerful. His Word has the ability to change us, to transform us, to enlighten us, to guide us and that is probably the main way God speaks to us today.

1. God will not speak things that will cause us to move away from Him, or to violate the principles of His Word. Whenever God speaks to us it is for our good and the strengthening of our relationship with Him or our relationship with others. When God speaks, He will always emphasize the principles of His word. If you think God has spoken and what you think He said goes against His written Word, guess what. God didn't speak to you. You had bad pizza to eat the night before.

2. God speaks clearly, understandably. He will speak things that we might question but should not bring us confusion.

3. God speaks to us when we are quiet enough in our heart to listen to Him. He speaks to us when we are open to receive instruction. He speaks to us when we ask Him.

4. God speaks to us in prayer, in the Word, in nature and through circumstances. God spoke to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to Joshua and to many other individuals as recorded in the Bible. In speaking to every one of these individuals, God had something He wanted to convey to them. God doesn't speak just because He likes the feel of words in His mouth. He speaks for a purpose.

Genesis 1:28-29-When God spoke to Adam, it was to give instruction about His expectations of Adam and to give him the boundaries of what he and Eve could and could not eat. Notice that there were more choices that Adam was given for eating than there were restrictions. God does not want our lives to be miserable. He knows what the outcome will be before we make choices and does what He can in His foreknowledge to let us know what the consequences will be if we choose to disobey and do things outside of His will. There was only one tree in the center of the garden that Adam and Eve were to let alone. God told him what his expectations were and that if he disobeyed, the consequence would be death.

Listen to what God says. He means what He says and He will make good what He has spoken. **Genesis 6:13 - Genesis 9:12**-When God spoke to Noah, it was to warn him that the flood was coming. Noah was faithful to share the warning that God had given him, even while he was building the ark. For 120 years Noah trusted God and kept building the ark. He did it because God spoke. When the flood came on the earth, Noah, his wife and sons and their wives along with the animals went into the ark and were saved. It happened because God spoke.

Genesis 15 & 17:1-9-When God spoke to Abraham, it was to encourage him in his faith. This is my promise to you. This is how I will bless you. I am going to give you a son. Many kings will come from you and your descendents will be as the stars of the heavens. God made a covenant with Abraham. God keeps His word, His covenant. That should encourage us, that God who has entered into a covenant with us will keep His covenant. His covenant has been made through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "This is the new covenant in my blood."

Exodus 3:4, 6, 9, 12-When God spoke to Moses, it was out of the burning bush, and God revealed Himself to Moses. "This is who I am. I want you to go speak to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go." God was giving direction to Moses. Moses wasn't too sure about this. He certainly had questions. What will I tell people who ask who sent me? What if Pharaoh doesn't listen to me? What if? God gave reassurance to Moses that He was with him; He gave him answers and told him what to say. He also told Moses He would lead him.

When God gives you a difficult assignment, listen carefully to the assurance, or the affirmation, or the promise that goes with that task. God will never ask you to do something without the assurance that He will be with you,

that He will help you, that He will see you through it. **Joshua 1**-God spoke to Joshua and encouraged him that the people were to go into the Promised Land. They were to cross the Jordan River. God told Joshua that He would give every place where His people set their feet, just as he had promised Moses. He gave the boundaries of their new territory and He assured Joshua that no one would be able to stand against the people of Israel and that as he was with Moses, He would also be with Joshua. **Verse 9**-God tells Joshua again, "I will be with you, I will never leave you, be strong, be courageous, do not be terrified, do not be discouraged."

I don't know about you, but this sounds pretty reassuring to me. When God speaks and says, "I will be with you just like I was with your dad or mom, or your grandpa or grandma", or someone you knew walked with God, it is very reassuring. God wanted to guide Joshua and to direct his leadership of the Children of Israel as they went into the Promised Land. After God spoke to Him, Joshua gathered the people of God around him and shared with them what it was God said to him and then he led them into the land of promise.

What has God spoken to you? Has He reassured you, directed you, made a promise to you, encouraged you, instructed you? Did you do more than listen? Are you acting in a way that lets God know you heard His voice? God doesn't change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. When He speaks to you and me, it will be along the same lines that He has spoken before. He will warn, encourage, set boundaries, instruct and give guidance.

I. How does God speak to us? Probably not in an audible voice but you know that God is speaking to you if you are being challenged to change something in your life, to lay down some sin, to give up some habit, to follow through on something God's Word tells us we should do. Most generally, God speaks to me through His Word, but He also speaks by His Spirit and even through people.

II. When and where can we hear God? We can hear God anywhere we quiet our hearts to listen. I would suggest that we take time every day to wait in His presence in prayer, in meditation, or in worship to Him. He will speak to us if we practice the discipline of bringing ourselves before Him.

III. How do we listen to Him? With open hearts, open minds, with the intent to obey, to follow, to let go, to move and to respond to what He speaks to us. God is usually speaking to us through one or more of these avenues:

1) Precepts – In the book of Psalms, we see that God's precepts (His Words) are a guide and a light

for us. It is hard to distinguish God's voice from our own desires when we are not saturated in His Word.

2) People – It is amazing how many times God has spoken to me through various people in my life (sometimes even strangers). This means that we have to be active in seeking advice from people who are further in this journey than us.

3) Problems – There are a lot of times when God has used a closed door or even a difficult situation to direct me towards another path. Problems are often times looked upon as a bad thing but sometimes it can be a gift from God.

4) Pain – C.S. Lewis in his book, *The Problem of Pain* writes, "**God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.**" When God wants to rock our world, He uses pain. Once we are attuned to God's voice, then the challenge for us is to obey His voice.

Conclusion:

Let's determine in 2010 to listen more carefully for God to speak. I challenge you to be more obedient to the Lord when He speaks. I challenge you like James writes to us **James 1:22-(NLT)-But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.**