

# Listen Up

## Study Guide #2 The Sound of God's Voice

**“I KNOW THE LORD IS SPEAKING TO ME** *when I stop listening to sounds from the world that fed my sense of pride and ambition. Instead, I fall quiet, tune in to God's great world around me, and actively listen. Sometimes nature speaks, telling me of God's majesty and glory. Sometimes God's Word speaks, awakening my conscience, reminding me of failure, stirring my compassion and sense of justice, aligning me with God's will. I cannot control the voice of God or how it comes. I can only control my “ears”— my readiness to listen and quickness to respond.*”  
— Philip Yancey

Both the Old and New Testaments give accounts of those who heard clearly from God whenever He spoke to them. Moses, for example, heard an angel speak from the burning bush, or knew beyond any shadow of a doubt which direction God would have him to go by following the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. In most every case, those that God chose to reveal himself to and give a direction to obey did not doubt that God has spoken. One might consider the account of Gideon placing out the fleece on two separate occasions as an exception. However, Gideon's actions were not based on whether or not he heard God, but rather his lack of trust in what he was hearing.

Few of us will doubt that the primary way that God chooses to communicate with His children today has changed. There is a reason for that, one that Jesus hints at when speaking to his disciples after His resurrection: *“Because you have seen me and believe, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen me and believed.” (John 20:29)* This being true, how much more precious is the voice of God to those who seek and confirm God's voice over those in the Old Testament who never knew the joy of Jesus Christ. God's goal is still the same. He wants all of His children to hear, recognize, and respond obediently and joyfully to his voice.

You are invited to begin your time with God this week with prayer:

*O gracious and Holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you,  
intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you  
patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you,  
a heart to meditate on you, and a life to proclaim you,  
through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
—Prayer of St Benedict*

## Focus Scripture

*1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." 11 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?"*

## Thoughts From The Text

- ✚ What were God's first two actions in bringing renewal back to Elijah? (vss 5-8)
- ✚ In your opinion, how did God communicate with Elijah in the cave? (vs 9)
- ✚ What had Elijah in such a depressed state? (vss 2,3,10)
- ✚ Underline five ways that God made Elijah aware of his presence. (vss 5,11,12)
- ✚ What does verse 13 tell you about how Elijah responded to the wind, earthquake, and fire compared to how he responded to the gentle voice?

## Group Talk

- ❖ Elijah had been faithful to God, but he appears to be a person who has 'burned out'. When has something ever stopped you, stirred you, or made you want to back off or ask a deeper question?
  
- ❖ Have you ever seen or felt God attempting to speak and renew you? Give an example.

❖ Respond to the following statement:

“LISTENING IS NOT ABOUT HEARING VOICES; IT IS A MUCH BIGGER ATTENTIVENESS TO A GOD WHO IS ALWAYS COMING TOWARDS US AT EVERY MOMENT. GOD IS ALWAYS STARTING THE CONVERSATION BECAUSE HE IS ALWAYS REACHING OUT TO US.” John Pritchard - How To Pray - A Practical Handbook

- How do you feel about the definition of ‘listening’ given here?
- Given this to be true, what areas do you feel God might be reaching out to you for right now?

## Divine Moments

There are three circumstances in which God chooses to speak.

### 1) Intervention

God speaks to his children in moments when they have been chosen to be a part of God’s plan. The announcement of the birth of Christ to Mary and Joseph stands out in the Bible. Hearing God call Pastor Mike into full-time pastoral ministry is another example. God may also intervene to prevent us from harm or going in the wrong direction. These are moments when God made his voice and his will unmistakably known. They are rare, and will come in a variety of different ways, each undeniably real. **Read Acts 16:7**

### 2) Anticipation

This is the most common way that we seek and look for God’s voice. Interaction is what we seek when we have asked God of his will and direction for our lives. As followers of Christ, we ask for God’s wisdom for decisions concerning finances, careers, covenant partners, and purpose in his kingdom. As a church made up of committees, boards, and leadership teams, we seek God’s voice for direction and wisdom through interaction. We speak, we listen, and we actively wait.

### 3) Identification

Similar to intervention, here, God’s speaks to us when He simply wants us to know just how special we are to him. This comes in those moments of assurance and peace and joy and love and thanksgiving. What we sometimes dismiss as a good feeling can very well be the identifying voice of God. **Read Mark 1:9-11**

## The Sound of God’s Voice

We are all wired differently, which means that God can choose to reveal himself to us in any way that fits our divine design and not through some cookie cutter approach. He also reveals himself differently not only based on our wiring, but within the circumstance as well. In some circumstance, he may be very obvious while in others very subtle.

**Read Job 33:15-22** below. Read it again, but this time, underline the different ways God chooses to speak.

*15 He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. 16 He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. 17 He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride. 18 He protects them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death. 19 "Or God disciplines people with pain on their sickbeds, with ceaseless aching in their bones. 20 They lose their appetite for even the most delicious food. 21 Their flesh wastes away, and their bones stick out. 22 They are at death's door; the angels of death wait for them. Job 33*

## Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit IS God's voice to the follower of Christ, but He chooses to do so in a variety of different ways and reasons.

**Read Isaiah 30:21, John 16:13-15, and Romans 8:13,14.** What is the purpose of God's voice here?

After Adam fell from God's presence, God restored to all men and women a certain sense of morality called '*conscience*'. It is that voice that enables us to know, to a certain degree, certain levels of right and wrong. However, a person's upbringing, values, and social environment can skew his or her conscience from having any common ground. What might be conscionable for one person is not for another.

Therefore, when a person enters a saving relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit is given in exchange for that person's life. Our conscience, once influenced by the world, is now influenced by and becomes a communication tool for God.

The voice of the Holy Spirit has an authority that can only come from God. While our conscience may want to reason and rationalize, God's voice come with such force and weight that it places a convicting, confirming impact on our human conscience.

**Read Matthew 7:28-29** and answer the following question:

What impact did the authority of Jesus' spoken word have on all those listening?

## Bible

**"WHEN HE SPEAKS, IT'S IN** *the language of our own personal lives, through a verse or passage of Scripture that just seems to leap up off the page with our name on it.*" —Anne Graham Lotz

The Bible becomes our index or guide for all the other ways that God communicates with us. If we are going to listen to God and discern his voice in the different avenues that He uses, we must be spending time in His Word.

How much time do you spend doing the following things? Rank them 1 to 8, with 1 being the thing you spend the most time doing and 8 being what you spend the least time doing.]

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| ___reading God's Word   | ___watching television |
| ___reading magazines    | ___reading novels      |
| ___surfing the Internet | ___working             |
| ___talking on the phone | ___pursuing hobbies    |

What does this ranking tell you about your ability to hear or not hear God's voice?

### Inner Voice, Dreams, and Visions/Trance

Read the following passages and mark out to the side an **I** for inner voice; **D** for dreams; or **V** for visions.

- Acts 8:29 \_\_\_
- Acts 9:10 \_\_\_
- Acts 10:9-16 \_\_\_
- Acts 10:19-20 \_\_\_
- Acts 13:2,3 \_\_\_
- Romans 8:16 \_\_\_
- 1 Corinthians 2:10b-15 \_\_\_

### Circumstances

**Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

- What was the circumstance through which God spoke to Paul?
- What was the message God spoke to Paul in this circumstance?

**Read Genesis 37:5-11, 26-28; 50:18-21.**

- How did God speak to Joseph in 37:5?
- What was the circumstance in which God revealed his plan?
- Are there circumstances going on in your life in which God could potentially be using to speak to you?

### Personal Reflection

List the kind of ways you think you might have placed God in a box, i.e., the way you think God only speaks to others, to you?

What kind of methods might you be more open to listen for God's voice more attentively and affectively?