

## **“Hearing God’s Voice” part 3**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

#### **Introduction**

Today we continue and conclude our series on Hearing God’s voice. This has been a very special series in that so many of you have told me that God is really speaking to you and taking you deeper with Him. This is encouraging.

This series fits very well with one of our goals as a church this year and that is to grow in our being a Word and Spirit church. We want to be very committed to God’s written Word while also allowing for the freedom of the Holy Spirit. Hearing God’s voice is about both Word and Spirit. Word in that we recognize that the Bible is the primary and surest way that God speaks and the Spirit of God living in us helps us to understand and apply this Word to our lives as well as speak to us in other ways.

The bible says:

**Luke 11:27-28** “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it”

**John 18:37** everyone who is of the truth heareth my voice

**John 10** my sheep will hear my voice

16x **Jesus** said “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

**Rev. 2-3** to him who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

**Gen 5:22** Enoch walked with God 300 years

**Rom 8:14** because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

One of our church values says:

**“We seek to be a church that is led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”**

Our central truth throughout this series has been:

**Central Truth: Learning to hear and obey God’s voice is one of the most important things in all of life.**

This is because if you learn to hear and obey God’s voice on a moment by moment basis then you will be in the center of God’s will, make the right decisions, fulfill your divine destiny, be and do what He wants for you, and in the end hear “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” It doesn’t get any better or more important than this, does it? Learning to hear and obey God’s voice is one of (perhaps is the most) important thing in all of life.

**Chall** How are you doing? Are you listening? Are you obeying? Are you seeking to hear God.

**1 Peter 5** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

**Jer. 29:11** you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart

**Ps. 32:6** Seek the Lord while He may be found

Let’s **quickly review** before I go to our new material. We learned in the past weeks that:

### 1. God is a talking God.

He is interested in telling us things. The bible is proof positive that He is a talking, communicating God. Aren't you glad?

### 2. God has "wired" His people for sound.

God has given us the ability to hear His voice through the Holy Spirit that comes to indwell us the moment we receive Christ. As long as you have the HS living in you, you are wired for sound, whether a brand new Christian or been walking with God for years.

**Jn. 16:13** The Spirit will guide you into all truth

**Prop: antenna**

**TS** So, how do we hear God? The primary and most certain way is through the Bible:

### 3. The Bible is the most certain voice of God.

Here it is plain and clear. This Word does not change. It is totally inspired and inerrant and infallible and will never mislead you. We must read it and study it and hear it preached and meditate on it and as we do this God will take it and personalize it to us.

**Pers.** this week I was sort of discouraged over some things and in my listening time, God brought to my mind: **Gal. 6:9** .... This encouraged me.

**Pers.** Last week I was at LWBC with my kids and they have built a model of the **Tabernacle** that you can walk through .... In the Holy of Holies is the ark of the covenant and in that were the 10 Commandments – the written word of God! This shows how central the word is to the presence of God.

**Ex.** I have been encouraged this week by some of you who have emailed me about the Proverbs challenge and how God has used that in your life!!!

**TS** In addition to the bible God also speaks in many other ways:

### 4. God speaks in many ways.

As I have said, we must be very clear on this. The bible is the most certain voice of God and there is no debate about that. So, when we sense God is speaking to us in other ways, we must filter those impressions or feelings or whatever it is through the Bible

**Prop: screen**

because God's voice will never contradict what He has already said in this book. He is immutable, never changes and therefore is always consistent with Himself. God will never tell you to lie or cheat or murder or .....

Last week we saw how the book of Acts is filled with God speaking in many different ways.

**TS** What are some of these "other ways" that God speaks?

#### a. In our spirit.

This is that sense we have in our spirit at times of God leading or directing us. The peace factor or lack thereof in which God is directing us.

**TS** Another way God speaks is:

**b. In prayer.**

We learned that prayer is meant to be a 2-way conversation where God brings things to our mind, a thought, a scripture, an impression. Give time for quietness in prayer. And journal what you sense from God.

**Ex.** Some of you have emailed me this week about this and it has been encouraging.

**Jer. 33:3** call upon me and I will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know.

In addition, seek to make prayer a way of life whereby throughout the day as you are in fellowship with God, you sense His still small voice and you are led by His spirit.

**TS** 3<sup>rd</sup> way:

**c. Through others.**

God will often speak to us through the input and counsel of other people, especially those closest to us.

**TS** Another way is:

**d. Through situations.**

God opens doors and closes doors to direct us. He even used difficulty at times to speak to us or lovingly discipline us.

**Ex.** Last week I spoke with a parent whose child was in a car accident and this parent feels that the accident was God's way of speaking to this child. I have seen this type of thing often.

C.S. Lewis said it well:

**“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to arouse a deaf world.” C.S. Lewis**

You see, every trial or circumstance in life can be an occasion for God to speak to us.

**Chall.** I am aware that many of you are going through some really difficult marriage situations. Let me say this as one of your pastors: seek to hear what God might be trying to say to you through this. Spend more time listening to God than pointing the fingers at your spouse.

**TS** Now this point about God speaking through situations brings up the issue I promised we would talk about.

**What about a fleece?** Fleece comes from

**Judges 6:36-40** where Gideon asks God for a tangible sign to show him God's will. He prayed and said to God, If you make the wool fleece wet and the ground around it dry

then I will take that as a sign that You will save Israel by my hand ... God did it. Then he asked that the opposite happen: fleece dry and ground wet and God did that.

Is this a legitimate way to hear from God and know His will? Well, before I directly answer that, let me point out a few things from Judges 6

- God had already spoken to him... v. 14, v. 17 (**gave him a sign**), v. 36 (as you have promised" – he even acknowledged that God had promised to deliver him.).
- What this shows is that Gideon's faith was very weak in asking for a fleece. It also shows God's incredible patience with Gideon.
- I think a major point here is that God saw in Gideon someone who had a sincere and good heart, he was just weak in stepping out in faith. Many of us are that way, too, aren't we? Praise God for His mercy and love and patience. He is mindful that we are but dust. But we must never abuse that patience.
- If we are asking for a sign to test God, this is wrong. If we are asking for a sign because we sincerely want to know and obey God, then perhaps He will be patient with us, too, and grant it.
- Overall, I would be very cautious in doing this. I would not recommend a situation where you say "if the light is green that means I am to marry so and so."
- I think it best not to make a major decision on the basis of a sign or fleece alone. Perhaps to confirm something.

**Example** of Dede and me and the deer?

- I also think that it is best to ask for something that only God could do versus something that could easily happen naturally. Just be careful, get counsel from others, and always go back to the most certain voice of God – the Bible!
- This should not be a major part of our seeking God for direction. There are not many examples of this in all the Bible (Judges 6, Gen. 24, Acts 1)

**Any questions?**

**TS** Now the other area I promised we would spend more time on this week is this: God also speaks:

**e. In dreams, visions and prophecies.**

Here I really commend to you a great book that is challenging and also very balanced and that is Jack Deere's "Surprised by the voice of God" and his first one.....

**Quo** He points out on p. 53f that every chapter of Acts, except chapter 17 has a reference to some kind of supernatural revelation: God speaking through His HS, angels, dreams, visions, prophecies, miraculous encounters. Now remember, Acts covers a lot of time, so don't think that these things were a daily occurrence.

We do not have time to look at many but the Bible is filled with examples of God using dreams, visions and prophecies to speak to people.

**Acts 2:17-**

**Hebr. 13:8** Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever

And no where in God's Word does it say that these things will cease.

Let's take **dreams** first.

### 1) Dreams

I am referring to actual sleep dreams. Dreams are usually filled with symbolism which makes them difficult to interpret at times. We need to write down our dreams (Dan. 7:1 Daniel wrote down the substance of the dream) and then ask God to help us to interpret them. God can use others to help us but be very careful here.

**Pers.** Dede had a dream that we had a boy named Michael, so when she had our first son, we named him Michael. I told one service last week about a time when our son Michael dreamed he rode a bicycle without training wheels and that day he did!

A big mistake people often make is if someone else is in their dream, they assume they are to tell that person. Not necessarily. First pray. That dream might be simply to direct your prayers for that person. Do not share with them unless God gives you the green light to do so. Joseph made the mistake of telling his dream to his brothers in the book of Gen.

I would say: give attention to your dreams and simply ask God to show you if there is something in that dream that He is trying to say to you.

### 2) Visions

**Visions** are where God actually gives you a **mental picture**, it could be where you actual see something with your eyes open (I have never had this happen) or with eyes closed you kind of see something in your mind.

**Pers.** I have had this happen quiet often, where in praying for someone I had a mental impression and what I do is just say: "I am sensing or seeing .... Does this mean anything to you?"

**Ex..** I remember one Sunday we had a listening time and Virginia Steindorf seeing the hand of Jesus and the rose coming up and then had her son draw it.

*Picture of rose coming out of Jesus' hand – I think this picture is here somewhere?*

**Acts 18:9**

### 3) Prophecies

It is important to understand that NT prophecy is different from OT prophesy in that OT prophecy was basically speaking scripture and it had to be 100% accurate in order to be valid and it was often foretelling the future. NT prophecy is where we sense something from God for a person or a group and we speak it.

In Dr. Grudem's systematic theology he has a good section where he shows some places in Acts where there were prophetic words that were not 100% accurate. I really encourage you to study his section in ST or some of the other references.

**Acts 21:4-14**

I think Dr. Grudem defines it well when he says:

**“Prophecy is telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.”**

**Dr. Wayne Grudem in Systematic Theology, p. 1049**

It is basically where someone has a strong sense of God saying something, either for an individual or for a group, like a church. To understand this more, let's look at 1 Cor. 14 and I will make a few observations that I hope will be helpful:

- It is a good gift that all should desire. **V. 1, 39**
- The reason it is good is because of how it affects us:

**1 Cor 14:3**

**3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.**

**v. 31**

**Notice** here there is nothing about the future, and that it is for the most part that which will encourage us to go further with God. We sure need this don't we? Who would not want this?

- When anointed, it points people to God. **V. 24-25**
- It is important to test it and be sure it is of God and consistent with scripture. **V. 29**
- Guidelines and order is important, lest you get out of balance and weird. **V. 40**

This is why we have a policy on the use of this gift

**Policy on Prophecy:** *quote from part* .... Be careful about saying “Thus saith the Lord.” .... I think it is important when someone's word uses the 1<sup>st</sup> person that we realize this is simply this person's sense about the heart of God and we should not regard it as claiming to be equal to scripture. I must admit that I am a bit uncomfortable with people using the “1<sup>st</sup> person” in the message itself unless it is scripture.

***Share about Judy's call and pastors' counsel?***

My sense is that when a word is shared, you will know if it is for you... it will be pretty obvious. For example, we have had several recently that mentioned not giving time for God ... perhaps you know that you have not been spending time with God. Take this word as a loving rebuke or correction from your Father. Last week someone shared “be grateful for what you have and do not dwell on what you don't have.” Someone emailed me this week about how that really spoke to them.

Another important verse on this is

1 Thess 5:16-24

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 **do not treat prophecies with contempt.** 21 **Test everything. Hold on to the good.** 22 Avoid every kind of evil. 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Notice here:

- **V. 17** pray continually: be in constant, unbroken fellowship with God
- **v. 19** Don't put out the Spirit's fire. How? By treating prophecies with contempt. What does contempt mean? To regard as naught. To regard as nothing or not important. Many of us do that. Not giving it proper attention.
- **V. 21** Test everything. This means there might be some bones with the meat. Eat the meat and spit out the bones. Hold on to the good. Test it. Filter it through the certain word: Bible.
- **V. 22-23** All of it should lead us to greater Christ-likeness. **The true test is in the fruit it produces!**

**Pers.** I have had prophetic words help me many times in my walk. I have had some that were very encouraging, others that were kind of warnings. I had a **1 Cor. 14:3** a few weeks ago like you wouldn't believe.

**Let me give you a few tips on prophecy:**

- Never make a major decision on a single prophecy. Prophecy is usually to confirm what God has already been saying to us or to start something that He will confirm in other ways.
- Patience and timing is very important: Give it much time and ask for confirmation. We often attach a scenerio to the word that is not necessarily of God and then we create an Ishmael in the flesh instead of waiting on the Isaac.
- Be very careful about timing if you have a word. You may have a word to guide you in prayer and not necessarily to give the person. Be sure God gives you the green light to share it.
- Use God's name sparingly. Don't say "thus saith the Lord". Better to say "I sense/think God has shown me something" and then give it to them and leave it with them. **Quote:** Cochran p. 117
- Once you give the word, your job is done.
- Submitting to church leadership is very important. **Quote** p. 186 of Deere
- The reason all of this is important is because the bible is clear that false prophets will arise and seek to mislead people. This is why we need the Bible as our guard, godly people for counsel, and to be careful in all these things.

**Matt 7:15-16**

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them.

**Matt 24:11-13**

11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

**Matt 24:24-25**

24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-if that were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time.

**2 Peter 2:1**

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.

The fact that there are counterfeits means there is the real McCoy out there and that is what we should strive to have. Don't let the abuses and counterfeits keep you from seeking after the real thing. Some people believe more in Satan's ability to counterfeit and mislead than in God's ability to guide us by His Spirit into all truth.

**TS** I want to conclude by adding one more point:

**5. We must be humble and receptive in order to hear God.**

God speaks to those who are still enough to listen. God speaks to those who want to hear and are humble enough to realize they need to hear God. God opposed the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humility is the recognition that you need God and cannot do it on your own. When we are broken and dependent God will lead and guide and speak to us.

**Conclusion**

Where are you at with God today? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Have you surrendered your life to Him? Do you desire to hear God's voice? Are you willing to be humble and tell God, "I need Your Lord?"

If so, I am going to ask you to come forward in a moment as we sing and in so doing you are saying: "God, I give my life to you. I surrender to Jesus. I humble myself and ask You to speak to me and have Your way in my life!"

**Pray** (time to yield and time to listen)

**Worship** (come forward and then ministry team)

**End:**

- a. Yellow cards
- b. Village Creek Bible Camp display

