

Hearing God: The Power of the Prophetic

Church is a place where many words, often what we want to say and what is actually heard, doesn't always match up!

Oops from the crazy world of Church Bulletins:

"At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice."

"The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon."

"Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door."

"This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar."

"The class on prophecy has been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances."

WHAT IS PROPHECY? Prophecy is simply the ability to hear God accurately and speak forth what was heard to another person or persons for their strengthening, encouraging, and comfort. **(1 Corinthians 14:3 NIV)**

- Nothing is more life-giving and encouraging than receiving an accurate and timely prophecy that indicates clearly that God knows you, loves you, is speaking directly to you. This is why we should **earnestly desire to prophesy** and why we are told **NOT to despise prophecy**. But **everything should be done for the building up of the church** and its people and not the tearing or dividing relationships.
- But prophecy done right is GREAT! Prophecy done WRONG can be harmful and even abusive.

Same for preaching, teaching, leading and worship... must be done with right motive and in alignment with the Word

Over the next few weeks, we are going to talk about the power of the prophetic and how it should operate, but before we talk about speaking forth a prophetic word, we must talk about HEARING GOD.

THE ROLE OF THE SPIRIT

Acts 1:1-5 NIV In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, **after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen**. **3** After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. **4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit**."

Acts opens with the resurrected Jesus, **convincing them of His victory** and **explaining and instructing them about the Kingdom**. These Apostles were eyewitnesses and had first-hand knowledge and instructions.

- The NT scriptures are NOT just a bunch of opinions of random people.
- Wow! This is the GLORIOUS JESUS! as one writer says, this NEXT-LEVEL JESUS; DEATH-DEFYING JESUS; THE WALK-THROUGH-THE WALLS JESUS.
- Before his death, Jesus was constantly explaining Himself and the Kingdom of God and the disciples were consistently missing everything He was communicating. Now it is different because Next-Level Jesus is speaking to OPEN EARS.

TWO IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS:

- **God Speaks:** I love how Jesus comes once again to their level of understanding and spends days and days speaking and making sure they are hearing.
- **Learning to Hear God is something we can grow into and must grow into,** just like the disciples/apostles.

TODDLER vs TEEN - You can't talk to a toddler like you talk to a teen. You should hear Kerri when she is Facetiming Asa (8 month). It's not the same as when she is Facetiming our son Grant.

Facetiming Asa: *how are you doing big boy, did you get some breakfast, are you taking a bath... Asa Asa look here...*

Facetiming Grant? *How are you doing little buddy... did you get some breakfast... were those strawberries good?*

Many Christians are like toddlers when it comes to hearing God.

*Hebrews 5:11-14 NET On this topic we have much to say and it is **difficult to explain**, since you have become **sluggish in hearing**. (often translated **dull of hearing**) **12** For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of **God's utterances**. You have gone **back to needing milk**, not solid food. **13** For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because **he is an infant**. **14** But solid food is for the mature, whose **perceptions are trained by practice to discern** both good and evil.*

- **Immature people** are sluggish in hearing God's utterances.
- **Mature people** are trained by practice to perceive or discern God's voice.

*****Note:** We said **2023 would be a year of equipping**. If we could get equipped to hear God better. Our lives would be transformed for the better.*

The Role of Spirit: The Holy Spirit's job is opening up our ability to Hear God.

- **Example of Casting Lots:** In Acts 1, the disciples had to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot. They struggled to make the decision between Justus and Matthias, so they casted lots and it fell on Matthias (1:26).
 - casting lots... kind of like rolling dice.
- In the next chapter the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit and they are Never seen casting lots again.
 - I see way too many people just rolling the dice when they need to make a decision.

HOW TO HEAR GOD

You might be sitting here thinking, I'm so dull and everyone else is so sharp. Seriously, have you ever felt like you are just not as spiritual as everybody else?

Some of your Christian friends are so close to God he tells them EVERYTHING:

- What to wear.
- Where to park.
- What cashier line is best in Kroger.
- Who to marry, what part of city to live in, what house to buy, what color to paint the living room.

Listen – I know God leads us and He speaks to us, but come on, I think God can trust us with our paint preferences. I don't think you need a word from God about which toothpaste is best! Or where you should park.

God has given you a brain and the autonomy to make your best decisions.

1) GOD IS A SPEAKING GOD, AND HE WANTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIS PEOPLE.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- a) **Jesus is the WORD:** Therefore, a desire to communicate with his people is in His nature.
- b) God speaks to men who care enough to hear.

2) YOU CAN HEAR GOD, SO EXPECT IT TO HEAR HIS VOICE.

- a) The ability to communicate is a gift from God.
 - i) **The gift of communication is even seen in creation.** the animals have a myriad of ways to communicate to one another.
 - (1) Honeybees dance, Whales sing, Fireflies flash their tales... Some use vocalizations and while others use movements and scents.
 - (2) But of all creation we humans were given by God the most unique gifts of language. Besides speaking, we write, draw, play music, use facial expressions, and even communicate through touch. Etc...

Joke: Secularists will say, animals and mankind just evolved that way... I heard about a group of cloning scientists had a contest with God to see who could create the best. God reaches down like he did in Genesis and gathers some dust, then he breathes in it and human being is created.

The scientists reach down to gets some dust... God says... hey wait a minute buster... get your own dust!

- b) If you are saved, you have already heard God.
 - i) When you got saved you heard God speak by the Spirit to your inner man or your spirit man.

Romans 8:15,16 NIV The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The assurance that you are **loved** by God, **forgiven** through Jesus, **adopted into the family** of God by the Father comes only from your ability to hear God.

- c) The Good Shepherd says His sheep know him and they WILL HEAR His voice.

Jn 10:27,28 NIV My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

- i) We are way too satisfied to have others hear God for us and then tell us what God is saying.
- ii) This is why people go chasing after personal prophecy.
 - (1) I spent an hour on the phone with a young man yesterday who is trying to decide about his marriage. Some well-meaning people have prophesied against it. He needs to hear God for himself.

Note: Remember when Paul told the Ephesian elders, He was **compelled by the Spirit** to go to Jerusalem. And some prophesied that he would be attacked if he went. So they told him don't go! But the Spirit had already compelled him. Acts 20:22 NKJV And **see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there.

3) THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO HEAR GOD IS "SPIRIT TO SPIRIT".

- a) There are many ways to hear God, but the best and most common is The Inner Voice of the Spirit.
- b) We can hear God by the Spirit just like Jesus did.
 - i) We need to realize that Jesus was: (1) Spirit-filled (2) Spirit-led (3) Spirit-dependent.
 - ii) ***Note: Jesus was conceived and born of the Spirit in the natural, and when we were saved, we were born again... **Like Jesus Born of the Spirit in the Spiritual.***
- c) The Spirit speaks to our spirit with inner impressions.
 - i) Like Paul, you might feel compelled, constrained or even bound in your spirit to do something or go somewhere.

Sometimes these impressions come to me as an urge to pray for someone and to follow it up with a call.
 - ii) These impressions often just feel like a strong gut feeling. The more we act on them the more we learn to discern what is God and what is just our own feelings.

(1) NTS - "I feel this impression and it may be from God, lets pray about it... test it". Look for a confirmation.

Remember Heb 5:14 – mature people are growing in their **perceptions** of God's voice and they are **trained by practice to discern** the Spirit's leading.

Next week, we will talk about how to test the impression to see if it is God.

Hearing God starts by understanding that Father God wants to have conversations with His sons and daughters and learning to hear God well is a huge part of a growing relationship with the Holy Spirit.