

- I am not all that good with silence.
 - I know that not everyone is like me, but I'm guessing I am not the only person.
 - I like radio in the car – driving for hours with no sound in the car doesn't work for me.
 - I am not overly excited about being around the house with no activity and no noise going on.
 - This can cause a problem when am I communicating with someone, especially if I am having an argument.
 - Too often I have talked when I should have listened and been noisy when I should have been silent.
 - This is difficult in any relationship, including our relationship with God.
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- Let me recap the journey so far.
 - Every person can experience more of God. We can experience his joy, his working, his peace, his ongoing presence. He can work through us to change people, to heal, to comfort and encourage. Does this describe you?
 - We experience God by knowing that God is always at work. Where have you seen God working in the past month?
 - God is pursuing a love relationship with me that is real and personal. Does it seem this way?
 - God is inviting us to be involved with him in his work. Are you responding?
 - God is speaking. He is not trying to be mysterious.
 - What did you hear from God this week? How did you hear from him?
 - Bryce looked at three things last week.
 - Hearing God speak from Scripture.
 - Hearing God speak through circumstances.
 - Hearing God speak through other people.
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- But what about all those things that aren't written in the bible, like whether or not to move, or take a new job, or have another child, or who to vote for.
 - What about when circumstances aren't clear, like when one job seems as good as the next, or we have multiple good opportunities?
 - What happens when what we hear from others is contradictory or no one has any opinion on what we are facing?
 - Does God care? Is he still speaking? How do we hear him?
 - I wonder if we are asking the right questions?
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- We saw last week that **GOD IS NOT MYSTERIOUS; HE IS SPEAKING TO US.**
 - It is actually how God designed it. He spoke to Adam in Eve in the garden face to face. (Genesis 3) He walked with them in the cool of the day. They dialogued about life, about how to live. They enjoyed his presence and he enjoyed theirs.
 - After Adam and Eve sinned, they were pushed away from God's presence because sin can't remain in God's presence. But God did not go silent.

I. God is a speaking God.

- God has never stopped speaking.
- Don't blow past this truth – if we stop to think about our frustrations and actions, much of the time we live as though God is silent. God spoke:
- Through a burning bush (Moses – Exodus 3)
- In dreams. (Joseph, Abraham, Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, etc.)
- In visions (Isaiah – Isaiah 6)
- Through Urim and Thummin (People of Israel – Exodus 28)

- Using angels (Gideon, Joshua, Mary, Peter)
 - When they cast lots (Joshua, Disciples – Joshua 7, Acts 1)
 - Using handwriting on a wall (Belshazzar – Daniel 5)
 - Using a donkey (Balaam – Numbers 22)
 - In a wrestling match (Jacob – Genesis 32)
 - In a still small voice (Elijah – 1 Kings 19)
 - Using a storm (Job – Job 38)
 - Through people (David from Nathan – 2 Samuel 12)
 - Through a fish (Jonah – Jonah 2)
 - Through miraculous events (Elijah – 1 Kings 18)
 - Using symbolic actions (Jeremiah – Jeremiah 18)
 - Through Scripture (Josiah – 2 Chronicles 34)
 - What's more important than parsing through all the different methods God used to speak, is that God spoke.
 - **GOD SPEAKS; HE IS NOT TRYING TO BE MYSTERIOUS.**
 - Then God actually upped the ante. He gave us Jesus who was God himself in human form teaching and speaking to crowds and disciples and those around him.
 - It was witnessed, recorded and written down.
 - But Jesus had to die for our sins, and he was not going to stay around, and so he went even one step further - he left us the Holy Spirit.
 - We have the advantage of having the Holy Spirit living inside us.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?*
- The Holy Spirit IS God, he is not some lesser version of God.
 - We have him in our hearts and lives to speak to us.
 - Not only that, he helps us when we speak to God the Father.
- Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*
- The Holy Spirit is not A method that God uses to speak to us. He IS God speaking.
 - When God speaks to us through the words of the Bible, that is the Holy Spirit. The book is not magic, but the Holy Spirit is opening our minds to it.
 - When God speaks through circumstances, the Holy Spirit is guiding our view of our life, changing it to line up with what God is doing.
 - When God speaks through people, the Holy Spirit is leading the right people to be in the right place for us, and opening our ears to hear what they are saying.
 - Regardless of how God speaks to us, the Holy Spirit (God) is part of that process.
- Often God speaks through prayer. Honestly, this is one of the ways he most often speaks. We could talk about this for weeks alone, but when we pray we are having a two-way dialogue with God. In those times of pouring our hearts out and listening, God speaks.
 - What God says in prayer is more important than what we say in prayer.
 - He still sometimes speaks through dreams or visions. One of the very common ways that God is reaching people in the Muslim world is through dreams. Many, many people have encountered Jesus in dreams and it has led them to turn their lives to him.
 - He speaks to many simply by speaking to our spirit (little s).
 - The key is to avoid thinking formula.

II. There is no shortcut to hearing from God.

- God speaking is not a formula. We are not trying to find the magic method. There is no shortcut to hearing from God because it is a relationship.
- Imagine if Moses had his experience today, he might write a book about how to have a burning bush experience. He would say you need the right kind of bush, maybe the right location.
- Perhaps he would tell us that it only happens when we are barefoot or alone.
- There might be a Burning Bush movement. Facebook pages would spring up.
- There would be T-shirts and wristbands with flames on it and a stylized “BB.”
- People who had a burning bush experience would be considered more spiritual and people would seek it and be depressed when they didn’t seem to find it.
- Why do we do this? Because any time we go to a formula, we are trying to find the easy way to get answers without the hard work of relationship.
- That’s why people say if you pray this certain prayer every day, God will answer.
- Others say that God will speak to you if you fast for 1 day. 3 days. A week.
- Others say you need to follow the model of the Lord’s prayer.
- I have heard God speak in those ways and many more.
- Let me say this – I can’t say it any more clearly than this. If you want to experience God you must practice listening to God.
- **GOD SPEAKS; HE IS NOT TRYING TO BE MYSTERIOUS.**
- But we have to practice.

John 10:2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

- Some things to consider when you are practicing hearing from God.
- 1) Willfully living in a sin pattern can block hearing God. Why would he talk to you about more and more things when you are rebelling against his instructions?
- 2) Are you being obedient. What has God spoken to you about that you did not listen to God about. If God speaks and you hear but do not respond, a time will come when you will not hear his voice.
- 3) Pay attention to what you already know to be true or what you have already heard.
- God will never contradict himself. Don’t ask him if he wants you to leave your spouse for another person. You don’t need to ask or wait. He answered already.
- Sometimes it’s more subtle. You have an opportunity for a new job but it is going to require much time away from family which is something that you already know needs to improve.
- You can get a bigger house but it is going to make things really tight financially and will keep you from being generous with your money.
- 4) Be alert for interruptions or distractions. *“Our problem is that we pray and then never relate anything that happens to our praying.”* (Henry Blackaby, Experiencing God)
- Things outside the norm in our days aren’t necessarily interruptions or distractions, but God is perhaps answering our prayers and speaking.
- What should we actually do? This is descriptive, not prescriptive. I am describing, not giving you a formula to follow.
- Read scripture. Many ways to do this. When I read, I have begun stopping the second something catches my attention. It is often God wanting me to consider something about it.
- Take time with God. Be quiet. Pray. I journal my prayers. I have a new practice of simply bring quiet for 10 minutes. Go for a walk. Go to the park. Turn off the TV. Worship.

- Be in relationship with others. If God speaks through people, then I need to have people in my life. Regularly!
- Pay attention to your circumstances. When you respond emotionally, especially negatively, ask God why. Ask how God might see your circumstances. What might he be doing?
- Listen for little promptings. Things that you notice. Ideas that pop into your head. Particularly in relation to others. Then do them. Take a chance.
- If I described my week – I did not have time to read more than a verse or two. I really didn't pray or take any time to listen. I really have no ongoing relationship with anyone that has the authority or knowledge to speak into my life. I am miserable and just want to be happy.
- Why is God not speaking to me?

III. Ask the right question.

- We often want God to speak clearly to us about which job, which house, which guy, which girl, where to serve, what to do.
 - We are living our life and then want God to give us a quick steer to make sure we stay on track.
 - The reason God speaks to us is not so we do the "right thing." He speaks so we can know him, experience him and come along where he is working. Consider that relationship is first and foremost in God's mind and you cannot skip relationship to get to the "doing."
 - There is an account of a young man named Samuel in the OT (1 Kings 3). He was just a boy, serving in the temple, and as he lay in bed, he heard his name being called. He assumed it was Eli, his superior, so he got up, and went and asked him what he wanted. Eli told him he had no idea what he was talking about and to go back to bed.
 - This happened again. Then again. Eli finally figured out that this was something different.
 - He told Samuel to say, "Speak Lord for your servant is listening."
 - The fourth time, that is what Samuel did and God spoke. His message was not a good one – it was judgment on Israel and on Eli and his family.
 - Yet this began a lifetime of learning to hear from God and God spoke to Samuel frequently and used him to accomplish what he wanted to do.
 - If we are going to practice listening, then we have to know what we are listening for?
 - Here's how we often listen.
 - "Lord, I really want to know your will. Stop me if I am wrong and bless me if I am right."
 - "Lord, I will proceed in this direction. Close the door if it is not your will."
 - This allows us to do as we please and put the burden entirely on God. If we are wrong, it is up to God to stop us. If we make a mistake, we blame God.
- A) What is God revealing about himself?
 - He wants you to know him better. He will show you things about himself.
 - Sometimes it is an affirmation of a truth you already know but you see it with new depth.
 - Sometimes it is a truth you know but never thought of the application in that new way.
 - Sometimes it is something new that you never considered about him.
 - Sometimes he simply wants us to experience a truth about him deeply.
 - B) What is God revealing about the state of my heart?
 - What stops me from living in freedom?
 - What keeps me from living the way he intended?
 - God wants to draw those things out. He wants to point out where we need to repent, what we need to change, who we need to forgive.
 - His desire in this is always so that we walk in greater freedom and intimacy.
 - C) Where is God working?

- Since God is always at work, and he invites us alongside, he lets us know that that is.
- He wants us to live in the best possible way.
- He desires for us to see how he is doing things.
- God wants us to know what he is doing. He wants us to see what he is about.
- God will give you enough specific direction to do NOW what he wants you to do.

- **GOD SPEAKS; HE IS NOT TRYING TO BE MYSTERIOUS.**
- So maybe while we can ask about all those things facing us, maybe the best question. The question we must ask is more simple.
- Instead of: "What is God's will for . . ."
- The focus of all of those questions is me.
- Maybe it is: "What is God's will?"