

- We are in week 3 of our Holy Spirit series.
  - The reason we are learning about the Spirit is because it is often this part of God that we have the most difficulty with. We have a hard time figuring him out.
  - We are influenced by those who have told us that the Holy Spirit is equal to speaking in tongues, falling down, shaking and laughing.
  - Some of you grew up never hearing anything about the Holy Spirit except that he is one of the trinity.
  - Many of you have heard bits and pieces about how the Holy Spirit lives in us but you're not really sure what that means or what it looks like.
  - Others of you have never heard anything about him.
  - Sadly, it often leads us confused and unsure about the Holy Spirit.
  - So what we've learned so far is that the God the Holy Spirit comes and resides in every one of us when we choose to follow Jesus. In fact, he is the one who gives us a new nature and who makes us a new creation. He takes up residence in us and points us to Jesus.
  - He leads us into change, he guides, directs and convicts us.
  - But, what we also learned is that while we all have the Holy Spirit, we need to be continually filled with the Spirit. There is more than simply having the Holy Spirit relegated to one room in the house, to one corner of the room. We are to regularly, intentionally, and purposefully pursue being filled up with the Holy Spirit.
  - Victory in this life, freedom from guilt and shame, power and boldness, does not come from sucking out a sin here and there, but comes when we are filled with the Spirit.
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- When we are filled, we hear his voice. They are connected. The more we are filled, the more we hear his voice. The more we hear his voice and obey, the more we are filled.
  - He gives us direction on what we are to do, when we are to do it.
  - He points out thoughts and beliefs that need to change.
  - He connects us to people in ways we never would have imagined and we hear his voice to say and do things that allow God's power to be released so that not just me, but others can experience Christ's joy and freedom as well.
  - I said last week that I would focus entirely this week on hearing the Spirit. Listening to the Spirit. What does it look like? How do we practice?
  - The problem is that without effort, we hear him less and less.
  - It is easy to get so busy with life, so bogged down in the here and now, that we soon find that we hear him less and less and he has to shout before we pay attention.
  - The great thing is that the opposite can be true for every single person, regardless of age, gender, where they live, the language they speak, their work situation . . . everyone who follows Jesus can hear from him regularly and increasingly.
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- If we want to hear more clearly and frequently, it is going to take a shift, a move.
  - *"Our next level with God lies outside the boundaries of our current experience. We have to risk something to get there."* (Rob Reimer, *River Dwellers*, pg 80)
  - **TO HEAR FROM THE SPIRIT REQUIRES A DELIBERATE SHIFT.**
  - I see three areas, and one or more of them may be more applicable to you, but there is going to have to be a shift.

## **I. Expect God to speak.**

- We must move from believing in our heads that God CAN speak to us to living daily looking for and expecting that God WILL speak.

- It's the difference between thinking that the Ben Franklin bridge CAN hold thousands of cars without collapsing and driving across with a complete expectation that it WILL do the job.
- He is a speaking God and wants a two-way relationship.
- God's relationships are always dialogical.
- Throughout the OT people like Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Daniel were all dialogical friends.
- Throughout the NT there is a constant dialogue with his people.
- Jesus himself was God speaking into our world.
- Some people think that God wrote the bible and then stopped speaking.
- When we go through our day, do we expect God to speak? Are we listening for it? Are we anticipating it? Do we rejoice when we hear him? Or is it rare? You love when it happens but it seems all too infrequent?
- For many of us, communication with God is one way. We pray. He listens. And perhaps he will give us what we ask for.
- When prayer is a monologue, there isn't much depth in the relationship.
- In order for our relationship with God to expand, it must develop into a dialogical relationship.

*John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

- The Holy Spirit cannot do these things unless he is speaking to us.

*John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will **guide** you into all the truth. He will not **speak** on his own; he will **speak** only what he hears, and he will **tell** you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.*

- Guides, speaks, tells what is yet to come – these are all communication words.
- It is what actually makes Christianity unique – it is real, intimate, interactive and personal.
- We must begin to live with the expectation that God is speaking. There must be an expectation that he wants to speak and is speaking and is waiting for us to listen.

## II. Sharpen our listening skills.

- What does a dialogue look like?
- It goes two directions.
- We need to be in two-way conversation.
- His presence buoys us up. When we hear God, our spirits are refreshed. When we hear God's voice, we are jazzed up.
- There are ways to practice listening. Here a couple that we know. There are more, but these are important.
- Practice stillness and quiet

*Psalm 46:10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."*

- My heart groans at this one. I'm too busy to sit and be quiet. My mind wanders. I never hear anything. I can't find a good place where I'm not distracted.
  - Notice v1, which is the context of this statement
- 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*
- David's response to problems and trouble, was to be still and listen.
  - Busyness, daily troubles, and the stresses of life dull us to the Spirit's voice.
  - If we want to master hearing God's voice in the midst of the busyness of life, we must first develop a quiet place within our souls where we can hear God.
  - If we live life continually at a busy pace, we will burn out.
  - Just like river rafting, there are periods of calm even when the rapids come.

- Develop time to listen – even if just 5 – 10 minutes – what is God saying?
- Remove Barriers
- There are barriers that keep us from hearing the Spirit's voice.
- **Sin** will separate us

*Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

- When we live with habitual, hidden, unconfessed sin, it severely curtails our ability to hear the Spirit.
- We must admit it, confess it, repent it.
- **Introspection** can kill God's voice
- "I don't know, is it God, is it me, how can I tell?"
- We are filtering everything we hear. We don't take risks. We don't act on faith.
- The problem with introspection is that our eyes are on us and not him. It is almost always related to pride. Our questions are simply there because we really don't want to risk doing, looking or being seen in any way that we think demeans us. We are so focused on our security and our image we won't move.

*A Christian gets on an empty city bus, walks to rear, and sits down. Lord, he prays, if you want me to speak to someone about you, please give me a sign. At the next stop another passenger boards the bus, goes all the way to the back, and sits down right next to the Christian. The passenger asks, "Do you know anything about Jesus?"*

*The Christian excuses himself for a moment and slowly bows his head and once again prays, "Lord, if you really want me to talk to this stranger, I need just one more sign. Please turn the bus driver into an armadillo."*

- We have to receive what God is saying. Test it with Scripture. Sooner or later, we must be willing to act in faith.
- Stop overthinking. We can talk our way out of faith. Listen, test, do.
- **Our bent will** – simply allowing our will to get bent towards our own desires / idols and away from God.
- Example: Sally – people pleasing. Fear of not being loved, rejection. Close friend heading down a bad path. Soul damage. She senses God telling her to intervene. Wants to help, but terrified of difficult conversation – wants her friend to be pleased with her. She asks God if that what he wants. But her fear of people filters what she hears, ends up not doing it. She can't even hear God speak.
- Intentionally pay attention to him
- He is with us always, but we must turn our attention to him.

*Hebrews 12: 1 And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

- Enter his presence with praise and thanksgiving
- The reason worship helps us hear God is because it draws us near to God's presence.
- The right answer to misuse is not disuse, it is right use.

### **III. Lean into what the Spirit says.**

- If we begin to expect the Spirit to speak and we have sharpened our listening skills, it will be for nothing if this is absent. When he does speak, we will respond. The only question is what the response will be. Yes? No? Equivocating? Arguing?

*1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good.*

- When we ignore, don't take risks, when we don't obey, we quench his voice.

Acts 2:16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

- What does it look like when he speaks? These seem to be the most often seen in Scripture.
- He speaks through Scripture. We must be grounded in it. We must study it, know it – anything we hear that is not in accordance with this bible is not God. Here some others.
- Whisper
- Many used to call this the still, small voice of God”
- *Example: Elijah in 1 Kings 19*
- He speaks in gentle whispers, and these are easy to miss, because they are gentle and we are busy people.
- Need to become attuned to these whispers.
- Audible Voice
- People are often reluctant to talk about this because they have been told it doesn’t happen.
- *Example: Paul, Samuel*
- It seems to be rarer, but it does happens.
- Dreams and Visions
- Scripture is FILLED with God speaking in dreams and visions, from front to back.
- Visions might be no more than pictures. Pay attention to pictures.
- When you are listening or praying – what comes into your mind?
- Many people see in pictures and God uses these to reach into their hearts.
- God’s power and love are amazing and can reach into any crevice and pull out truth and bring healing.
- Dreams a little tougher.
- 1. Average, everyday dream. Everyone has them.
- 2. Dreams which come from our souls. They arise from our areas of concern. The dominant factor in these kind is the emotion. When that happens, reflect. Talk to God about it. Is there anything I need to pay attention to right now?
- 3. From the Spirit. God is working something. Be humble. Test them.
- Word in the mind’s eye
- Just see a word – might mean something.
- This is often me – I get a strong impression that a particular word is what seems to apply to the situation – may not even be what another person has shared.
- Emotions or body
- Like conviction when we are uncomfortable. We can feel it.
- *Example: John 16:8 Spirit’s role is to convict.*
- Perhaps it is through peace. Heavenly peace. We can use as a guide.
- Sometimes it is through compassion. Our emotions. Compassion the way God sees things. Must be careful though because we can hear through our bent will and “hear God” through our own idols.
- Sometimes feel something that guides us to pray for another.
- He isn’t doing it to make us feel bad, but to get us back into alignment with him.
- The “knower”
- God just puts it into our minds. We know something.
- Sometimes he speaks directly to our spirit.
  
- Remember the goal – God is glorified, we are not. People are healed and find freedom.

*1 Corinthians 14:1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

- Prophecy – hearing God’s voice – is a pathway to love.
  - First with Scripture. If it disagrees with Scripture, it is not from God – PERIOD!
  - Test with others – mature, Spirit-filled. Not just those who will tell you what you want.
  - Test by prayer and fasting.
  - Don’t rush to interpret what you see. Don’t add to it. Just communicate God’s words.
  - Do it humbly. Ask permission.
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- Theology 101: God is smart, and He knows stuff we don’t know.
  - Google has over 2MM servers, crawling 20 billion websites per day and performs 100 billion searches per month.
  - Yet as remarkable as that is, it doesn't hold a candle to the Holy Spirit's search engine. There is nothing he doesn't know. The number of hairs on your head. Every subconscious memory and subliminal desire. The value of pi to the ten millionth decimal and beyond. You name it, God knows it ... And he is searching all things, all the time.
  - If we want to be full of the Spirit, we must live with a high level of expectation that God is speaking.
  - We must sharpen our listening skills.
  - Then we must lean into what God is saying.
  - Following God is always going to involve risk, but the risk of not doing it holds far greater consequences than listening.
  - Wouldn't it be great if every Christ-follower were so dialed into the Holy Spirit's promptings that our lives were littered with divine appointments?
  - What if we looked at this week and knew that God had walked before us through this week and set the stage for us with divine appointments?