

PETE BUMGARNER MINISTRIES

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**HEARING THE VOICE
OF GOD**

STUDY GUIDE



HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD

SCRIPTURE READING

John 10:27

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Romans 10:17

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

THEME

It is imperative that believers hear the voice of God. Many Christians say they never hear God speak. God is speaking, but we seldom hear or recognize God's voice. We must immediately begin listening **for** the voice of God so that we can listen **to** the voice of God. God speaks in many different ways; therefore, we must be very attentive to the Spirit.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. God has never stopped talking to His people; His people have stopped listening to Him.
- B. We have reduced prayer to an oratory petition that has no faith, only hope; consequently, communication with God is foreign to the average Christian.
- C. God wants to walk and talk with the believers today, just as He did with Adam in the Garden of Eden.
- D. Every speaker, including God, needs a listener.
 1. We want God to listen to us when we speak, but too often, we do not allow God the opportunity to speak.
 2. God wants His people to take the time to listen to Him.
 3. Hearing the voice of God is contingent upon listening to God.

II. BE STILL AND KNOW

- A. We must stop, look, and listen in order to hear the voice of God.

- B. Knowing the voice of God is not guessing or thinking; knowing produces confidence.
- C. I Samuel 9:27 is an excellent example for us to follow.
 - 1. We may need to let the others pass on.
 - 2. God may give us the opportunity to hear Him, but we must cooperate with His method of communication.

III. GOD SPEAKS IN VARIOUS WAYS

- A. There are many ways God speaks to men; consequently, we must be alert.
- B. We must avoid preconceived ideas of how God is going to speak.
- C. Let's look at some of the ways God speaks to men.
 - 1. Speaking in an audible voice is one method that God uses to speak to men.
 - a. It appears that Samuel heard the audible voice of God, but he thought it was the voice of Eli. (I Samuel 3:1-10)
 - b. God spoke in an audible voice when Jesus was baptized, when He was transfigured, and when He asked the Father to glorify His name. (Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 9:28-36; John 12:27-30)
 - (1) Jesus heard and understood the voice of God.
 - (2) The crowd heard a noise, but they did not hear God's message.
 - c. Paul and the men who were with him heard an audible voice when Jesus spoke to Paul as he was traveling to Damascus to persecute the believers. (Acts 9:1-7)
 - (1) Paul heard the voice and understood the message.
 - (2) The men who were with Paul were frightened because they heard a voice but could not see anyone.

2. Although God does speak in an audible voice occasionally, this method is not the predominant way that God speaks to His people.
3. We must not focus our attention upon hearing an audible voice. This type of focus can be detrimental to the believer.

D. God may choose to speak through dreams and visions.

1. God spoke to many people in the Bible through dreams and visions.
2. Joseph the son of Jacob, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, Joseph the husband of Mary, Peter, and Paul all received revelation from God through dreams or visions.
3. Dreams and visions are much more common than the audible voice of God, but they are not the predominant way that God speaks to His people.

E. There have been occasions when God has spoken through an angel.

1. Daniel, Zacharias, Mary, Philip, and Peter are some of those to whom God spoke through an angel.
2. God may choose this method to speak to people today, but this method is not the predominant way that God speaks to His people.

F. Often, God will use people to speak His word.

1. I Corinthians 12:7-11 lists nine different ways that God manifests Himself through people.
2. Too often, these manifestations are not recognized and received as God.
3. God speaks through inspired teaching and preaching, but many do not receive the preaching and teaching as God speaking. (Luke 10:16; Romans 10:14-15; Ephesians 4:11-15)

G. God may use animals or inanimate objects to convey His message.

1. God used Balaam's donkey to get the attention of Balaam. (Numbers 22:1-33)
 2. Jesus instructed us to consider the lilies. God has a message for us that will be revealed only when we stop and think about the lilies. (Matthew 6:28-30)
 3. God used a gourd and a worm to convey a message to Jonah. (Jonah 4:5-11)
 4. The rooster that crowed when Peter denied Jesus conveyed a powerful message to Peter. (John 13:38; John 18:27)
 5. Jesus used many parables to convey truths from God.
 6. It is vital that we stay alert and consider the things around us. God may choose to speak through an object lesson.
- H. Often, God speaks through the spirit, which we generally recognize as the inner voice.
1. God's Spirit indwelling man's spirit often conveys God's message.
 2. It is vital that we give attention to the inward man; otherwise, we will not hear or recognize the voice of God when He speaks.
 3. Speaking to the inward man is a very common communication tool used by God.
- I. The inward witness is another way God chooses to speak to people.
1. Unlike the inward voice, this method which God uses conveys a message without speaking.
 2. The inward witness is a perception rather than a voice.
 3. This inward witness is produced when the spirit inside a believer agrees that what was said, seen, or done was of God.
 4. Often, God uses this method to protect us from error or deception.

5. The inward witness is another common tool used by God to speak to people.
- J. Finally, we come to the most common way that God speaks to His people; He speaks through His Word, the Bible.
1. The Scriptures are God's voice recorded by man.
 2. Many directions and instructions are revealed through the Word of God.
 3. When God speaks through other methods, the message conveyed will never contradict the Scriptures.
 4. Reading and studying the Word of God can eliminate much of the confusion and frustration in an individual's life.
- K. God speaks in various ways; He is not limited to one method. We must not limit or underestimate God.

IV. KNOWING GOD'S VOICE

- A. Jesus said that His sheep know His voice; therefore, they will not follow the voice of a stranger. (John 10:1-16)
1. God is heard with the heart, not the head.
 2. We must learn to pay more attention to the heart that is speaking than the words being spoken; otherwise, we may not recognize God's voice.
 3. In order to hear God speak, we must discipline ourselves to listen more than we talk.
 4. Only those who listen to God can be instructed by God.
 5. In order for one to hear God, he must have ears to hear—spiritual ears—ears that pay attention.
- B. According to John 8:47, one who is of God hears God's words.
- C. We have probably complicated knowing God's voice by being too analytical.
1. Fear is the opposite of faith. We have become more focused on fear than faith.

2. **Fear** says that the voice we are hearing **is not** God. **Faith** says that the voice we are hearing **is** God.
 3. Instead of analyzing the voice, we must immediately act on the voice. We must promptly obey God's voice and ignore or rebuke the voice of the devil.
 4. We must not become foolish and act without judging. All voices must be judged to determine their origin.
- D. There are some basic guidelines that we should follow when judging the source of the voice which is speaking to us, but we must be cautious not to reduce these guidelines to a formula.
1. God always speaks in agreement with His Word, the Bible.
 2. The Spirit of God on the inside of us will bear witness when God speaks.
 3. Everything that God does brings glory and honor to God, not man.
 4. Satan masquerades as an angel of light, but the Spirit of God in us will not bear witness to the devil.
 5. We must never allow our zeal to exceed our wisdom and knowledge.
 - a. Each individual is responsible for determining the origin of the voice he hears.
 - b. Not only should each individual judge the voice that he/she hears, but he/she must also judge his/her motive or reason when acting on the voice that he/she hears.
 - c. Being zealous for God is only profitable to God when we are obedient to Him.
- E. Always remember! Intimacy produces familiarity. The more time we spend with God, the more familiar we will become with the ways of God.
- F. Often, the question is asked, "Is God speaking to me, or is this just my thoughts?"

1. God's thoughts are not the thoughts of a wicked man, neither are His ways the ways of a wicked man. (Isaiah 55:7-8)
2. The thoughts of those who are truly in rightstanding with God are right. (Proverbs 12:5)
3. We must allow the Word of God to discern our thoughts. (Hebrews 4:12)
 - a. Every thought which passes through our minds should be compared to the Word of God. (II Corinthians 10:3-5)
 - b. Any thought that violates the Scriptures cannot be God.
 - c. If we do indeed have the mind of Christ, our thoughts should be in line with His thoughts. (I Corinthians 2:14-16)
4. One who gives his life and attention to God will know the thoughts which are contrary to God.
5. The key to knowing the difference between the thoughts of man and the thoughts or voice of God is being led by the Spirit.
 - a. We cannot judge spiritual things naturally; consequently, we must move beyond the natural mind and judge by the spirit.
 - b. We must have the Word of God and the Spirit of God in our hearts; otherwise, we will not have the ability to properly discern.
 - c. One who is led by the Spirit will recognize the voice of God.
6. Reason and rationale have no place in determining the voice of God.
7. One who knows the ways of God can easily discern the voice of God.

V. DEVELOPING OUR HEARING

- A. Hearing involves more than acknowledging noise. We must be able to distinguish the sound; otherwise, we will not know what to do. (I Corinthians 14:7-11)
 - 1. People often become so overwhelmed with the event that they forget to listen to the message.
 - 2. Always remember! The message is more important than the event. Listen to the message!
- B. Hearing requires effort on the part of the listener. It is not God's responsibility to get our attention.
- C. We must protect our hearing by refusing to listen to things which are not of God. They prove to be distractions that hinder our hearing. (Luke 8:18)
- D. We must be cautious not to become dull of hearing. We must never become complacent with the things of God. (Hebrews 5:11-12)
- E. Walking in the spirit is the key to hearing God.
 - 1. We must give more attention to spiritual things than we do to natural things.
 - 2. We must constantly look for God in everything we do.
 - 3. One who walks in the spirit listens more to the inside than he does to the outside.
- F. We must learn the language of God, realizing that God does not limit Himself to words; He speaks through impressions, object lessons, dreams, visions, conscience, and even animals.

VI. SUMMARY

- A. God desires to communicate with His people on a regular basis.
- B. In order for one to hear, he must listen.
- C. "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

- D. **Stop! Look! Listen!** We must discipline ourselves to **stop** long enough to **look** at the things around us, and to **listen** for any message that God may want to convey to us.
- E. God uses various ways and methods to speak to His people.
 - 1. God may choose to speak in an audible voice.
 - 2. God may speak through dreams and visions.
 - 3. God may use an angel to speak for Him.
 - 4. God may speak through people who preach, teach, prophesy, etc., in His name.
 - 5. God may speak to our spirits either by the inward voice or the inward witness.
 - 6. God continuously speaks through the Scriptures.
- F. It is vital that the sheep know the voice of the shepherd.
- G. We must develop our spiritual ears. This development is accomplished by giving God our attention as we diligently listen to Him.
- H. Intimacy with God produces familiarity with God. Familiarity with God reveals the ways of God.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. Hearing the voice of God is imperative to every believer.
- B. Recognizing God's voice is a prerequisite to following God's directions.
- C. Jesus emphasized that He only did what He saw His Father do, and He judged according to what He heard. His ministry was successful because His personal life was successful. (John 5:19; John 5:30)
- D. We must follow Jesus' example and become so acquainted with the Spirit of God that we, too, do only what we see and hear the Father do and speak.

- E. We do not have the option of telling God which method to use to convey His message. We are responsible for giving God our attention.
- F. If we will apply ourselves to know the ways of God, we will not struggle hearing the voice of God.
- G. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith comes by hearing the voice of God. (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6)
- H. One who does not hear the voice of God will not have the faith to accomplish the purpose of God for his life.
- I. Direction precedes action. Hearing precedes direction. Listening precedes hearing.
- J. We must guard against selective hearing. Let's listen **to all** that God has to say to us **through all** the various methods of His choosing.
- K. Knowing the Word of God and the Spirit of God is vital to hearing the voice of God. The Spirit leads us and guides us into all truth; God's Word is truth. (Romans 10:17; John 17:17)
- L. We must not become so engrossed with the spectacular that we miss the supernatural. (I Kings 19:9-14)
- M. We must learn to listen for the "still small voice."