

## HEARING GODS VOICE

## Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 18-19

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**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most fascinating (and sometimes frustrating) aspects of our relationship with the Lord is our God-given ability to hear Him speak to us by His Spirit. We do not commune with the objects of the universe; we commune with the Maker of all. He is our Father, and He loves to tell us things about His kingdom; He delights in counseling us and nurturing us with His words.

Of course, the main message He conveys to humankind comes through Jesus, the Word of God (see Hebrews 1:1-3). God loves to reinforce that general message of affection, forgiveness and hope with very particular bits of instruction, encouragement and direction for our daily lives. Sometimes His words are life-shaping prophecies (see 1 Timothy 1:18 and 4:140); other times they provide specific advice or instruction, comfort or encouragement in the midst of life.

The Bible acknowledges that discerning God's voice and distinguishing it from all the 'noise' in our mind is not always the easiest thing to do. Just as we grow in our relationship with the Lord, so do we develop—over time, through experience—in our ability to hear Him when He speaks to us.

Are there ways to speed up that process—things we can do or understand that will sharpen our spiritual listening skills? Yes. That's the focus of our Bible study.

**I. Learning to Hear God "Is that You, Lord?"****A. A language of Love.**

1. Born out of relationship and affection.
2. Even before we know God.

3. Neither strange nor out of the ordinary.
- B. Words of Guidance.
1. Leading us by day or night. (Exodus 13:17-22)
  2. Distinguishing us from all others. (Exodus 33:14-17)
  3. Giving us “insider info.” (Deuteronomy 4:1-8; 40)
- C. ‘To Obey’ Is to Listen Carefully.
1. Pay close attention; it can get tricky.
  2. Treasure His words.
  3. He gives specific words of instruction.
- D. The Bible: A “Handy Listeners” Guide.
1. Bible stories and passages are His words.
  2. Declare the truth!
    - a. “I believe that You talk to me, Lord. Help me to listen.”
- E. “Your Servant Listens.” (1 Samuel 3:1-8)
1. Be worshiping and serving the Lord, regardless...
  2. You won’t hear all the time.
  3. In ‘still’ moments, He will get your attention.
- F. Value-Added Words. (Mark 4:13-20)
1. *Recognize* His words. (Vs. 24)

2. *Hold onto* His words even when it's difficult.
3. *Focus* on them single-heartedly. "I want to live by more than bread alone. I want the value Your words add to my life."

As we have been learning, God gives us His words to guide us into bounty and blessing—even if they do sometimes call us into (and through) a desert. In a sense, each of us has a *Promise Land*, a way/place of life specifically prepared for us to end up living life to its fullest. God's counsel takes us there, and apart from "abiding in His words," we can do nothing to get there on our own. His words are the pathway; we cannot find our *Promise Land* (in any area of our life) without paying very close attention to what He says to us.

The challenge comes on three fronts. First of all, it's somewhat difficult to identify which words are His among the many words that vie for our attention; spiritual seeds are so tiny. Second, pressures and opposition always come on the heels of His words; it isn't easy to keep believing when circumstances contradict what His words have promised. And finally, (though not always in that order) the everyday hassles of life, along with desires for other things, cut off the fruitfulness His words were meant to have in our lives.

## II. The Call to Repentance

### A. The Goal is:

1. To keep paying close attention (hanging on) to His every word.
2. To end up in a place of bounty despite our circumstances.

### B. Change in Thinking/Living.

1. Reconsidering and coming to different conclusions. (Isaiah 55:6-9)
2. Allowing His words to *succeed* in our lives. (Isaiah 55:10-11)
3. Being led by joy and peace. (Isaiah 55:12)

### C. Become Accustomed to God's Ways.

1. *Disciple* = a taught one, someone who has become regularly accustomed to a teacher's teaching/life-patterns. (Isaiah 50:4-5)
2. *Way* = custom, manner of life/thought, road, mode. (Psalm 25:4)
3. *Path* = well-traveled course, frequented trail, caravan/trade route.
4. *Instructs* = points out, lays out, informs, directs. (Psalm 25:8)
5. *Leads* = guides, treads a path, leads forth by walking. (Psalm 25:9)

Most of the time when the Lord speaks to us, His words bring about an almost instant *change in our thinking* (that's called *repentance*). Suddenly, we see things differently than before; new possibilities, joy and a great peace usually accompany His words. And since the whole point of His counsel is to bring us to places of promise and bounty, it only makes sense to *pay very close attention* to them (that's called *obedience*).

In our study to learn how to better hear when God speaks to us, we've learned that disciples become accustomed to God's ways and that they receive instruction from Him; the more we respond to what He has already said to us, the better able we will be to hear what He says next.

Practically speaking, if we want to hear God better, we should adopt a posture for listening that begins with saying, "Whatever, Lord, I'm open to hearing anything—no matter how small it may seem to me...or how different it is from what I was expecting." Like Samuel said, "Speak Lord, for Your servant (whose life belongs to You) is listening."

### III. Feeble, Faint and Uncertain

#### A. The Biggest and Loudest "Word" from God.

1. His words usually seem *foolish* and *feeble* (faint); and they often frustrate or confound natural (even wise) thinking.
2. God chooses the *foolish*, the *weak*, the *base* and the *despised*, so that no one can boast except in Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

3. We'll hear better if we determine to know nothing "except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)

#### B. God's Wisdom and Words.

1. Hidden from natural perception, but *revealed* by His Spirit.
2. Spiritual *thoughts* combined with spiritual *words*—and neither taught by human wisdom.
3. Spiritual appraisal:
  - b. Does it align with Scripture?
  - c. Does it communicate the heart of God (grace and mercy)?
  - d. Does it offer a future and a hope? (Jeremiah 29:11)
  - e. Does it build up and give more inheritance? (Acts 20:32)

#### IV. Fruit of God's Words

Once we realize that the Lord has particular speech-patterns, just as He has "ways and paths" that He frequents regularly, it is a bit easier to hear Him—to differentiate His voice from the many other mental goings-on (impressions, ideas, promptings, etc.) during our conscious days. Obviously, not every nudge in our heart/mind comes from Him, but many more thoughts than we might imagine do originate in God's mind and heart for us. (See Psalm 139:17-18)

Another way to think about the "sound" of God's voice is to peek at what it produces. Chemists sometimes use this approach to determine the makeup of uncertain compounds. We know, for instance, that baking soda will react to vinegar and produce bubbling foam—whereas flour (a similar white powder) produces nothing of the sort. When Jesus' words touch us, they are fairly consistent catalysts. They "do" the same kinds of things in and for us. That's why you will sometimes hear people saying, "That feels like the Lord."

Let's go to a few typical Bible passages to see where we identify some of the sorts of fruit produced by words that are truly from the Lord:

## A. Psalm 19:7-11.

1. *“Restoring the soul”*—Changing what you think, feel or choose.
2. *“Making wise the simple”*—Providing an uncomplicated next step.
3. *“Rejoicing the heart”*—Bringing a surge of joy despite circumstances.
4. *“Enlightening the eyes”*—Changing your perspective about things.
5. *“Desirable, sweet, rewarding and warning.”*

## B. Other Passages.

1. *Penetrating and Sifting* of your deepest thoughts. (Hebrews 4:12)
2. *Foundational and Build-on-able*. (Matthew 7:24-27)
3. *Healing and Delivering*. (Psalm 107:20)
4. *Illuminating*. (2 Peter 1:19)

## v. Intimate Bonds and Connections.

At some point, we have to ask ourselves why God bothers trying to communicate with people like us who aren't very good at hearing or paying attention to what He says. If the whole point is merely to steer us in the right direction, or to “get at” some point of distortion in our lives, He and we would be better served by email or a message on our answer machine. Truthfully told, we miss more than we hear. So, “Why?” Why does He whisper when He could use a spiritual megaphone?

The answer, at least as closely as we can understand it in natural terms, is INTIMACY—a close connection that keeps us leaning in, and keeps us from trying to do things apart from Him. In ministry terms, we get to follow His private counsel, not just standardized manuals and practices. Winks and whispers are much, much more securing and inspiring than rules and regulations announced with a loudspeaker.

## A. Hearing and Believing (Hebrews 11).

1. *Obedience* is simply paying close attention to and following the “insider instructions” Jesus gives us.
2. *Faith* involves believing two things: THAT God and WHAT God has said.
3. God’s words.
  - a. Originate in the imperceptible dimension but shape visible reality.
  - b. Must be welcomed from afar because they’re feeble and faint.
  - c. Provide “next step” instructions for a future that is not fully seen or understood.
  - d. In keeping them there is great reward—bounty and transformation in our life, as well as encouragement, edification and consolation for others.

## B. Hearing and Speaking (1 Corinthians 14).

1. “Since you are zealous of spirituals, seek to abound for the edification of the church.” (V. 12)
2. Words from the Lord bring revelation, knowledge, prophecy or teaching (v. 6), and they equip us for spiritual ministry. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
3. Spiritual language (tongues) involves speaking “as the Spirit gives” utterance. (Acts 2:4)
4. When we pray in the Spirit, our conscious mind may not know what we’re saying, but our spirit hears and prays according to the Holy Spirit’s leading. (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 14; Romans 8:26)