

→ A Biblical Basis: Does God still speak to us today?

- A. God's initial intent for us was that we would be with Him and speak to Him face to face and that our lives would be led by His voice.
Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day... the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"
(Genesis 3:8-9)
- B. Due to our disobedience toward God and the shame we have from our disobedience, we were separated from His presence and voice.
He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."... So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden... (Genesis 3:10, 23)
- C. Through Jesus' death on the cross our relationship with God was restored. In terms of our own standing with God, the primary purpose of the cross was to restore our access and communication with the living God.
For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... through him we... have access to the Father by one Spirit. (Eph. 2:14-18)
- D. We live in the day that Joel prophesied when God will restore communication with His people through the activity of the Holy Spirit.
I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)

→ What does the voice of God sound like?

- A. Because we primarily experience the world as physical beings, the way we naturally "hear" is through physical means (vibrating air molecules hitting our ear drum); however, God is not a physical being and is therefore not limited to speaking to us through just physical means.
- B. Because God is not bound by physical limitations, there are an endless number of ways God could speak to us including: Scripture, nudges, images, people, situations, audible voices, dreams, sermons, impressions, thoughts, intuitions, etc.
- C. God is always speaking to us. The problem is that we expect Him to speak in a particular way and miss out on what He's saying. We need to learn how to use our spiritual ears and tune them to be sensitive to God's voice.

→ Whispers, Shouts, and Moment: Three Ways that God Speaks

A. Whispers

A whisper is an experience with the gentle voice of God speaking to us experienced through a thriving relationship with Him. Whispers are very subtle and easily missed if one does not practice actively waiting on God. They can sometimes be confused for one's own thoughts, intuitions, or skills. Whispers are not necessarily "quiet," but rather easy to miss if not in an active relationship with the presence of God. For most people this is the most common way in which God speaks to them.

1. Examples of whispers- Scripture passages, promptings, nudges, images, phrases, words, inclinations, feelings, thoughts, past memories, etc.
2. Purpose of whispers- Whispers are the regular communication between you and God and include: encouragement, life and ministry direction, guidance, revelations and reminders of truth, expression of love and identity, etc.
3. How to grow in hearing whispers- Create space in your life to listen to God and act in faith to what you hear.

B. Shouts

A shout is an abrupt, clear, and often supernatural experience with God's voice that is often heard in a moment of intervention or calling. It's hard to mistake that God is speaking when he shouts; it often requires active disobedience or ignoring His voice.

1. Examples of shouts- Audible voices, dreams, open visions, miracles, precise prophetic words or words of knowledge, strong "checks" in your spirit, etc.
2. Purpose of shouts- God generally speaks this way when He is trying to rescue you from brokenness or sin, give you promises to hold onto in difficult times, or call you into something completely different.
3. How to grow in hearing shouts- One word- obedience. Also, it is vital to grow in discernment to know what is actually from Him (more on this later).

C. Moments

Moments are circumstances or events in your life that God uses to speak to you. Because the Holy Spirit is always with you, He can use any of your experiences to speak to you. As it is difficult to know that God is speaking during the moment, one often hears God's voice in moments through reflection and contemplation.

1. Examples of moments- Almost anything including: break-ups, difficulties, celebrations, things people say, relationships, family circumstances, ministry challenges and successes, emotions you feel, things you desire, etc.
2. Purpose of moments- God often uses moments to shape and form you into the image of Christ. He uses moments to teach you truths about Him or yourself. He can also use moments to give direction and guidance for your future.
3. How to grow in listening to moments- Reflection and journaling. Reflect on your day and ask what God is teaching or speaking to you through its events. The Daily Examen is a great spiritual practice to grow in hearing moments.

→ **Growing in Discernment**

- A. Discernment is defined as skill in understanding, grasping, and comprehending; the ability to recognize or identify as separate and distinct, right or wrong, God or Satan. In regards to hearing God's voice, discernment is important in interpreting correctly what you hear, and ultimately knowing whether what you are hearing is actually from Him.
- B. Growing in discernment is ultimately growing familiar with the *qualities* and *motivations* of God's voice. This is like how we instantly recognize the voice of a parent or significant other when they call.
 1. Qualities: loving, compassionate, gracious, truthful, accepting, faithful, selfless, patient, slow to anger, joyful, etc.
 2. Motivations: to heal, to restore, to build up, to motivate, to inspire, to bless, to send, to forgive, to give identity, to encourage, etc.
- C. To grow familiar with His voice we need to spend time listening to it through Scripture. Because God will never contradict the Bible, Scripture serves as guardrails to ensure what we are hearing is actually in line with who God is. If you want to know God's voice become an excellent student of the Scriptures.
- D. Part of growing in discernment is recognizing that you can be wrong! Even the most mature, "prophetic" people get it wrong at times. This should not discourage you from acting on what you hear, but rather encourage you to trust in God's ability to speak over your ability to hear. Because of this reality, there are certain guidelines that you can follow to protect yourself if you are wrong in what you hear. Remember that these are guidelines and not rules. They are not meant to restrict you, but rather free you to act on what you hear in faith.

→ **Discernment Guidelines:**

- God will never tell you to sin or contradict the Bible!
- Does what I hear yield the fruits of the spirit? (Gal 5:22-23)
- Be humble and acknowledge that you could be wrong. Avoid "Thus saith the Lord" terminology. Humility does not mean you lack faith!
- Be extremely careful in what you hear regarding significant others. Don't pull the God card as pick up line!**
- Be extremely careful in what you hear regarding people you hold a grudge or any other strong emotion toward.**
- Be careful with exact dates, times, and places.** God is not a fortune teller!
- Be extremely careful in calling out sins in another person, especially if you're not sure if he or she is actually in sin.**
- If you're unsure about what you heard, it's okay to ask God to confirm what you heard. It's not testing Him if you do so with a humble and open heart.

**When learning to give prophetic words and do prayer ministry, it is generally a good idea to avoid giving these kinds of words to the person you are praying for.

→ **Biblical Prophecy: Hearing God for Another Person**

- A. Biblical prophecy is divine revelation from God, interpreted by a man, and delivered to the church. More specifically in dealing with giving personal prophetic words it is the right word, for the right person, at the right time.
1. Revelation- a whisper, divine impression, word, image from God
 2. Interpretation- how you think this word applies to the person
 3. Delivered- how you give the prophetic word can vary

- B. In relationship with other gifts, the act of prophesying and giving words to one another is foundational to the operation of a healthy church. It serves to:
1. Equip Christians for ministry
 2. Bless, encourage, and edify
 3. Bring unity
 4. Further knowledge and understanding of God
 5. Bring believers to greater maturity

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, **some prophets**, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **equipping** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ, till we all come to the **unity** of the faith and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, **to a perfect man**, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13, NKJV)*

- C. The point of Biblical prophecy is for the benefit of the listener, not the speaker! If a prophetic word is given that is true, but it's meaning is not understood by the listener it fails to fulfill its purpose.
- D. When giving a prophetic word, always be willing to "pay the bill" if you are wrong. In other words, if what you say doesn't connect with the listener, be the first to admit that you could be wrong and make sure that any negative repercussions of the incorrect word falls on you. Follow discernment guidelines outlined above to guard the listener from an incorrect word.
- E. How do you receive a prophetic word? You can either receive it, shelve it, or reject it. Remember that a word could always be wrong! Don't let a prophetic word run your life or take it on yourself to make it come true. Make sure when giving words to someone who is unfamiliar with this to teach them this principal. You do not want a person to confuse your voice with God's.
1. Receive It- If the word rings true to you and is align with other things that God has been already speaking to you the receive the word gratefully.
 2. Shelf It- If the word could be true, but you're unsure about it just shelve it. Put it aside in your journal and just wait on the Lord to confirm it for you. You don't need to work to figure it out, just let the Lord speak to you.
 3. Reject It- If the word doesn't ring true and it produces fear or anxiety instead of the fruits of the spirit, just reject it. Trust that if it is really from God that he can speak it to you again if your heart is open to it.

→ **Application: How to Grow in Hearing God's Voice**

- A. **SPACE**- Set aside time regularly to make space and sit in God's presence and listen to His voice. Following discernment guidelines, act in faith in anything you think you might be hearing! Often, the first voice you hear is God, the second voice you hear is yourself, and the third voice you hear is Satan's telling you that the first voice was not God! Journal everything you hear and see what words comes to pass.
- B. **SCRIPTURE**- Become an excellent student of the Scriptures and learn the qualities and motivations of God's voice.
- C. **PRACTICE**- Find a group of friends whom you trust and understand discernment and practice giving prophetic words to one another. Don't be afraid to be wrong, just extend grace to each and laugh about it! Do this as often as you can. Prophetic words often begin as a whisper and God gives you more of the word as you speak it out. Therefore, even if you're not sure, just speak it out in faith!

→ **Further Reading**

- *The Power of a Whisper: Hearing God and Having the Guts to Respond* by Bill Hybels (evangelical)
- *Growing in the Prophetic: A practical, biblical guide to dreams, visions and spiritual gifts* by Mike Bickle (charismatic)
- *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* by Richard Rohr (contemplative)
- *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* by Dallas Willard (academic/intellectual)