

Lecture 3: Discerning God's Voice

God Speaks to Us

Does God speak to us? Of course! God is always speaking

- "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye." (Psalm 32:8)
- "Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

How does God speak to us?

- Through the Scripture (the Word of God)
- The Holy Spirit (who abides in us) speaks to us through our conscience
- Your Father of Confession (spiritual guidance and counsel)
- Circumstances and Events and Actions (e.g. opening and closing doors, etc)
- You may be the answer to someone's prayer

Five Channels:

1. The Scripture

- "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (1 Timothy 3:16)
- It's good to read the Bible academically, theologically, didactically... but also important to read the Bible as a personal love letter from God to you

2. Prayer

- Prayer is a two-way communication
- Prayer opens the heart to hearing God's response
- "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:3)

3. Counsel

- "Plans are established by counsel." (Proverbs 20:18)
- Spiritual counsel, Abouna, my servant, etc.

4. Nature

- "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1)
- When you look at the Sunset, remember the Sunsetter

- From Synxarion of the day: "St Barbara rose up her eyes to heaven from the top of the tower contemplating the beauty of the sky and what was in it: the sun, the moon, and the stars. She came to the conclusion that the universe must have an able and wise maker who is worthy of worship and honor."

5. Events

1. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Are we listening?

Barriers to Hearing God's Voice

Starts with the **desire to listen** to His voice; listening to God is a **purposeful** activity. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark 4:9, Revelation 2, 3).

Listening to God's voice is a **privilege** ("many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see and have not heard them; and to hear the things which you hear and have not heard them.")

What are the barriers?

1. Distractions

- Social media, constant notifications, earbuds, phones, noise, busy schedules, etc.
- How can we hear God's voice in the midst of all of these distractions?
- "Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:40)
 - Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World - Joanna Weaver
- "The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains..., but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire **a still small voice**..." (1 Kings 19)

2. Pride

- If I am self-reliant, will I WANT to hear God's voice? I won't need to hear from God because I already know what I need to do
- The Pharisees
 - "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'."

3. Doubt

- "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God... but let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord." (James)

1:5-6)

- Doubt vs. Questioning
 - St Mary Questioned
 - Zacharias Doubted

4. Impatience

- Instant Gratification... I gave you some prayers on Tuesday night but didn't get an answer Wednesday morning. If He doesn't answer my prayer within 24 hours, He doesn't love me, care about me and doesn't exist"
- "But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:4)

These barriers are spiritual earplugs from hearing the voice of God

Overcoming the Barriers

- Digital Detox
 - What's the first thing you do in the morning? Reach for the phone
 - Take a weekend without phones
 - Plug your phone somewhere else
- Replacing bad habits with good habits
- How do you overcome doubt?
 - If He died for you, won't He guide you and speak to you and direct you in His path? It would be foolish to think
 - God does not play hard to get with us
 - God does not play hide and seek with us
 - A relationship with God is not a guessing game
- The Importance of Quiet Time
 - Setting aside focused and uninterrupted time **every day** where you can be "alone" with God
 - Start with 60min or 90min? No. Start with 2 min.
 - When someone says "I get bored in liturgy" - tell them to be FAITHFUL in the amount of time you CAN focus. If you can focus for 10min, be FAITHFUL in those 10min. and ask God to help you expand the time. In a short amount of time, you will find that you're telling Abouna he finished early!

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