**Listen, God is speaking**

Activity: Have kids gather around you. Send one away from the group to whisper a bible verse while you yell directions to the kids (don’t listen to your parents, don’t go to church, don’t read your bible) Ask which voice they heard? Did they hear what the other kid was saying? If so, was it because they wanted to hear it?

John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

There is a big problem in the world today – That problem is noise and distraction. We are always surrounded by noise and distractions. Everywhere you go we have phones, Radios, TVs. Internet, … Everybody has problems and advice. It is no wonder we have trouble hearing God’s voice over all these things.

Many people say they have never heard God’s voice. Maybe they just can’t hear His voice over the noise and distraction of this world. It shouldn’t surprise anyone that we have trouble hearing God speaking to us. You can be sure that the enemy has placed all these distractions there just for this purpose.

Imagine standing in a noisy crowded room full of distractions with God at one end and the enemy standing at the other end. If you desire what the enemy has to offer (Lust, Hatred, Gossip, Bad movies, bad words, Pornography) you are going to be moving toward the enemy and hearing his voice loud and clear. How then can you hear what God is whispering to you at the other end of the room?

It is not that God doesn’t want you to hear his voice, he whispers because he wants **you** to desire to hear his voice. He will not force you to listen to Him. On the other hand, the enemy is going to be yelling in your ear because he doesn’t want you to hear what God has to say.

Now, if you start focusing on God, praying, reading and meditating on His word, and maybe even paying attention in church then this will bring you closer to God and the closer you get the more you will start hearing his soft whispers. Eventually you will find yourself in a place where you start hearing God’s voice but you will still hear the enemy as well. Remember God is whispering and the enemy is still yelling.

Have any of you ever been in a situation where two people are talking at you at the same time? Who do you usually end up listening to? It’s usually the one with the more appealing message, maybe the better offer, the one that agrees with what you want, and if that is the enemy then you will start to drift back toward him.

I have heard many people say I can watch bad movies, play bad games, tell bad jokes… it won’t affect my relationship with Chris because I know wrong from right. **It’s not about what you know it is about where you are standing. Are you standing with Christ or with the enemy?**

You have to make a decision to turn your back on all that is wrong with this world and start walking towards all that is right in Christ.

The bible tells us toCast down everything that exalts itself against the Father and Capture every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Jesus said we are to deny ourselves. We have to give up all that we desire for those things God desires for us then we can turn down the voice of the enemy (till it is just a small whisper) and hear God’s voice loud and clear.

John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

There are three things Jesus mentioned here: 1) My sheep hear My voice. 2) I know them. 3) They follow Me. This is all a part of the Christian life, hearing the Lord speak, having a relationship with Him, obeying what he says. (again, Deny yourself daily and follow me- Luke 9:23)

**So the next question is “How do you know when God is speaking to you.”**

# 1 Kings 19:11-13 The Lord said (to Elijah), “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.  When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Elijah was a seasoned prophet who walked with the Lord and knew his voice well. But now he was on the run and sitting alone in a dark cave. He had just called down fire from heaven and killed all the False Prophets, now he was in hiding because Jezebel, the queen, was seeking to kill him.

During the night, the Lord spoke to Elijah and told him to go stand on the mountain. While waiting on the mountain for God to speak to him. A mighty hurricane tore through the mountains but Elijah sat still. An earthquake shook the mountain, but Elijah waited. Then there came a fire, but Elijah sat still. Then came a small voice. When Elijah heard the gentle whisper, He knew that it was God Almighty speaking. Elijah recognized His voice and he arose and went out to meet God.

We are meant to hear God’s voice. That was his original plan, that we would each hear his voice and follow him

The first key to hearing God's voice is to be still, quiet and calm our own thoughts and emotions despite what is going on around us. Psalm 37:7 calls us to “be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” There is a deep relationship with God we can experience when we quiet our surroundings and calm our minds. It does take practice to silence all the noise and distractions that fight for our attention.

FYI: I am not very good at this! I have ADHD and My mind goes a mile a minute. I rarely get through a prayer without getting sidetracked several times.

The bible also tells us we need to seek God with all our Heart if we want to hear from him

# Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

# Deuteronomy 4:29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul'

God also knows what’s in your heart. He knows whether you will listen if he tells you something or if you will rationalize it away. (Oh that wasn’t really God speaking). If God speaks you have to open your heart to him and be willing to follow whatever he tells you.

1 Samuel 3:8-10 …Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down. It shall be, if he calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord; for your servant hears.' ' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Yahweh came, and stood, and called as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak; for your servant hears.'

Samuel was a young boy sleeping in his bed, when God called his name. Three times he got up and ran to his teacher, Eli because he thought that it was Eli calling him. When Samuel heard the Voice of God he thought it was Eli calling him.

Many people wait for God to speak to them in some miraculous way but the Lord may be speaking to you in a failure voice. It may be something that someone says to you, something in scripture, or a song that comes to mind. It can be easily missed if your heart is not right with God and if you are not ready to receive his word.

John 14:26 the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you.

Sometimes we just need to stop and listen for that small 'familiar' voice. You may have heard it, but just did not recognize it was Him.

**There are many ways God’s voice may come to us**

* **Through Scripture**: Many times when I have questions I turn to the Bible to see what it has to say. Sometimes I am just reading the bible and God will reveal something to me. Even a scripture that you have read a dozen times may reveal something new to you. We can always trust Gods word to reveal truth

II Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work".

* **The Prophetic word**, word of wisdom, personal prophecy: This message could come from a friend, a teacher or a complete stranger. Most likely they won’t even know they are giving you a message. I have heard many people say that they become a preacher, missionary or something else because someone told them that it was God’s will for them.

[2 Peter 1:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+1%3A21&version=ESV) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said in Matt. 7:15-16 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits"

* **The peace of God**: Sometimes You will just have an overwhelming Peace about it. I have had this before where I had a tough decision and felt God moving me in one direction and just had this overwhelming peace about it (i.e. The first house me and my wife bought was more than we could afford but I had been praying about it and when we saw it I know it was the right one)

Colossians 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful"

* **Signs**: God has used signs in the past like the 10 plagues with the Israelites, With Gideon, and even Jesus used signs. But signs seem to send the wrong message and people quickly forget them and ask for more signs.

Matthew 12:38-39 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

If you ask God for a sign but don’t believe God will give you one and just want to test God, you will not get one. If you ask God for a sign and he gives it then be ready to take action.

**Something to think About**: An Angle of the lord came to Gideon and had already told Gideon what he was to do but then Gideon ask for a sign just to be sure. (Judges 6:11-16, 36-40) Was this right?? Did it show a lack of faith?

*I can tell several Stories of people who asked for a sign and received it but still did not following God (Myself included)*

* **The Holy Spirit speaking directly to our heart**: Have you ever been doing something and had a thought come to you. Maybe you had a thought to pray for a certain person or call someone? Did you think it was God telling you to do it? This could be an idea, a feeling or an opinion about something. It is usually not an audible voice but a spontaneous thought that comes to our mind? Many times we may dismiss this voice unless we are tuned in to God’s holy channel.

Isaiah 30:21 says, "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

Other ways might include: seeing something meaningful, hearing something in a song, you might get an email on the subject, You may have a dream or a vision, and just maybe you will even hear an audible voice.

**\*\*So when you receive a message how do you know it is really from God?**

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul states, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is**

You need to test the message

**1) Test the Origin (1 Jn. 4:1)**

There are three possible sources of thoughts in your head: Your own thoughts, The Enemy and the Holy Spirit. (This would also apply to someone telling you they have received a message from God for you)

When you receive a message ask yourself if it is consistent with the character of God (See number 3) or is it more in line with the character of the enemy. For examples would Satan encourage you to pray for someone or help someone? Would God want you to hurt someone or say something mean to someone?

If it is in line with God then ask yourself if it is something that could come from your own desires. For example saying God wants me to buy a lotter ticket and win a million dollars. Does this really sound like something God wants you to do or is this something you want.

**2) Compare It to Biblical Principles**

God will never tell you to do something that goes against his own word found in the Bible. If the Bible clearly states that something is wrong God will not tell you to do it so it is important to understand what is in the bible

**3) Compare It to the Character of God as Revealed in the Bible**

Anything God says to you will be in harmony with His nature. Knowing what the Bible says about Him will help you discern what words are from Him.

 *(My brother swore God wanted him to have a Harley motorcycle)*

**4) Test the Fruit (Matt. 7:15-20)**

What effect does the message have on you and the way your treat those around you? Words from the Lord will bring the fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

When God speaks to us we should feel humility and peace knowing the one true God is speaking to us.

On the other hand, any words you receive which causes hate, anger, fear, doubt, anxiety or pride must be immediately rebuked and rejected as lies of the enemy.

Matthew 7:15-20 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

**5) Through the Confirmation of others:**

If you have any doubt about the message you receive seek confirmation from someone else whose spiritual discernment you trust. Share it with your spouse, your parents, your friends, your elders, your group leader, even your grown children. Ask them to pray over the situation and give you their thoughts.

Avoid the authoritarian who insists that they have the all the answers and tells you not to listen to others.

I once read a story of a person working in the Church who felt God was calling them to leave, if they left there would be a big impact on the Church so they asked the Elders to pray for a Yes/No decision without telling them what they were praying for. I don’t know if that was fair but it took human emotion out of the picture.

Matthew 18:16 "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed"

**6) Sometimes we may hear from God but don’t immediately understand it or believe it so we cast it away**

Matthew 13:18-19 “Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

If you receive an answer from God (or think it is from God) but don’t understand it pray about it or ask for discernment from Christian friend or Pastor. Don’t just throw it away. Ask God for wisdom, he will provide it.

James 1:5-6 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

* **Sometimes God is Silent**

Sometimes God chooses to be silent. We find this in the bible

God Was silent with Job: “I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me.” (Job 30:20)

God was silent after he had Elijah hold back rain from the people for over three years, because of their sins. *“After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.”(* [1 Kings 18:1](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=1ki+18:1):)

God was silent with King David: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” (Psalm 22:1–2)

God was even silent when His own son, Jesus, as he used these same words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”, hanging on the cross

**Why would God choose to be Silent?**

I know the bible says that God will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5), but there is a difference in God being present everywhere and watching over you and His presence with you helping you to make the right chooses. Sometimes you can be in His presence but hear nothing but silence.

Testing: During King Hezekiah's most prosperous time we are told God left him for a season:

2 Chronicles 32:30-31 ..(Hezekiah) He succeeded in everything he undertook. 31 But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land**, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.**

In school, the teacher is there to answer all your questions, However, when it is time for the test, the teacher is quiet and expects you to complete test using the knowledge that you have been taught.

If you are trying your best but it seems that God has nothing to say to you, then you might be going through a test. Stay the course remember all that you have learned (the Lord always prepares us) and take comfort that soon the test will be over.

We also find that sometimes God is silent because we have some unrepented sin that separates us from God so that we can’t hear his voice.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Other reasons include: Request is inappropriate or not in God’s will, Answer was No or wait, God has already provided an answer in his word.

**Closing**

If you are waiting to heard God’s voice maybe you need to spend more time seeking him and listening. In the old days if you wanted to listen to a Radio or TV station you would have to play around with the tuning Knob and adjust the antenna to just the right angle to get a clear signal. This may seem like a far-fetched analogy but **we need to have are minds tuned into God’s will and adjust or lives to be like Christ to clearly hear his voice.**

So, if you have not heard from God examine yourself to see if you have repented of all sin in your life? are you really wanting to hear what God has to say? Are you willing to except whatever answers he gives you? Will you fully trust God to see it through?

If you know the request is not aligned with His will then why would God ever speak in the first place! He has already spoken in his word. If it is in his will then keep praying, don’t give up and get ready to receive because the answer will come to you in God’s time.

When you do receive a word from God test it and if it stands up to the test believe it, hang onto it, and step out in Faith to what God has for you. If you fall, He can catch you.