

The Ministry of Loving, Listening, and Praying

Session 6: Hearing God's Voice

Rockford Reformed Church, Rockford, MI Prepared by Pastor Paul Bradford

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1. The Word of God is the Sword that defeats the enemy Kingdom.

Eph 6:17 Word = Greek *rhema* which refers to a word spoken on a given occasion, in contrast with Greek *logos* which emphasizes written Word.

The Prophetic word is the Word of God shot like an arrow at a specific need. It is often an anointed application directly from the Scriptures, and is always in full accord with the Scriptures, for the Bible alone is the infallible standard of faith & all must be judged by it.

2. Ways God speaks

A. God speaks through:

- His Word
- His Works – nature, miracles
- Circumstances
- His Voice

B. Learning to hear God's voice.

- When God communicates to us, it is nearly always in our spirit. This is why we often miss his voice. God is spirit, he lives in the realm of the spirit, & he communicates to us spiritually. He almost never speaks in an audible voice. He speaks & he speaks clearly, but not with the movement of physical sound waves that vibrate against our eardrums.
- A careful study of the scriptures reveals that God speaks through what we might call Spiritual Sight, Spiritual Hearing, & Spiritual Knowing. When God communicates we see, we hear, or we know within.

C. Spiritual Sight

1. Dreams, Visions & Images. These are the “symbolic language of the soul”. This is very common Biblically. With time and pray, we can understand what these images are communicating.
 - Caution against over interpreting dreams.
 - Pictures during a prayer time.
2. Words - Some people might see a scriptural reference as if before their eyes, which, when they look it up, is exactly what is needed for the time.
3. Angels - Another aspect of spiritual sight are visions of angels. Occasionally God allows one of his angels (messengers) to appear to give messages, to minister, or to give aid to his people.

D. Spiritual Hearing--Words & Language

1. Philip & the Ethiopian (Sudan) eunuch (Acts 8) - saw an angel (vrs. 26), the Spirit spoke (vrs. 29). “Told”? How did the Spirit “tell”? Perhaps it is the kind of speaking Elijah heard in 1Kings 19:12 when God spoke to him in a “gentle whisper”, or in the KJV, the “still small voice” of the Lord. It can be an inner voice, or an inward sentence that instantly comes to your heart.
2. Inward sentences or words are a common way in which God speaks.
3. Inaudible or audible voice

- Audible is rare. God causes sound waves to vibrate and you hear with your natural ears. This is how he spoke when he gave the 10 commandments as recorded in Deut 5. All the Israelites gathered could actually hear God speak.
 - Inaudible voice come as inward words that are so clear and “loud” that it is as if you actually hear the words spoken, though others standing by could not hear them.
4. The Hearing of Scripture - not just “hearing” but “hearing!!”. Cf Ethiopian Eunuch truly hearing.

E. Spiritual Knowing - Impressions, intuitions, burdens, leadings.

1. Acts 16:6-8 [Paul’s Vision of the Man of Macedonia.] Holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus, preventing certain directions. “Preventing...would not allow”? Most probably a lack of peace, a knowing that this was wrong. Spiritual knowing.
2. Spiritual “knowings” come as a stirring in your inner man, & as you pray & ponder, what you are sensing becomes more defined & clear. I may wait quietly for a minute or more as I try to understand what the Lord is saying in my Spirit. God is beginning to speak, & I must be still & listen.
3. The fact is that no one can even become a true Christian without receiving a direct personal revelation from the Holy Spirit.
 - In John 6:44 Jesus says “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...”
 - There may be someone here today who has been sensing the presence of the Lord. You are suddenly more opened to finding out about God. You’ve felt his touch. You could describe what feels like a spiritual hunger or thirst. This is God speaking to you in your inner man. God is at work.

F. Uniqueness of Experience

- You will find that God will usually speak to you more in one way than another. People tend to be either Hearers or Seers or Knowers. Don’t feel cheated if God doesn’t speak to you in a certain way.

G. God Speaks To Those Who Are Listening

- Be still. Develop a habit of stillness and listening.

3. How do I know God’s voice from my own self or even a deceiving spirit?

- A. You will know because of the deep peace in your heart...the Holy Spirit will bear witness to the Word.
- B. You will know because the Word will not be something you would just have thought.
- C. You will know because you will experience God’s presence as the Word comes, & the experience of God’s presence will always be consistent with the God revealed in Scripture.
- D. You will know because the Word will bear the good fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- E. You will know because the Word will build you up in Christ and promote health in your inner being. 2Tim. 1:7KJV “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power & of love & of a sound mind.” If it is God, it will promote health and godliness.

4. Characteristics of New Testament prophecy.

A. It is available in some measure to all Christians

- We are all prophetic, though our gifting will differ. And God’s Word will come more readily to us in certain ways, or for certain purposes.
- See Numbers 11:29, Jeremiah 31:31, Joel 2:28-29 cf. Acts 2:17-18, 1Corinthians 14:1-5.

- B. Its primary purpose of prophecy is to “strengthen, encourage and comfort” & build up others (1Cor 14:3-4).**
 - This will often occur as the Holy Spirit guides us in how to pray for a person.
- C. Its secondary purpose may be to confirm God’s direction in a persons life.**
 - The primary aspect of encouragement and edification will most likely be evident as well.
 - Caution: When prophecy contains guidance we should not act without first receiving God’s confirmation for ourselves. If you move out on the basis of the prophecy without first hearing God you are not being Spirit-led. Note Agabus and the potential Paul had to be misled if he wasn’t listening to the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:22-23, 21:10-14, 30-36).
- D. It cannot establish doctrine. Bears witness to sound doctrine. (1Tim 6:3)**
- E. It cannot establish universal practice. Bears witness to sound practice. (Galatians and Circumcision controversy)**
- F. It does contain error, isn’t 100% because we aren’t 100% Spirit-led.**
 - The problem isn’t with the transmitter (God) but with the receiver). The purer the vessel, the purer the prophecies will be.
 - Paul’s command to test (1Cor 14:29-32 and 1Thes 5:20-22) is based on this understanding.
- G. It is prompted by the Holy Spirit and is not to be despised. (1Thes 5:20-22)**
- H. Most guidance prophecies are conditional, not absolute.**
 - “This will happen if...(you obey me, you do not repent, etc.).” As such they are invitations, not certainties (Jer 18:7-10)
- I. Some additional insights...**
 - Many prophetic insights are for prayer not proclamation. Don’t speak everything you hear.
 - Often the same person will not have revelation, interpretation & application.

5. Guidelines for giving Words...

- A. Listen for God’s voice for persons for whom you are praying.**
 - Be alert to impressions, sensations, awareness, pictures, and compassionate feelings.
 - Does it sound like something that was me, or something that wouldn’t have come from me?
 - Was that a vain imagination? If it was feeding your flesh, your desire for attention, significance in this life, pride, fears, etc. chances are good it was. Never trust a negative word for someone you have a grudge against. The sin of unforgiveness will obscure any possibility of accuracy!!
- B. Deliver the word appropriately**
 - Step out in faith but continue to pray for understanding and clarity. If our inner awareness is spoken out too soon it may be inadequately communicated. Do take time to wait for clarity, but also know that sometimes we have to step out in faith when we only have a few words.
 - Be cautious and tentative with directional prophecies (such as “Do this or do that.”) Encourage the person to confirm the word in their own heart. Any attempt to take away a persons responsibility to make decisions is of the flesh. An immature person could be greatly led astray by an inappropriate directional word.
 - If you give a predictive prophecy, qualify it and make clear that the person must hear God themselves with clarity before they take action. E.g. “I see you as a missionary in a

country in Africa”...only if God tells the person directly. Predictive prophecy is for confirmation, not direction!!

- Prophetic manipulation - avoid it with great care! Avoid “the Lord says”.. “I think the Lord might be saying” is almost always better. Exception: when you are speaking a clear truth from God’s Word, and you feel God is applying it to the individual. The truth is beyond doubt, and the strong statement may well be God inspired. “God says to you, you are loved by him, you are his child, stop trying to earn my love” This word is firmly grounded in scripture. Obviously you would have to have the Word of God stored in your heart to speak it.

C. Comments about the imperfections in prophecy

- Impure flesh pollutes God’s voice. A pure life is the best guard against fleshly words. Through an impure person a genuine word could come across judgmental or condescending. Through a pure person the same word could powerfully show God’s grace and cause deep repentance. Our pride, legalism, insecurity, woundedness, anger, untruthful exaggerating, can all pollute a word.
- We’re imperfect and so our prophetic words are imperfect. We are not under OT prophetic rules. And so we test. But we don’t despise prophecy!