

Listening to the Voice of God

Every thought is either a response that will strengthen you to live a Kingdom kind of life, or robbing you of that life. How can we cultivate a mind that will hear the Word?

October 25, 2009



John 10:11-18 (NIV)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Reflections

I recently read an account of a rescuer at the Pentagon on September 11th 2001. He told of going into the damaged building while it was filled with dust and smoke. Visibility was zero, but he knew there were people trapped. He couldn't go further to locate them, so he shouted. He instructed them to listen to his voice and follow the sound.

Those people had a choice – they were hearing his voice, and they could either trust him or choose another path. Five people were saved because they chose to obey his direction and followed the sound of his voice to safety.

God tells us to do the same thing: to hear His voice and follow His directions.

There are many voices that call to us each day – parents, children, employers; chores, pastimes, work; things we like and things we don't. We hear them all but we must choose the ones to which we should listen.

In John 10:16 Jesus says that His sheep – his followers – will hear His voice. As His followers, we do hear His voice, but there are many

other voices and some of those are intentionally trying to keep us from hearing His voice.

Various translations use the phrase "my sheep know my voice". How do we know a voice?

By spending time with God regularly in prayer, we become accustomed to His voice.

Because we have heard it!

In a crowded mall, a mother can still recognize her own child saying "MOM!"

In another room, we can still know when to dash to the television for the weather

In a radio interview we recognize our favorite actor without hearing the introduction

How do we know? Exposure!

We hear our child's voice daily, and can distinguish the various tones. We watch the news every evening on the same channel and know the sound of our favorite

weatherman. We watch the same TV shows regularly and instantly recognize the voices of actors we like.

And how do we hear God and recognize His voice? In the Psalms we are told "Be still and know that I am God". Prayer – conversation with God – is like any other conversation: it is a two-way communication. It allows us to talk to Him, and then listen.

By spending time with God regularly in prayer, we become accustomed to His voice. We can then recognize it among the many voices vying for our attention, even when His is that "still small voice" and other messages from the world seem to be shouted at us. And God always has something valuable to communicate. His voice will lead us to safety – and eternal life.

Listen carefully – do you hear Him? He is closer than you think...with something important to say.

—Wendy Woods

Series Resource:

God is Closer Than You Think, John Ortberg, 2005.

Readings

Sunday, October 25

John 10:27

Whose voice do you recognize no matter where you are? Do you recognize God's voice this way?

Monday, October 26

Genesis 12:1; Exodus 3:13; Isaiah 8:1), Acts 11:12

Many people in the Bible heard God's voice: Abram (Genesis), Moses (Exodus), Isaiah (Isaiah), Peter (Acts) among other. If there was a verse that said "And God spoke to insert-your-name," what would you want him to say to you today?

Tuesday, October 27

Psalms 46:10

Dallas Willard writes in *Hearing God*: "The still small voice – those inner promptings – is still the most preferred and most valuable form of individualized communication for God's purposes." How do you make sure to hear God's voice?

Wednesday, October 28

1Samuel 3:9-10; 1Samuel 3:19-21

Listening is only part of the equation – what are we supposed to do once we have heard God's voice?

Thursday, October 29

Jeremiah 29:12-13; 2 Chronicles 7:14

When and where does God talk to you most often?

Friday, October 30

Philippians 4:7; Philippians 4:4-6

Of all the voices that call for your attention, what feelings do each produce? What feelings does God's voice bring?

Saturday, October 31

Matthew 25:21

A sign hung over a desk says: "What if the only opinion that mattered was GOD's?" With what has been read and discussed this week, how would you answer this question?

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.