

Session 10: The Still, Small Voice and its Rivals

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What is it like to be spoken to by God? There are various ways in which God speaks to people, but they all have in common one thing: each contains a message. Sometimes people need addressed in one way or the other, so that they get the message.

- The more dramatic the way the message comes the more difficult it is to get the meaning.
- The less dramatic the form the message comes, the fuller is the content and the more advanced, if you wish, is the condition of the person who is receiving the message.
- Moses, Abraham, Jesus

1 Kings 19:13 "The still, small voice..." It could be no voice at all, it could be just a thought or a whisper.

We can learn when God is speaking to us in our thoughts. The form it will take always is in our thoughts.

The Three Lights tend to be limited to guidance. But **the conversation is not just about guidance!**

The three lights are not adequate to understand the conversational relationship with God, but they are important.

- Circumstances
- Impressions of the Spirit
- Passages from the Bible

"When the 3 lights line up you can know that's God's will." ~ FB Meyer, *The Secret of Guidance*
You should be worried about that. In many cases, circumstances won't give indication of what you ought to do.

These are not a mechanical sort of indicator as they are often presented; they are factors you would consider in forming a responsible openness to God's teaching.

You should not *disregard* any of these, but you need to recognize that these three "lights" are not indications of God speaking to you. They may be there, but *without God's voice* you cannot rely on them. They will not substitute for communications with God.

Learning to Listen and Recognize God's Voice

You do not automatically know it is God who is speaking to you. (Samuel – Eli)

You learn to recognize the voice of God coming to you by **experience**.

The role of the Bible...Scott Hillborn, "Ninety percent of God speaking to me comes in class-time with the Bible while I'm reading the written word. Ninety percent of it is not about what to do but to enlighten and encourage me."

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Three Factors in the Voice: (Thoughts that come to you!)

Tone: There is a certain tone, quality, weight to it. Confidence. You don't think it up. Often you are surprised by it. You don't sense it as something coming from you.

"Perhaps the distinction of the voice is this: the voice of the subconscious argues with you and tries to convince you, but the inner voice of God does not argue. It does not try to convince you. It just speaks and is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it."- E Stanley Jones

Spirit: Not to be separated from tone; peacefulness, joy, a sweet reasonableness, goodwill, a warm but firm presence; James 3:17; It's not the voice of a bully; it will not run over you.

Content: There are a lot of things you know that God is *not* going to say.

You must distinguish the **principles** of the Bible from the **periphery** of the Bible. Keep to the principles in interpreting the voice of God to you. If the Bible says something once, don't worry about it. If it says it twice, think about it twice. If it becomes a fundamental principle, then use it as a guideline to understand what comes to you as the voice of God. What you want to believe from the Bible is **what is taught on the whole** by a fair interpretation that interprets the Bible by the Bible.

You learn to know the voice of God by experience.

- Hearing the voice of God doesn't make me infallible.
- The voice of God doesn't solve all our problems. It isn't meant to. In many cases we're expected to proceed in our conversation and in our lives and deal with problems in which no solution is proposed.
- We don't force it to solve all our problems. It is a conversation, and a conversation is not something we try to force.

Numbers 12...the Primacy of the Voice

The surest way for God to speak to you is to be humble because God knows you aren't going to misuse it.

"If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision; I shall speak with him in a dream." Visions and dreams always require interpretation. They are not self-interpreting.

"Not so with my servant, Moses. He is faithful in all my household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the Lord." **You see here the preference for clear statements that do not require further interpretation.** That's the nature of the still, small voice. The meaning is clear on the face of it.

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Why would the individual that is closer to God have the clearer communication given to them?

1. God doesn't have to get their attention. They're already paying attention.
2. They're in tune with what God wants done.

We should look forward to the time when the conversation is a quiet constant regular interaction as is appropriate for our information, guidance, usefulness in ministry and as we do the work God has placed before us.

Matthew 12:29-31 The Great Commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength...and your neighbor as yourself.*

You're only going to be able to love the neighbor as yourself if you are living in a conversational relationship with God. He's not going to tell you everything to do. But as needed, you'll have the experience of God speaking so that you will be able to love your neighbor as you should.

What if your neighbor is your enemy? How do you love your neighbor if he has done something awful to you?

- Is anyone teaching you how to do that? We must be taught.
- If I love my neighbor, what does that mean? Does that mean that I let them do what they want to do? Is it to think that it's ok that they did what they did?

To love your enemy means that you do what is in your power for their good.

- Sometimes that would be to oppose what they want.
- How you do that, what that means, is something we need to hear from God about.

Raising children: You love them by not doing what they want to do on many occasions.

Hearing God never makes sense except when it is set in the context of a larger kind of life.

How Dallas listens for God about something specific:

- First, ASK. Then expect it and watch for it. Set a time limit (two or three days)
- If given nothing, ask, "Is there anything in me that is preventing you from speaking clearly to me about this matter?" and listen. Don't just go on.
 - The Lord is able to speak to us if he wishes too. God doesn't mess with our minds.
- If there is still nothing that I can identify, I take that as God's indication that I should decide on my own. When God leaves you to decide on your own, that is your assurance that he will be with you in your decision.

God is preparing us for a life of initiative.

God will be with me when he doesn't tell me what to do.

His presence with me is known in different ways than just him specifying a course of action.

God is drawing people to maturity.