

Session 8: What Hearing God is Not

© Dallas Willard Ministries

A good way to initiate conversation with people is to **ask if they are friends with Jesus.**

All human troubles come from thinking of God wrongly.

To get this right is to get right thinking about us. **If we are in the image of God, in order to understand ourselves we have to come to an understanding of God.** We tend to think of ourselves wrongly because we're thinking of God wrongly and then we can't get right what our relationship with God is supposed to be.

THE BIBLE: One of the ways to seek God's face is to turn to the Bible... We have to read the Bible on the assumption that we don't already know what it says.

CONTROL: The desire to control is one of the primary ways that we fail to hear God. When we come into the conversation with God, we want to abandon our hopes to be in control.

MOTIVE: Why do we want to hear from God? Do we want to hear from God when we don't have a need? Am I trying to use God's guidance to keep me safe? **Many people want to know what the will of God is, so they won't have to be responsible for their actions.**

RESPONSIBILITY is the heart of our relationship to God. If we aren't careful and we lose that idea, we will misconceive the nature of our heavenly Father and will come to think of him as working with robots. That's a great danger!

If we get God's nature right, we step into the conversation in a way that is creative. Matthew 25:14-30, The Parable of the Talents – is a teaching about our responsibility.

- The ten-talent man took initiative! He didn't wait to be told what to do with it.
- The one-talent man's problem was he had the wrong view of God.

We can be on the wrong side of life because we are on the wrong side of God's nature. That is why so many people only end up in relationship to God trying to get guidance.

- That's not the focus of a conversational relationship.
- **If you had a child that only wanted to talk to you when they wanted to know what you wanted them to do, you would realize there was something wrong in that relationship.**
- If we get God wrong in his attitude towards us and eliminate initiative then our lives will shrivel, and not grow and not expand.

MANY THINGS HEARING GOD IS NOT:

Some people think if God isn't telling them what to do all of the time, then they're out of the will of God. That's not God's idea of how he develops his saints. You CAN try too hard to hear God! You need to realize that you must leave initiative with the other person as well as yourself.

Bible Roulette. When you open the Bible and put your finger down and that's what God told me to do. It's a way of trying to force God to give you a message.

Session 8: What Hearing God is Not

© Dallas Willard Ministries

- You don't have to be right all the time for God to work with you.
- If God blesses something it doesn't mean it was his preference.
- There are real problems when we come to forcing God to tell us something.
- You do not force a conversation. You respect and you wait and you listen.

Many people think that those in authority bring God's word and God's will. It comes from a context where people are not taught to hear the Word of God themselves and to identify it.

Some think that God speaks with a loud booming voice. That if he spoke, you would know it.

Many people have a problem with hearing God because they think God is way off somewhere.

- God's way of being locates him wherever you are. God is not far off.
- Acts 17:27-28: *He is not far from us because in him we live and move and have our being.*
- Space and distance is not a problem for God's Word. Again, our theology becomes so important in enabling us practically to interact with God in a conversational relationship.
- When you speak, God hears you, and when he speaks, he is near at hand.

We Are Not Robots - The Stepford Wives Movie

God could have done that if he had wanted a world of robots instead of **a world of free people who love him, understand and are participants in his kingdom and his work.**

- Then, there would be no conversations. There would simply be direction and conformity.
- This picture robs many people of the kind of initiative and freedom that goes into the kind of relationship we talked about – friendship, cooperate creativity.
- Subordination, yes, but not forceful direction that leaves no possibility of initiative on the part of the person.
- If you think of God in this way, you'll conclude your prayer with 'if it be your will' and you're off the hook. And now you're not responsible for anything that happens.
- **When you surrender initiative, you make prayer meaningless.**

If you don't believe that prayer makes a difference in what God does and doesn't do, within the sovereign purposes of his will, you won't pray, because it's meaningless. And that's why one of the hardest things to do in church is to get people to pray!

- Imagine a church that would do that – pray. Probably, if the church decided to get into prayer in the way Jesus presents it...there would not be special meetings for prayer because it'd become the main business of all the meetings.

In prayer I'm talking with God about what we're doing together. I am participating in something that God and I are doing together, and I am invoking his power in that activity. Joint activity is the key to understanding how the conversational relationship goes.

Session 8: What Hearing God is Not

© Dallas Willard Ministries

The conversation very often is not about what I'm supposed to do. Its about all kinds of things. **People in a conversational relationship where they're working together don't just talk about what they're supposed to do!**

- They talk about all sorts of interesting things -things that are funny, sad, glorious...
- **Most of what God has to say to us is not about what we're supposed to do.** A lot of it is just teaching. Helping us understand things, appreciate things...there is the element of what we're doing together, and we talk about that, but that's only part of the conversation.

How does God relate to his people? **He relates to them in such a way as to leave them free to grow and take initiative.**

This is the with-God life! How are you with God?

You are with God in conversation – speaking, hearing, acting.

Spirit is a different kind of reality than matter.

Speed of Spirit: How long does it take your mind to travel from the moon to the sun?

- 1 Cor. 15:52...Paul is talking there about the speed of spirit.
 - How long does it take for our thoughts to go to God?
- Space is not a problem; distance is not a problem.
 - Acts 17:27 *He is not far from each of us. In him we live and move and have our being.*
 - Hebrews 1:3 *Christ upholds all things by the word of his power.*
- The Logos is present throughout all of physical reality. He is nearer than our breath.

You can come to the place that when you speak to God it's like you are talking to a person sitting next to you, except it's closer than that.

Spirit is unbodily personal power.

It is the communion of spirit. You are a spiritual being. God is spirit.

- Little children haven't learned to hide their spirit in their body yet!

The Scripture is an unbelievable treasure. Come before the Scripture with a true heart, an open heart to God, you're not trying to engineer anything or to get an answer. You'll see the word light up!

Memorizing Scripture passages - **Once taken in, it becomes a substance in their bodies as well as their minds, and things begin to come out of that that they have never seen before.**

THE TEST: **Is this serving what I want or is it serving what God wants?** Is it an act of love, an act of God's power, or an act of my will and my power?

Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God to salvation.* Paul saw that in action; that's what he depended upon.