

The Voice of the Father
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We are in a sermon series called The Voice: Learning to Hear God. Our basic premise is this: God is speaking and you can hear Him!

Since today is Father's Day I'm preaching a message entitled The Voice of the Father. Hearing God is important, because the voice of the Lord is powerful. Psalm 29:4 says

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

There is supernatural power in God's voice.

1- Knowing the Voice of God requires knowing the Heart of God

Knowing God's heart and knowing God's voice always go together. We saw that last week in 1 Samuel 3:7

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.

Samuel was hearing from God and did not know it.
 You can be hearing from God and not know it.

God speaks and you can hear Him, but it takes time and effort to hear Him. If there is any problem communicating, it's not on God's end.

A man was having difficulty communicating with his wife and concluded that she was becoming hard of hearing. So he decided to conduct a test without her knowing about it.

One evening he sat in a chair on the far side of the room. Her back was to him and she could not see him. Very quietly he whispered, "Can you hear me?" There was no response. Moving a little closer, he asked again, "Can you hear me now?" Still no reply. Quietly he edged closer and whispered the same words, but still no answer. Finally, he moved right in behind her chair and said, "Can you hear me now?" To his surprise, she responded with irritation in her voice, "For the fourth time, yes!"

Any problem we have in hearing God is not with God speaking but with our hearing!

Knowing God's heart and knowing God's voice always go together. That's why Satan works so hard to make you think you can't hear God.

Or when you do – he tries to twist God’s words. That’s that very first thing we see Satan do in the garden in Gen. 3:8-10. He deceived Adam and Eve by casting doubt on God’s word.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

There’s a lot here that I don’t have time to teach on today. I just want you to see that sin causes us to be afraid of God’s voice. And sin causes us to have a wrong view of God.

The most important thing about you is what you believe about God. Why? Because your belief about God impacts every other area of your life on earth AND more importantly, your eternal destiny. Hearing from God greatly impacts your relationship with God.

The Old Testament rarely refers to God as Father. However, when Jesus came on the scene he introduced God as Father. He referred to God as Father more than 170 times. He taught us to pray, “Our Father Who art in heaven.”

You can tell the depth of a person’s relationship with God by the way they relate to him as Father. Some people have problems with the word father. Maybe their father was abusive or absentee. Some people relate easily to God as father because they had loving fathers. Regardless of how your father treated you, God is the perfect loving Father and no earthly father can love us like Him.

By the way – there are no perfect parents! No one perfectly models God to their children – but there is a vast difference between being raised by a father who loves you and one who abuses you.

Our relationship with our parents shapes our image of self and God. Here’s how family contributes greatly to our view of God and how we can end up with wrong concepts of God that need to be put away.

If you had no father in the home – or if your father was there but uninvolved – you will tend to see God as distant. He’s too busy for me or He doesn’t really care. This will impact your worship and your prayer. It’s hard to express love and devotion to someone you’re not sure cares or is paying attention.

Maybe your parents were hard to please. If you got a C – why not a B? If you got all A’s and one B- they focused on the B. When you did a job around the house – they criticized it. No matter what you did – it was never good enough. When that happens – you can end up viewing God as hard to please. No matter what I do – it’s never enough or never good enough. You live under condemnation.

Take it a step further. Some people see God as a mean dictator. Matthew 25:24-25 – In the Parable of the talents Jesus said -

Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

This man had a view of God as harsh and mean. His god was like Pharaoh in Egypt – he continually made the Israelites work harder. “Oh, you want time off? You must need more work.”

One way this is seen is when people fear that if they totally give it all to God – if they totally submitted 100% to Him – He would do something terrible to test them – like a major illness or a child getting hurt. This is a pretty common wrong concept of God.

It would be like a child saying to their father, “Dad, I love you and want to obey you totally.” And then the father saying back, “Oh yeah? We’ll see about that. I going to take away your allowance and give you more work to do and hit you for no reason on a regular basis and we’ll see how committed you are.” Would a parent do that? NO! they would want to bless their child. How much more does God want to bless us!!

Some people view God as Santa Claus. He should always give me what I want when I want it. I just sit in His lap and tell Him what I want and it appears. I’ve seen many people view this view and when God was not their Santa Claus – giving them what they wanted when they wanted – they turned on Him because their view of God was wrong.

We must come to the place of realizing that God is good, no matter what the circumstances we are currently in. He does not change! He is good all the time. The wrong concept of God will not sustain you in the long run. With the wrong concept of God – you will end up shipwrecked in your faith. That’s why you need to recognize the voice of your heavenly Father!

The voice of God will never condemn you!
The voice of God will always forgive you!

The voice of God will never curse you!
The voice of God will always bless you!

The voice of God will never say, “I hate you!”
The voice of God will always say, “I love you!”

The voice of God will never put you down!
The voice of God will always lift you up!

The voice of God will never lead you to despair!
 The voice of God will always say, “I have plans for you that are good not evil!
 Plans to bless you, not harm you. Plans to give you a future and a hope!”

It’s important to have the right concept of God! Where do we get that right concept? Knowing the voice of God requires spending time with God and spending time in His word.

2- Knowing the Voice of God requires spending Time with God

It takes knowing God to know His voice. That requires spending time with God. Having a devotional time with God is also called a quiet time – yet many of us are never quiet! When we pray we do all the speaking.

Psalm 5:1-3 gives us wisdom in hearing from God. It says-

Give ear to my words, O Lord, Consider my meditation. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but You. Listen to my voice in the morning, O Lord; Each morning I bring my requests to You and wait expectantly.

The Amplified Version says – *I wait for You to speak to my heart.*

Notice that the Psalmist spoke to God and took time to hear from God. Prayer is not a monologue where we do all the speaking. It’s a dialogue - a conversation between two individuals.

So – learning to hear God’s voice requires us to spend time with Him and then getting quiet and still to listen to Him. Psalm 46:10 says

Be still, and know that I am God.

We must be still, get quiet, focus on God and listen.

Before refrigeration, people built ice houses to preserve their food. In the winter, when lakes were frozen over, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the ice house and covered with sawdust. Often, the ice would last well into the summer.

One day, a man lost a valuable watch while working in an ice house. He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but couldn’t find it. His fellow workers helped him look, but they could not find it.

A small boy heard about the lost watch and slipped into the ice house after the men gave up their search. He quickly emerged with the watch. The men were amazed and asked him how he found it so quick.

“Easy,” he said. “I closed the door, lay down in the sawdust and kept very still. Soon, I heard the watch ticking and I dug it out.”

The men just did not get still enough to hear. It's the same way with us. The issue for us is not whether or not God is speaking, but whether we are being still enough – quiet enough – to hear His voice.

We need to all commit to spend time with God in His word to learn to discern his voice. When we pay attention, hear Him, understand Him and respond to Him – He rewards us by speaking even more.

God is infinite and unlimited and can speak any way He chooses. But the main way God speaks is through His Word.

Don't complain about not hearing from God if you don't spend time in the Word. Don't complain if you don't spend time in prayer listening to God.

People make prayer hard and complex, but it is nothing more than talking to God and waiting for Him to respond. This conversation doesn't have to be long to be effective. It's better to spend five minutes with God than an entire day without Him.

So, if you don't have a great prayer life, don't feel guilty or make an unrealistic commitment that you're going to begin praying an hour a day. Pray for five minutes. And then spend some time in God's Word. Get a version that is easy for you to understand and a reading plan.

Before you read, pray what the Psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:18

Open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Word.

You can read the Bible with closed eyes or opened eyes.
You can read the Bible with closed ears or opened ears.
You can read the Bible with a closed heart or an open heart.

Jesus addressed people who read the Word but didn't hear God in John 5:37-40

And the Father who sent me has Himself testified concerning Me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, nor does His word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one He sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.

It's possible to read the Bible and not hear God. But, when you spend time with God and you ask Him to speak to you through His Word - you will hear from God.

Just remember to start where you are – not where you want to be. It's like training for a marathon. You must first get up off the couch. Then walk around the block. Then work up to walking a mile. Then start running longer and longer distances.

It is the same with your time with God. People who have spent little time with God and make a commitment to an hour with God will become discouraged and quit. So start where you are, wherever that might be.

If you want hear the voice of your Father, you must spend time with Him in prayer and in the Word.

3- Knowing the Voice of God requires knowing the Word of God

God speaks through His word. So read the word of God with an ear to hear God's voice. One of the reasons for this challenge is found in Romans 10:17

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The reason we are constantly challenging you to spend time in the Word is because that's the main way you hear from God.

And there is nothing more faith-building than knowing you have heard from God. I'm not a natural risk-taker, but when I hear from God, I will go where He says and do whatever He says with confidence and boldness. I will charge hell with a water-pistol because I've heard from God.

Knowing you've heard from God will build your faith. So, don't be afraid of hearing God like Adam and Eve were! Jesus said believers could know the voice of God and distinguish it from voices that give wrong guidance. John 10:27 says

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

The voice of God will direct you, correct you and protect you!

Eph. 6 lists the spiritual armor and then it gives us our only offensive weapon:

...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I was raised in church where we were taught to turn the other cheek, not to fight. We were taught that all fighting was bad. I'll never forget when I was a little kid living in Detroit and I finally got big enough to ride my bike around the block on my own. There was a kid on the other side of the block who was a bully. Every time I went around the block he would chase after me, knock me down and beat me up.

My dad noticed I quit riding my bike around the block. He asked me why. I told him about the bully and he told me these words that set me free. He said, "Son, you can't let anyone bully you like that. Next time he does that, you pick up the nearest stick and beat him with it."

I thought it was a trick or a test or something. I said, "Really?" He said, "Really."

The next time I went around the block, the bully came running up to me, but he didn't know he was about to meet a different Joey – a new and improved Joey – G.I. Joey. I told him, “You better leave me alone.”

He said, “Why, what are you going to do about it?” I said, “My dad told me if you bothered me anymore I should pick up the nearest stick and beat you with it.” He said, “Yeah, right.” But I saw the fear in his eyes! He backed off and never bothered me again.

I learned an important truth that day - I won the fight by hearing my father's voice and speaking my father's words. And you will win spiritual battles when you hear your heavenly Father's voice and speak your Father's Word!

Jesus is our example and that's how he overcame Satan in Matthew 4. Satan tempted Jesus three times and every time Jesus responded – “It is written” – and then He quoted the word of His Father.

Jesus won the battle by speaking His Father's Words.
We also win the battle by speaking our Father's words!

Here's how you take up your sword - just like Jesus did.

When Satan comes against you with fear – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - God has not given me the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and a sound mind.

When Satan comes against you with condemnation – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

When Satan comes against you with feelings of inadequacy – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

When Satan comes against you trying to steal your job or your money – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - My God shall supply all of my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Satan comes against you trying to make you sick – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN - By His stripes I am healed.

Even when it looks like Satan won a victory over you – you speak the word of your Father and say IT IS WRITTEN -

My Father always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus.

I am more than a conqueror through Him that loved us.

No weapon formed against me will prosper!

Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world!

If God is for me, who can be against me!

For every attack of Satan – you have the answer – God’s answer!

For every word from Satan – you have a greater Word – God’s Word!

Can you thank God for the voice of our Father revealed in His Word!