

Lord, I Want to Hear Your Voice!

Key Scripture

*"...the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."
John 10:3-5 (NKJV)*

Portion for the Journey

We all face times in our lives when only the voice of the Lord will do! Only God's voice can touch deeply enough in our hearts to reach the pain, fear, disappointment, need or loneliness we carry. We were created for intimate friendship and relationship with God. Do you believe that God can speak to you? Do you believe that He does? Actually, the Word is very clear that God speaks to His children from the beginning of creation and not just those "super Saints" (who don't really seem to exist anyway)!! God's Word describes people who made mistakes, fell short of the mark, failed--in other words--people just like us! And yet, God spoke to them!! Jesus said quite clearly, "My sheep hear my voice." The LORD invites us to call on Him and He says, "I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." (Jer. 33:2-3) But how can we know it is the LORD who is speaking to us? The primary way that God speaks to us today, is through His Word, the Bible. It is through His Word, we learn to recognize His voice and to tell it apart from all the other "voices" that try to speak to us in this world.

Before we begin to open the Word, let's pray: Lord, I desire to draw near to You. Please open Your Word to me through Your Holy Spirit so that I can know You! Help me to learn how to listen to Your voice. LORD, I want to hear Your voice and know what is on Your heart. Help me to have ears to hear and a heart that responds to Your voice alone. Lord, Your Word promises us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, so I ask for a special release of faith as I study Your Word to believe You will speak to my heart today through the study of Your Word!

Digging Deeper in the Word

1. The entire chapter of John 10 is devoted to Jesus' teaching regarding His sheep hearing His voice. Read the verses about His voice in the context of the entire chapter. Now let us apply the 6 W's to this passage. Who is the door of the sheep? Is there any other door? Who is the good shepherd? Who are His sheep? Note especially verse 9, 27 and 28. Who does this passage apply to in general? What differentiates the sheep of His pasture from all others (note verse 9) Does it apply to you?

2. Go through this passage and mark every reference that you find to His voice, to ears or to hearing. You can use a special colored pencil to mark verses related to hearing, listening, His voice, speaking, etc., or put a small symbol in your margin. I used a small backwards "C" in bright yellow, which looks a lot like a little ear. This helps me to identify those words that we are given special instructions to LISTEN or pay attention to! We all know that yellow is the color meaning "pay attention!" Write down what you have learned from this passage about the voice of the LORD and our ability to hear Him. How does our ability to hear His voice relate to being one of His sheep? How does knowing His voice protect us from deception and being led astray? (See also John 18:37)

3. Now, let's look at some other passages and let them increase your faith in your ability to learn to hear the voice of the LORD. Write a brief description of what you learned after each passage. Look for those things that will improve our ability to hear the LORD's voice!

Revelation 3:20
Deut. 33:3
Deut.32:44-47

Jer 33:3
Prov 8:34-35 (NKJV)
Rev 2:7 (NKJV)

Hab 2:1-3
Psalms 95:6-8
Deut. 4:10-11

4. The Word provides many descriptions of God's voice and ways that He speaks. Look up each verse and meditate on these verses and let them stir your heart with longing to hear His voice! Read 1 Kings 19:9-21; Ps. 29 entire chapter. Write down the characteristics of God's voice in these passages. What does God's voice sound like?

Whisper, still small voice: 1 Kings 19:11
Audible voice: 1 Sam. 3
The voice of a victorious warrior, shouting in joy over His people: Zeph. 3:17
Voice of the Bridegroom: John 3:29, Song of Sol 2:14
The Voice of the Shepherd: John 10, Ps. 23
The Voice of a Teacher: Isa. 30:20-21
His voice singing over us: Zeph. 3:17
Voice from Heaven: Acts 9:3,4; Matt.17:5; John 12:28-30
The Sound of Many Waters: Rev. 1:15; Ezek. 43:2; Ezek. 1:24
Thunder: Ps. 18:13

5. While we have discussed that the Word is the primary way that the LORD speaks to us, He makes it clear that He is not limited to His written Word. Read the following verses and then write down as many other ways that the LORD can speak to us. Job 33:14-17, Luke 24:13-16, 24-32; Ps. 19:1-6, Rom 1:18-20; 2 Sam. 12:1-7; Luke 15:11-18; Num. 22:28

6. We all know people who think they hear God's voice, but are clearly fooling themselves with all kinds of wacky messages. As we study listening to God's voice, do you find this fear rising up that you, too, that you will miss hearing the LORD, or hear other voices and think they are His? If so, I think that is very normal! We need to be very careful for impressions come from many sources. What possible sources might we confuse with the voice of the LORD? Is it possible to be guilty of selective hearing? How do you think we can avoid that happening?

IMPORTANT RULE OF THUMB: God is able to speak to us through circumstances, or a message repeated from different sources, another person or different sources. These secondary sources must always be confirmed in His Word and with the inner witness of our heart. We are far more likely to be deceived by messages "from the LORD" that do not come from His Word.

- ♥ Be sure that this "word" lines up with His Word! God will never contradict His Word. The more we know His Word, the easier it is to discern His voice.
- ♥ Ask God to search your heart and make sure that your motives are pure and that there is no sin or selfish desire that would warp our perceptions. We must keep in mind that our own hearts can be deceitful and tell us what we want to hear.

- ♥ Bind the enemy from speaking. Remember he can appear as an angel of light. His voice can be seductive and appealing but as we grow in the Lord our senses are trained to distinguish between good and evil.
- ♥ Seek godly counsel. God does put people in our lives who are trusted sources of guidance that we can bring what we think we have heard from the LORD and ask them to pray to confirm the message. This would include any that the LORD has placed in leadership over us, a pastor, a parent, a spouse or a godly friend. For example, if a wife feels led to take a certain job and her husband, who is her covering has no peace about it, this is probably not a door being opened by the LORD.

What is the Shepherd speaking to your heart?

How has this lesson changed the way you think about your relationship with the LORD? Has it given you a desire to pray for Him to give you better hearing as you study His Word? Briefly summarize what you have learned in this lesson and how it has impacted your relationship with the LORD.

Your response to the LORD

Talk to the LORD about what you have learned in this lesson. Ask the LORD to open your ears in a new way so that you can truly hear what His Spirit is speaking to you in this day!

God's Voice	Satan	Our Flesh
Gentle and kind, full of love even in His rebukes	Harsh or Imploring: Can be an Angel of Light or a Prince of Darkness	Demands attention, tends to be negative and complaining; tone of voice is often whiny
Speaks through His Word, Other people, Circumstances, Dreams	Counterfeits God's Spirit, Speaks through thoughts in our head, entertainment, books	Speaks to our personal comfort and gratification, often has component of fear.
Focus is on God & His Love; calls us to His Word, love for others and thanksgiving -- not always what we want to hear	Focus is on ambition and performance; often speaks of peace but peace without repentance	Focus is on "me"-- always puts self first. Seeks pleasure. Concern about what others think of us. Fear of man.
Always consistent with His Word, His standards of righteousness. Unchanging over time.	May speak the Word, but takes out of context or twists. Loves to appropriate the Word but not the whole word.	Repelled by God's Word which is foolishness, praise and seeks to avoid self-sacrifice
Calls men to godly sorrow for their sins and repentance leading to change; calls us to follow the way of the Cross	Produces worldly sorrow that does not benefit; Condemns without hope for salvation	Seeks self-preservation, unwilling to take personal responsibility, blames others, takes victim stance
Always speaks truth; even when it is uncomfortable	Lies: The most dangerous lies are those closest to the truth	Rationalization. Relies on human reasoning. Lies to protect the flesh
Encourages our hearts to hope in Him, calls to humility	Fear, discouragement and hopelessness. Abusive.	Looks to self for solutions; pride is root of thought-life
Simple and uncomplicated	Confusion, disorder, complex	Rationalization
Speaks of freedom and growth in Christlikeness	Emphasis on limits and hindrances to God's calling	Confidence in the flesh and our own abilities
Convicts of sin and offers forgiveness	Critical and Condemning; rejects and blames	Chooses bitterness over forgiveness
Calls us to know Him and rely upon His Word by faith	Distorts what God has said, who He is and seeks to instill doubt regarding His promises	Gravitates to painless ways to preserve "self"
Always calling us to draw near Him and His Word	Seeks to draw us away from God and His Word; seeks to achieve our agreement with his agenda	Calling us to satisfy desires of the flesh; enjoyment of the moment without regard for consequences
Wants you to trust God alone	Wants you to trust anything or anyone but God	Wants you to trust yourself
Assures you of His provision and care for you	Seeks to instill Fear and worst case scenarios; dread of evil	Emphasis upon security and fear of future