

VOICES IN MY HEAD - PART 1

Recognizing the Voice of God in our Everyday Lives

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

We often hear people say, "God spoke to me," or "God told me to..." How should we interpret these kinds of expressions? Did God really speak? If so, how did He do it? It can be puzzling to know what they mean when people say that God spoke.

If God speaks to people, how can we recognize the voice of God in our lives?

Define the word "recognize."

1. To recognize is to identify something with what you have previously seen, known or experienced. For example, *He had changed so much that one could scarcely recognize him.* (Often times we know God's voice because we had heard it before. We will cover this in more detail next time, when we talk about "how can we know if it's God, us, Satan, or something else that we are hearing?")
2. To recognize is to identify from knowledge of appearance or characteristics. Here is an example. How many of you meet a friend somewhere, knowing what they will look like? Here is another example. When someone is a liar or misrepresents themselves by the way they behave, you can recognize them as a fraud. (You see they are not who they present themselves to be.) We recognize, or discern the truth.

How do you recognize God's voice, or His presence in a situation in which you might need Him?

It begins with knowing Him as your personal Savior and Lord.

- You spend time with Him in prayer.
- You read all about Him in His Word.
- You remember your previous experiences when He showed up and gave you the help you needed.

If you make these things part of your life, when the time comes to make big decisions, such as who to marry, what career to choose, where to go to college, what job to take etc., then you will not have to make these decisions alone. God will speak to you!

Listen... it is possible, and you need to be able, to hear God's voice in everyday life. Even in the insignificant decisions, you need to hear God's voice. He wants to help you, guide you so you can be a success, and have a life of significance.

When you give your life to Jesus, you get a set of spiritual ears. You have the ability to hear God. This does not mean that you always make perfect decisions. You and I are capable of making wrong decisions, with or without God's input. That is OK with God. He knows we are not perfect.

READ ALOUD: JEREMIAH 29:11

God thinks about you all the time. His thoughts toward you are loving and caring. He wants the best for you. If you listen for His voice, He will help you get His best. In fact, when we listen carefully and include Him in our decision making, He will do His best, which is as good as it gets, so we will not miss what He is saying.

READ ALOUD: MATTHEW 6:33

READ ALOUD: PROVERBS 3:5-6

Speak to your audience about these two Scriptures.

- Share the idea of seeking God first.
- Share the idea of trusting God from within your heart (and not holding back anything).

POINT 1 Often our problem is not that we cannot hear God, but rather we have heard him and do not want to do what he says.

Be sure to measure what you believe you heard by the whole counsel of the Bible.

- A mistake people often make is not to judge what they think is God's Word to them by what is written in the Bible.
- A second mistake is to pick out a single Scripture to validate what they think they heard, but not put it in context of what verses are around it. You can make a single verse of Scripture say almost anything. Submit to the whole counsel of His Word and you will not make these mistakes.

Warning: Do not reduce the way God speaks to some kind of a formula.

POINT 2 God can speak any way He wants. He is GOD! You cannot reduce God, or hearing His voice to a formula!

God spoke many unique ways in the Bible.

- Through a blinding light from the sky (acts 9 to Paul)
- A donkey in the Old Testament
- A gentle voice in the night to Samuel (I Samuel 3)
- A burning bush to Moses
- A cloud of fire flashing to Ezekiel
- The Holy Spirit to the Apostles (N.T.)
- Through Jesus when he was on earth
- A still small voice to Elijah when he was on the mountain (I Kings 19:11-14)
- A Voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism (John. 3)
- Many more

POINT 3 GOD CHOSE TO SPEAK TO SO MANY PEOPLE IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. KNOWING THIS FORCES US TO PUT FAITH IN HIM, NOT A METHOD.

Often, God will speak to you progressively, a little at a time until you get the whole message.

In the Bible, we often read that someone's first encounter with God's voice is much more dramatic than later encounters. For example:

- Moses and the burning bush that was not consumed
- Saul of Tarsus, who was literally blinded by God on the road to Damascus
- Ezekiel, who saw a cloud of fire flashing

As each of these men grew in their walk with God, He did not always need to use such dramatic means to get their attention.

If you struggle to hear the voice of God, remember the example of Samuel as a young boy. It took a number of times for him to recognize it was God speaking. As Samuel grew, he became closer to God and soon was easily able to hear and even speak for God. So you may have a dramatic encounter with God's voice, or you may gradually get to recognize it. Just be listening. You will hear it.

Here is some basic information about communicating with God.

1. Seek His voice by reading the Bible. (God has already spoken.)

READ ALOUD: 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

Comment on what this means.

2. Listen for the voice or the urging of the Holy Spirit. (Often, this will come through prayer)

FIND A SCRIPTURE TO PLUG IN HERE.

We will cover how we can know it is the Holy Spirit in the next session.

3. Learn to discern if God is speaking through another person. (The Lord will speak through authorities in your life, such as parents, pastors, teachers, cell leader, etc.)

READ ALOUD: 2 TIMOTHY 2:2

4. Look for God's voice in the Spiritual gifts you encounter (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophecy, etc.).

There are many examples in Scripture about prophets speaking. You may hear a word that speaks to you in a meeting like this one. Often it is confirmation. Sometimes it is completely new. For example, perhaps God has been dealing with you on a certain issue like pride and a person begins to talk to about pride. It is a possibility that God is speaking something new, or even confirming things he has already spoken to you through that person.

THESE WORDS MUST BE TESTED.

- Do they bear witness with your spirit?
- Ask the authority figures in your life how they feel about the words?
- Do they line up with the Word of God (the Bible)?
- The final test, which will take time, is whether they come to pass.

5. Listen carefully through the circumstances you encounter.

- You might walk through a difficult circumstance and God will use that circumstance to teach you something, or give you wisdom for the next situation.
- Often our circumstances offer an opportunity for Jesus to receive glory and honor. An example of this is found in John 11, when Jesus resurrects Lazarus.

6. It can be through praying in the Holy Spirit (Speaking in Tongues)

We will cover how we can know it is the Holy Spirit in the next session.

[Author's note to our non-charismatic friends: We respect your doctrinal beliefs. If you take issue with this sixth point, we ask you to read our words in love, or skip past them. In either case, we value you as a brother or sister in Christ and respect your beliefs.]

READ ALOUD: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:4

READ ALOUD: ROMANS 8:26

READ ALOUD: JUDE 1:20

When we "pray in the Spirit," we tune our Spiritual ears and hearts to God's voice.

Make additional comments as you see fit.

PRIMARY KEYS TO HOW GOD SPEAKS TO US

- God will never contradict the Bible.
- Not everything people say or write is truly from God, or true.
- Seek counsel from spiritually mature Christians.

END THE SERMON WITH A SKIT ABOUT HEARING GOD'S VOICE.

If you do not have one, it might be good to have a few people do a skit from 1 SAMUEL 3, when Samuel first heard God's voice, as a child in the temple.

CLOSING COMMENTS

What if you were the person in this skit? HOW WOULD YOU KNOW THAT GOD IS SPEAKING TO YOU? Write the answer on the piece of Paper under your chair and drop it in the container on your way out.

WE WILL SEE YOU NEXT WEEK AS WE CONTINUE "VOICES IN MY HEAD"

Altar Call

Pray for people who have struggled to know God's voice.

Pray for people to hear the voice of the Lord and come forward to give their lives to Him.