

Title: Lesson 7: The Blade and the Filter

Main Idea:

God speaks to His children, but we must learn to discern His voice carefully. Every potential word from God should be tested by Scripture, examined by the Holy Spirit, and filtered through Jesus.

Opening Reminder:

God is a talker. He loves to guide His children with clarity.

The problem is not that God is silent, but that we often have confusion around us and sinful desires within us.

We need to know how to recognize His voice and test what we think we are hearing.

Review from Previous Lesson:

Three fences for testing a potential word from God:

1. Scripture is the framework.
2. The Spirit is the facilitator.
3. Jesus is the foundation.

Five Scripture Checkpoints:

1. Does it claim equal footing with Scripture?
2. Does it clash with the known Word of God?
3. Is it contrary to Scripture?
4. Does it complement Scripture and what God has already said?
5. Has God confirmed it through other witnesses?

A word may pass the Scripture checkpoints and still need to be tested by the Spirit and through the foundation of Jesus.

1. Let the Bible Read You

Key Scripture:

Hebrews 4:12-13

The Word of God is living and active.

It does not only give information; it exposes what is inside us.

God's Word discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Main Point:

We often come to the Bible to read it, but we also need to let the Bible read us.

The Scripture checkpoints deal with things outside of us.

The Spirit uses the Word to deal with things inside of us.

God wants to expose motives, desires, fears, and hidden agendas.

Important Thought:

You can fool people, but you cannot fool God.

God knows what is going on in the heart.

The Holy Spirit makes the Word come alive.

Hebrews 3 quotes Psalm 95 and says, "The Holy Spirit says..."

The Spirit uses Scripture to speak to us today.

Application:

When seeking to hear from God, ask:

God, what is going on inside me?

Is there anything in my heart that is distorting what I am hearing?

Am I willing for Your Word to expose my motives?

2. Navigating the Prophetic and the Pathetic

Main Question:

How do I know if this is a word from God or just a word from me?

Key Scripture:

Acts 21:8-14

Paul visits Philip the evangelist.

Philip has four daughters who prophesied.

Agabus, a prophet, gives a word from the Holy Spirit that Paul will be bound in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.

The people urge Paul not to go.

Paul refuses because he had already received a clear word from God to go.

Key Background:

Acts 20:22-24

Paul had already been compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit had already testified that imprisonment and affliction awaited him.

Main Point:

The Spirit may speak clearly, but our emotions can add “soul noise.”

The prophecy was true.

The people loved Paul and did not want him to suffer.

Their love for Paul led them to urge him not to go.

That part was not necessarily the Spirit’s instruction; it was their emotional response.

Definition:

Soul noise is the mixture of our desires, fears, emotions, assumptions, and personal opinions.

Application:

We should not despise prophetic words.

We should also not blindly trust every impression, dream, or word.

We trust the Holy Spirit, but we should be cautious about our own interpretation.

Helpful Phrase:

“I think the Lord may be saying this. Test it and see if it is from God.”

Ask:

Is this the Holy Spirit speaking?

Is this my own fear, desire, or emotion?

Am I adding my own conclusion to something God has said?

3. Exposing Your Internal Scoreboard

Main Point:

All of us have an internal scoreboard for what we think success looks like before God.

Examples:

For some, success means occasionally coming to church.

For others, it means reading the Bible.

For others, it means serving, leading, or being involved.

For some, it means visible fruit, growth, or ministry success.

Personal Example:

Pastor David shared how he wanted to make God proud and be successful in ministry.

God exposed that his scoreboard was based on success rather than faithfulness.

Key Lesson:

God did not call us to be successful.

God called us to be faithful.

Important Thought:

“Well done, good and faithful servant” does not mean “well done, good and successful servant.”

Biblical Examples:

Paul looked unsuccessful at the end of his life by worldly standards.

Jesus ministered for three years, never left His country, and left behind about 120 followers, yet He completed everything the Father gave Him to do.

Application:

Take down your personal scoreboard.

Stop measuring your obedience by worldly success.

Walk with God and be faithful to what He has called you to do.

Ask:

Am I trying to obey God, or am I trying to prove myself?

Am I measuring faithfulness by visible success?

Am I trying to make God proud, or am I resting in His love for me?

4. Surrender to the Jesus Filter

Main Point:

Every word from God looks and sounds like Jesus.

Key Scripture:

1 John 2:6

Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Four Questions for the Jesus Filter:

1. Does it echo His character?

Will obeying this make me more like Jesus?

A blessing is anything that draws you closer to Jesus.

A curse is anything that pulls you away from Jesus.

Ask:

Will this step draw me and my family closer to Jesus?

Will this decision help me become more like Christ?

2. Does it engage His mission or my agenda?

Whose kingdom will grow if I follow this?

Ask:

Is this about advancing God's kingdom?

Or is this mostly about building my own comfort, reputation, or success?

3. Does it call me to depend on His power?

Can I do this with or without Him?

Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

Ask:

Will this require faith?

Will this require dependence on God?

Will I need God's power for this to happen?

4. Does it enhance His glory?

Will Jesus be lifted up if I obey this?

Ask:

Will this glorify Christ?

Will His name be honored?

Will people see more of Him through this?

Summary:

When testing a potential word from God, walk it through the three fences:

1. Scripture

Does it fit within the framework of God's Word?

2. The Spirit

Has the Holy Spirit exposed my motives and separated His voice from my soul noise?

3. The Son

Does it look like Jesus, sound like Jesus, and glorify Jesus?

Closing Application:

This week, open God's Word and ask Him to read you.

Ask Him to expose hidden motives and clarify His voice.

Ask Him to help you be faithful, not just successful.

Ask Him to give you His eyes to see people and opportunities around you.