

COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

5.2 Hearing the Voice of God Way of Empowerment

Chris Douglas, Weekend Experience Pastor, Capital Turnaround
National Community Church

God speaks. You read across the breadth of Scripture and discover a God who talks to His people in all kinds of ways: walking and talking with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), speaking to Moses out of a burning bush (Exodus 3), calling out to the young boy, Samuel in the middle of the night (1 Samuel 3). In the New Testament we read about God's direction as the first century church was formed: Phillip following the prompting to speak to an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), commissioning of missionaries "it seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit"(Acts 15), Paul's directive to leave Asia Minor and take the Gospel to Europe (Acts 15). It would seem that God speaking and people hearing, is a normal part of a person's relationship with God. Jesus said "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me". But how do we hear God's voice?

Pastor Mark in his book, "Whisper" outlines several ways to hear the voice of God: Scripture, Desires, Doors, Dreams, People, Promptings, Pain. This book would be a great follow up if you want to dig deeper on this topic.

Scripture is the first and primary way that God speaks to us. Orthodox christianity has held the belief for nearly 2000 years, that the Bible is the inspired word of God. The Bible reveals the story of God and His relationship to His creation. The goodness of creation, the fall through sin, the journey through exile, the redemption in Jesus through His death and resurrection and ultimately, the reconciling of all creation as a new heaven and earth become reality. This is His story and this is the beautiful story that we are invited into! Through scripture we get to know the character and nature of God, what brings Him joy and what breaks His heart. Most importantly, we get to know His Son, Jesus. God in human flesh, we learn through Jesus, what perfect theology looks like and are invited to follow His example of right relationship with God and others.

Scripture also renews our mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” We need to get into the word of God until the word of God gets into us, renewing our mind. The renewing of our minds literally transforms our minds to think LIKE God. Now an important clarification, to think LIKE God, not to think AS God. Thinking like God gives us that discernment that Romans 12 talks about. This is what Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 2:16 as having the “mind of Christ”. We can discern and test what is the will of God by having the mind of Christ. It’s important to remember that Scripture is our final authority and God will not contradict what He has already said in Scripture. When we read about God speaking in the Bible, it’s often about specific things, to a specific person, in that specific moment in time. While Scripture may give wisdom that indirectly guides believers through the important decisions we make and life experiences we walk through, it often does not speak directly to our current set of circumstances. Don’t tell me God doesn’t care about who you are going to marry, important job decisions you have to make, a big move across the country uprooting you and potentially your family. You better believe God wants to share His thoughts with you beyond the pages of, but consistent with, Scripture!

God also speaks supernaturally (even though I would argue the Bible and having the mind of Christ is a miracle itself!). God often wants to speak to us for the benefit of others. This is known as prophetic gifts. Prophecy is information about the future that we hear from the Holy Spirit. Words of knowledge are pieces of information that are presently true that we would not know about other than hearing from the Holy Spirit. The purpose of New Testament prophecy is to, as the Apostle Paul writes, encourage, exhort and console. Encouragement, lending the Spirit’s courage. Exhortation, to call closer to Jesus. Consolation, the comfort of Prince of Peace.

Kris Vallotton says “True prophetic ministry is looking for gold in the midst of the dirt in people’s lives.” You and I both know that it doesn’t take Holy Spirit insight to see what is wrong with people. It is easy to criticize! What takes a heavenly insight is to recognize the God given potential in people's lives. So often, God given passions, purposes and giftings get covered up by hurts, wounds, circumstances that we all walk through in life. Prophecy is calling forth that original blessing that rests on everyone's lives and reminding them of WHO they are, WHOSE they are and the DESTINY that lies before them. It takes time and practice to grow in prophetic giftings and I would encourage you to jump into our class, Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry. In that class, we dig deeper into the prophetic gifts and have activation moments where we can practice in a safe and low pressure environment, how to hear the voice of God for others.

I would love to leave you with a few best practices that will help position us to hear God’s voice in our daily lives.

1. Be in Scripture daily. A consistent time spent reading the bible helps us learn what His voice sounds like.

2. It may sound obvious but ask God to speak to you. Ask God to point out anything that might be hindering you from hearing his voice.
3. Seek quiet and solitude that silences the noise around you and amplifies the voice of God. These spaces don't happen by themselves, you must make space for them.
4. Do it in community- a safe place to experiment, to be held accountable, to encourage. Again, consider Basic Training for the Prophetic. Getting a prophetic word wrong helps you learn what God's voice doesn't sound like and having a safe place really helps.
5. Test what you have heard. Does it reflect God's character and ways? Does it glorify Jesus and draw people to him? Does it resonate with your spirit and what God is speaking to the wider community around you?
6. Act on what you hear. God does not give us information for consideration, deliberation, or negotiation, but for activation. God will not speak to us if we have not been obedient to what he has already said.
7. Be patient! This is a journey that takes time. Remain faithful to the things you can control: seeking God in prayer, reading scripture, staying connected to the community of God.

God, thank you that you are speaking to us. Would you open our ears to hear Your voice. God, transform our minds giving us the mind of Christ to think like You. Make us a prophetic people and give us boldness to speak prophetic encouragement to people who desperately need a word from You. May we be sensitive to your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.