



**How Do I Hear God's Voice?**  
**Shane Philip**  
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**The Crossing Church**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

### **OPENING**

This week we are continuing our study of Quest 52 and this is week #32, "How Do I Hear God's Voice?" This parable is a metaphor through which the people of that time could relate to their own lives - it was an agrarian society and they were very familiar with the four types of soil described here. The farmer represents our Father who plants the spiritual seeds, and our hearts are where the seeds are planted. The condition of our hearts **determines** God's voice in our lives.

### **SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>**

**Luke 8:8b** Whoever has *ears to hear*, let them hear.

**Luke 8:10b-15** Jesus said, "Though *seeing*, they may not *see*; though *hearing*, they may not *understand*. "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who *hear*, and then the devil comes and *takes away* the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have *no root*. They believe for a while, but in the *time of testing* they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's *worries, riches and pleasures*, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who *hear* the word, *retain* it, and by persevering *produce a crop*."

**James 1:3b-4** ... you know that the *testing of your faith* produces *perseverance*. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be *mature and complete*, not lacking anything.

**Psalm 46:10** "Be still, and know that I am God."

### **OBSERVATION**

The soils the Jewish people cultivated in their fields in order to feed themselves, their families, their animals and their guests, and from which they harvested first fruits for their sacrifices to God, were of four types: **1) Hard soil.** This is on the dirt path where people's bare feet have packed it into hard ground and where the sun dried it out. It becomes so hard that nothing grows there; **2) Rocky soil.** It seems that there are more rocks than soil in this field! Sounds like Las Vegas backyards where, just below the surface, we find caliche. The seed springs up quickly and

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<sup>1</sup> NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

then dies because the soil is shallow. There isn't enough topsoil to nourish the roots<sup>2</sup> of plants; **3) Distracted soil.** Some seed falls among thorns and gets choked out quickly; **4) Receptive soil.** It is rich with minerals and fertilizers that produce lush fruits and vegetables. It is deep so that roots can reach down to take in rainwater and distribute nourishment to the rest of the plant.

**QUESTION: What experience do you have as a horticulturist? When have you lost plants to hard or rocky soils that don't nourish them?**

## **APPLICATION**

We often have conversations with someone who is talking, but not listening to what we have to say. We are often that someone, aren't we? Just sitting back waiting for our chance to speak and planning what our response will be. Well, we do the same thing with God. It's not a matter of God speaking to us, but it is a matter of our stillness, waiting patiently, and listening for Him. Sometimes His voice is inaudible because He communicates with us in dreams, conversations with wise Christian counselors or friends, in circumstances, by impressions on our minds, but less often through burning bushes. Sometimes the problem is our own hearts and their condition.

**QUESTION: How does God "speak" to you?**

**QUESTION: Jesus is speaking to all types of church congregations in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 where He comments on their ability to hear the Gospel. Which one do you think best describes The Crossing Church? Why?**

So, this week's study is about being in a place to hear from God. Some of us are in a place where we can listen and receive His message while others have closed their ears and hearts to what He is saying. The problem isn't the seed that is sown – it is a problem of the soil. When we aren't getting the results we want in life, we begin to think the seed is unsatisfying and, so, we go looking for different seeds - self-help books, a new belief system or a different church.

**QUESTION: When have you been dissatisfied by the Gospel of Christ and gone looking for things of the world?**

Our soil of the heart must be soft and receptive to God's Word, but often barriers crop up that make this difficult. The Word can't penetrate if our hearts are hard. There maybe something in our lives that have hardened us toward God. Spiritually our arms are crossed and we can't hear anything. Symptoms of a hard heart are: **1) Going through the motions.** We may be doing the right things, but we are just checking a list. Our hearts are not really in it; **2) Spiritual apathy.** The church at Laodicea was criticized by Christ for this. Their hearts were without passion or energy; **3) Stubborn resistance.** God is convicting us of a sin and we know we need to deal with it; **4) Bitter resentment.** But we aren't dealing with it, we are angry with God or resentful so our hearts harden slowly, but surely. The more we ignore God, the less we care about Him – we even celebrate our rebellion; **5) Self-righteousness.** We become modern-day Pharisees. They knew God's Word well, but didn't think it applied to them. They listened to His message, thinking all the time that other people needed to hear it rather than themselves.

**QUESTION: In what ways is your heart hard? Did something happen that made you apathetic or resistant to the Gospel?**

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<sup>2</sup> This seems an appropriate time to mention that our **Rooted** program begins again in September. You can register online now.

When the Word begins to plant in us and we have a moment where spiritually God moves us, but we don't do anything with it, we have rock-filled hearts. Our relationships with Him are superficial. There is no rain and too much sun which lead to no harvest. The storms we experience are meant to mature and complete us, but our own disappointment and hardship can put a wall between us and God.

**QUESTION: In what ways is your heart shallow and full of rocks, unable to receive the Gospel? Did something happen that made you apathetic about your faith?**

Then there is the distracted heart that is full of worries and chasing after pleasures of the world. If we don't cultivate this soil, these things or weeds and thorns will choke out the good stuff. We don't plant weeds, but they show up when we are not paying attention. We might have been Christians for years, but if we are not maturing - it might be that the soil is hard and plants are being choked out.

**QUESTION: In what ways have you allowed the world to distract you from your ability to hear God? What worries or things have consumed you?**

The good heart is receptive to God's voice. We hear His Word; we retain it; it produces fruits of the Spirit. The way God designed the seed has hard-wired it for harvest. That's the power of God's Word in our lives. If it is planted in the loam of our hearts and we pull the weeds regularly, a harvest will come on our journey to become more like Jesus.

**QUESTION: In what ways is your heart soft and receptive?**

So, how do we hear God's voice in our lives? We read God's Word daily; we pray without ceasing; we fellowship with Godly people who speak His Word into us; we spend time in worship with God's congregation; we eliminate barriers and add and amplify those things we have identified as opening our spiritual ears so we can listen to Him.

#### **PRAYER:**

Lord Jesus, open our ears to hear You. Help us to stop talking and listen for Your voice, breathing, impressions, counselors' wisdom so we can be closer to You. In Jesus' name. Amen

#### **QUESTIONS**

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**QUESTION: When have you been dissatisfied by the Gospel of Christ and gone looking for things of the world?**

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**QUESTION: In what ways have you allowed the world to distract you from your ability to hear God? What worries or things or circumstances have consumed you?**

**QUESTION: In what ways is your heart soft and receptive?**