

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions. To watch the video teaching visit www.mainstreetchurch.ca or download the *Main Street Church APP*.

DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 2 –

BE STILL: Quiet Yourself to Hear God's Voice: S.T.A.R.

Day 1

Renew the Mind

Introduction

1. Their goal in spending time with Jesus is so that we can learn to hear His voice. Our devotional times should be relational. God wants to hear your heart and He wants to share His heart with you. However, it can be difficult to hear God's voice for all kinds of reasons. These devotions address 15 reasons why believers can't hear God's voice at first. As you go through them, ask the Spirit to reveal to you which of these applies to your situation. The first 14 don't apply to every believer but the the 15th reason is the most common reason why people don't hear God speak. In fact, even believers who are seasoned in hearing God's voice, will occasionally have difficulty hearing God's voice, due to this reason – they haven't quieted themselves to hear God's voice.
2. On Day 3 & 4, you will learn **how to quiet yourself**, and use a tool called S.T.A.R.
3. S.T.A.R. is an excellent and practical quieting tool as many have greatly benefited from it.

A. Reasons why people don't hear God's voice

1. Some really don't want to hear God

- a. Jesus taught in parables so that those who did not really want to hear truth could avoid it. **Matthew 13:12-13 (NIV)** *Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."*
- b. Some don't want to hear because they are afraid what God might ask them or what it will cost.
- c. But perfect love casts out fear. Come into His presence and say, "**Here I am, Lord.**" Let him initiate with love and still your fears.

2. Some don't or won't surrender to God until they first know what He wants

- a. Many don't believe that God has their best interests in mind – that He wants their good.
- b. Therefore, they want to know what He wants before they yield themselves.
- c. If you don't yield yourself FIRST, you'll likely not hear Him.
- d. Perhaps you had a parent that wasn't trustworthy. But God isn't like that. He has ONLY your good in mind.

- e. **Romans 8:28 (NIV)** *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

3. Unconfessed sin keeps us from hearing God

- a. **Psalms 66:18 (NIV)** *If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*
- b. When a husband & wife have something between them, a chill and quiet set into their relationship! The same is true in our relationship with God.

4. Some have never been taught how to hear God

- a. **Job 33:14 (NIV)** *For God does speak--now one way, now another-- though man may not perceive it.*
- b. Samuel didn't perceive God's voice until Eli helped him (1 Samuel 3)

5. Unbelief

- a. It was said of Jesus that He couldn't do miracles in Nazareth because of unbelief (Matt 13:58).
- b. Some people do not believe that God speaks to us in this time of history. Obviously if you believe that, you will not hear Him.

6. Fearing it could lead to chaos in the church

- a. It is true that the church in Corinth was experiencing many problems because of the misuse of the gifts of the Spirit. But notice, Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, didn't say, "Well then, just put them away and quit using them!" He just laid down some proper ways to use them (1 Cor 12-14)! For example, he said ...
 - o **1 Corinthians 14:40 (NKJV)** *Let all things be done decently and in order.*
- b. Many areas of life would be chaotic if careful rules weren't laid down: flight, health care, financial institutions, driving, etc. We don't get rid of airplanes, doctors, money & cars. No – we regulate them.
- c. Why would we apply a different standard to the Holy Spirit's gifts & hearing God?
- d. The Church has been greatly neglectful in this, bringing stain to the name of Christ, the Holy Spirit and His Church!

7. Not desiring a friendship with God

- a. Such people only want God when they need Him to get them out of a jam.
- b. But the Spirit says: *"The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them."*
Psalms 25:14 (NIV)

8. Too busy to spend time listening to God

- a. Martha was an example of such a person, while Mary exemplified the opposite (Luke 10:41).
- b. Many peoples' lives are filled with a lot of eternally irrelevant matters. To hear God's voice, you have to stop listening to and reading the news, listening to people with worthless opinions, watching TV, etc.
- c. You even have to stop from ministry to hear God's voice. It's part of your spiritual breathing.
- d. This may be a good moment to remind yourself of why we began in session one encouraging you to establish a consistent daily devotional time so that you can ABIDE in Christ.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What eight reasons are shared regarding why people don't hear God's voice?

3. It is true that people can abuse God's gifts, including those that involve hearing His voice. What is the solution to this?

Life Application

1. Do any of the first eight reasons for not hearing God apply to you? Which one(s)?
2. Take action to correct that now, including things such as:
 - a. Thanksgiving: for revealing to you the incredible gift of hearing God's voice; for being able to have true fellowship with Him through conversation; for being able to receive real instruction, direction, comfort and encouragement from Him through hearing Him.
 - b. Confession: for whatever reasons apply to you. Ask God for His response.
 - c. Surrender: commitment to do whatever you hear.
 - d. Help: to grow in faith, understanding and practice of hearing God's voice.

Day 2

Engaging the Mind

On the previous day, we looked at the first eight reasons why people don't hear God's voice. Here are the next six:

9. Talking instead of listening

- a. When you go to prayer, do you pour out all your complaints and concerns to Him in a steady stream, without stopping to listen to what He has to say about your concerns?
- b. The Spirit admonishes: *Be still and know that I am God.* **Psalm 46:10 (NIV)**

10. Being impatient and rushing ahead

- a. How long do you wait? A minute? Five minutes? Do you ever wait in silence for 15 minutes or even an hour? Moses waited 6 days before God spoke!
- b. **Exodus 24:15-16 (NIV)** *When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.*

11. Fearing man rather than God

- a. If we are afraid that other Christians will think we're crazy for claiming to hear God, we might not hear God.
- b. **Proverbs 29:25 (NIV)** *Fear of man will prove to be a snare.* But ...
- c. **Proverbs 14:26-27 (NIV)** *He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. ²⁷The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death*
- d. We are meant to be dead to this world and everything that it represents. A dead person doesn't care what he looks like or what others think of him. Confess it. Repent and hear God.

12. Satan tries to keep us from hearing

- a. It's fascinating that we're very good at listening to the devil's voice, when he says things such as: "You're not beautiful;" "You're not smart;" "Nobody likes you."
- b. Or when he sows seeds of doubt in our minds: "Yeah, but . . ." "What if?" "That wouldn't be possible."
- c. In one parable Jesus tells us that Satan will attempt to snatch the seed (God's Word) out of our hearts as quickly as it is sown (Mark 4:14-15).
- d. God says something positive or right to you, but you choose not to believe it, but rather choose to believe the opposite – which is a lie!
- e. The devil is a liar and the source of all lies.
- f. Why would we choose to listen to him rather than God?

13. Asking the wrong questions

- a. Sometimes we can frantically ask God a question and we hear no response.
- b. If we quiet ourselves, He might show us that we're asking the wrong question!

14. Fear of confusing our thoughts with God's thoughts

- a. Jesus promised that we will be able to know and recognize God's voice.
- b. **John 10:4-5 (NIV)** *When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."*
- c. The Bible promises that if we are seeking the Lord, we will find Him.
- d. **Deuteronomy 4:29 (NIV)** *But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.*
- e. If you ask for wisdom, you will receive it.

- f. **James 1:5-8 (NIV)** *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*
- g. Humans learn from experience alone how to distinguish colors; musicians learn by experience to distinguish a minor from a major key simply by listening. We also learn to recognize the voices of other humans through experience and we learn to hear God's voice in our spirit through the experience of intentionally listening.
- h. **Will you make mistakes?** Of course! If we can mistake a friend's voice, we should expect to mistake God's voice from time to time. Learning to follow God is messy, and we will all make mistakes along the way! No person on earth will be 100% accurate – not till heaven!
- i. In fact, when you're beginning to hear God, perhaps you'll 'bat' closer to 50%! Can you live with that? God can!
- j. At first, we may have to be told that God is speaking to us and be helped to detect His voice. For example, Eli helped Samuel recognize God's voice (1 Sam 3:1-14).
- k. The most necessary characteristic you need for learning to hear God's voice: **humility**! It will allow you to laugh at yourself when you make a mistake. It will allow you to learn from others HOW to hear God's voice. The other necessary characteristic you need is to choose faith over unbelief! It's a choice.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What six reasons are shared in this day regarding why people don't hear God's voice?
3. It is true that we will make mistakes as we learn to hear God. Why should we not panic?

Life Application

1. Do any of the six reasons for not hearing God shared today apply to you? Which one(s)?
2. Take action to correct that now, including things such as:
 - a. Thanksgiving: for revealing to you the incredible gift of hearing God's voice; for being able to have true fellowship with Him through conversation; for being able to receive real instruction, direction, comfort and encouragement from Him through hearing Him.
 - b. Confession: for whatever reasons apply to you. Ask God for His response.
 - c. Surrender: commitment to do whatever you hear.
 - d. Help: to grow in faith, understanding and practice of hearing God's voice.

Day 3

Renew the Mind

For this day, we will look at the 15th reason why people struggle to hear God's voice. We'll also look at the hinderances of fear and anxiety.

15. Listening for a loud, rather than a quiet voice

- a. While all the reasons given in the previous days will not be applicable to every single person listening for God's voice, this one does!
- b. Elijah was hiding in a cave on Mount Horeb when God told him to stand on the mountain because He was about to pass by.
- c. **1 Kings 19:11b-13 (NIV)** *Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'*
- d. **God seldom raises His voice!**
- e. Though the world makes a lot of noise, God does not generally make Himself heard by speaking over the chaos.
- f. Rather, He often speaks in a whisper, and only those who are willing to become still, will be able to hear Him.
- g. Here's a selection of verses from the Psalms which exhort us to become still.
 - **Psalm 46:10 (NIV)** Be still and know that I am God.
 - **Psalm 37:7 (NIV)** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
 - **Psalm 131:2 (NIV)** But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.
 - **Psalm 62:1 (ESV)** For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.
- h. The Psalms, itself a book of prayer, emphasizes the need to become silent before the Lord.
- i. That's all well and good. But HOW do we become still so that we can hear God speaking to us?
- j. Glad you asked! That's what the next part will address.

The hinderances of fear and anxiety

1. One of the biggest hindrances we face in our relationship with God and in our ability to hear God in prayer is FEAR!
2. Anxiety and fear are at the root of much of the struggles we face, such as relational issues or poor choices.
3. Although it is natural to feel fear and normal to feel anxious, it becomes a hindrance when fear/anxiety begin to direct and steer us in life. This holds true for everyone.
4. It is important that we are living our life by FAITH and not FEAR. Faith isn't the absence of fear. It is the resolve, the choice to follow the leading of Jesus in our lives despite our fear and lack of understanding.
5. The key to doing this is learning to stay connected to God's peace. There truly is a peace that passes understanding.
6. **Philippians 4:6-9 (ESV)** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable,

*if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, **and the God of peace will be with you.***

7. Here we see Paul admonishing the Philippian believers and us to not be anxious about anything (afraid, fearful) but to instead turn to thanksgiving and prayer. Then we can let our requests be made known to God and His peace will guard our hearts and minds. This is brilliant!
8. How many times do we come into a prayer time overwhelmed, anxious and then feel like our devotions are dry, prayer times feel empty and we leave feeling the same as we came in?
9. This is **NOT** the way our walk with Jesus was supposed to be!
10. Paul is giving us very practical advice. He is saying “change your focus” and you’ll have an easier time accessing the God of peace. Remember this is the peace that passes understanding, and it doesn’t come through the absence of conflict. That is the world’s peace.
11. The peace that comes from God passes understanding because it can follow us in the middle of a storm, even when the circumstances don’t change; it partners with a hope that revolves around being connected to the Vine, Jesus.
12. It is based more on the confidence that comes from trusting that the Sovereign Lord of all is with you.
13. When we look at Jesus, we can’t help but be filled with peace, hope and confidence, even in the darkest circumstances.
14. In those moments, we feel that somehow things will be “ok.”
15. **For Days 4 and 5, we’ll look at a tool that will help us quiet ourselves, and re-focus when confronted with fear and anxiety.**

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What book of the Bible speaks a lot about stillness? Read the verses noted in this day, from that book. Try reading them very slowly, three times each.
3. What emotions often overwhelm us, hindering our ability to hear God’s voice?

Life Application

1. Reflect on your life a bit – are you able to be quiet before God? Ask the Lord to show you any reasons why you struggle with being still and quiet before Him. Write your answer down.
2. Write down a list of fears and anxieties that you have. You will use this on future days.

Day 4

Renew the Mind

Today we are going to introduce a tool that will help us address the challenges we noted in Day 3, namely, a difficulty in quieting ourselves and the challenges of fear and anxiety. **The tool is S.T.A.R.** Each letter stands for something that will give you direction and understanding in order to hear God's voice more clearly.

S = STOP – don't fix the problem, person or situation

1. Science has shown that when we are tired and/or overwhelmed our ability to use our cingulate & prefrontal cortex is diminished. What does this mean? Among other things, this severely limits our ability to make moral choices, think creatively, connect relationally with others (God included), empathize and make wise choices.
2. This comes as no surprise when you examine our lives and times where we have made poor choices, struggled with sin, emotional outbursts and/or isolating from God and others.
3. Right before we behave poorly, we are usually tired, overwhelmed or a combination of the two!
4. When we are exhausted, we simply need to sleep.
5. But for the rest of the time... **we are given great instruction throughout the Bible on practices that will help us overcome our weaknesses and stay connected to the peace of God.**
6. The first step to overcoming our fear/anxiety and reconnecting to God is to **STOP**.
7. We need to learn that not everything has to be fixed right now. Most things can wait at least a minute or two or much longer for us to STOP and make sure we are connected with the Lord.
8. When we insist on fixing the problems or people that are in front of us right now, we almost certainly end up trying to control the person/situation.
9. The same is true if we run from the problems and people that are causing us stress.
10. In either case we miss out on whatever God is trying to do in the situation.
11. **Psalm 37:7 (ESV)** *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!*
12. The first step to walking by faith is making sure we are connected to Jesus and not making our decisions based on fear. To do this, we must **STOP**....

T = TAKE – a breath and calm down

1. In our Western culture being still and quiet is not something we practice regularly.
2. In fact, many people feel shame when they aren't busy ALL the time. We think being constantly busy is a sign of our value. Sadly, this causes many people to burnout, even leaders who are supposed to model the power of being quiet and hearing God's voice.
3. **For example:** if we were to go the gym and lift 15lbs dumbbells, they wouldn't feel heavy. It would feel like we could lift those light weights FOREVER. What would happen though if we strapped those weights to our hands to prove our theory? Eventually those 15lbs weights would feel like 30lbs, 50lbs and may as well be 1000lbs, as our arms would be so tired from being under constant strain. Not only would we not be getting stronger, we would actually lose the strength we previously had.
4. **Too many people do this!** They keep themselves so busy they miss out on times of quiet and stillness before the Lord and then they wonder why they feel so stressed and burnt out!
5. We were NOT made to go with a continuous power source! We are like rechargeable batteries.
6. We need to rest. God rested on the seventh day and commanded His people to rest.
7. In its most basic form we rest through sleep, on a daily basis.
8. **Psalm 46:10 (ESV)** *Be still, and know that I am God.*
9. Be still, STOP, calm down... quiet yourself...

10. **Isaiah 30:15 (ESV)** *For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling,*
11. Rest, quietness, trust shall be your strength!
12. **Psalms 131:2 (ESV)** *But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.*
13. David understood the value of calming and quieting his soul!
14. **Part of learning to practice quiet is having scheduled times with the Lord where you practice being still, meditating, soaking in the Word, etc.**
15. Basically, our time with the Lord is an excellent place to practice quieting.
16. In the moments of anxiety, whether in a stressful situation, dealing with a conflict or feeling overwhelmed in our time of devotion, we can practice quieting by exercising self-control over our bodies and breathing.
17. Simply taking a few minutes to be still, relaxing your body and breathing deeply is often enough to calm our nervous systems.
18. This allows our cortisol levels to subside, serotonin to increase (feel more peaceful and content) and our minds to begin slowing down.
19. This will make it much easier to engage our hearts in the next two steps, to be shared on Day 5.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What is the name that we have given to the tool that can be used to help quiet ourselves?
3. What are the first two steps of the quieting tool? Explain them simply if you can.

Life Application

1. In your journal, write down two or three examples of when you've tried to take control of a situation. Try to pick examples that are most recent, if you can.
2. Spend some time in confession. Confess to God that you sometimes, in pride or fear (or both) try to control life, or others.
3. Write out a prayer to God, committing to go on a journey of seeking His voice and heart more often. If you can think of specific situations, be specific in your prayer. Be honest with God – He can handle how we feel, as He already understands us perfectly!

Day 5

Renew the Mind

For this day, we're look at the final two steps of S.T.A.R. The first two were: **STOP** – don't fix the problem, person or situation; **TAKE** – a breather and calm down.

A = Appreciate & Connect to Jesus

1. Once we have stopped and calmed down, we are ready for the best way to enter God's Presence – worship!
2. **Psalm 100:4 (ESV)** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*
3. **James 1:17 (ESV)** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*
4. When we focus on Jesus and the things that He has done for us and provided for us, we find that our hearts begin to change. It important that we recognize that saying we are thankful for a couple of things is VERY different than actually feeling appreciation or gratitude for something.
5. We can stay overwhelmed and say we are thankful for a few things and feel just as dry as we did when we started. But, when we STOP, calm down and begin focusing on Jesus and what He done for us and provided for us, we will notice a shift.
6. Especially as we focus on why the things we are thankful for are meaningful to us.
7. We will find that our overwhelm begins to go away and our heart begins to warm up. Our thoughts are then clearer and from this "heart posture", prayer and hearing God seem much easier.
8. **Why is this?**
9. Remember we said that science has shown that being tired and overwhelmed can cause the cortex levels of our brains to diminish in their capacity to function. Interestingly, science has also found that focusing on what we are thankful for causes these same areas of the brain to begin functioning again!
10. We will then have an easier time making moral choices, thinking creatively, connecting relationally to God and others, empathizing and making wise choices! **INCREDIBLE.**
11. Basically, we will function better in ALL areas of life.
12. Once we have entered God's Presence through praise, we are better able to hear from Him and receive direction for our current situation which leads us to...

R = Respond – in faith & love, do the right thing, obey the direction you receive from the Lord.

1. Once we have reconnected to the God of peace, we can receive His heart and direction for the situation(s) we are facing.
2. Next, we respond in obedience.
3. If we are to live a life of faith and not be controlled by our fears, it means we must be living the life of the obedient servant. We listen, trust, and obey.
4. In some situations, this may mean that we forgive and let go; others we may have to confront; in prayer times, we may have to choose to trust in the Lord, etc.
5. Whatever the direction we receive, we respond in faith by obeying and make sure we are always responding with a loving heart, so as to represent Christ in all our actions and deeds.
6. In responding, we show that we are looking for Jesus to not only be our Saviour, but also our Lord.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are the four steps of the quieting tool, **S.T.A.R.?** Explain them simply if you can.

3. If you have access to the Internet, go to **biblegateway.com**. Do a search by typing this in – ***thank***. How many times is this word or a variation of it used in our Bibles? And to think that there are many other words like it – i.e. praise, worship, etc.

Life Application

1. **Go back to Day 3, Life Application question two. You wrote down a list of fears and anxieties. Pick one of these.**

2. Using this fear or anxiety, go through the following exercise:

Stop – Do not fix the problem, person or situation

- Write down the fear or anxiety that you are currently facing:

Take – A breather and calm down

- **Psalm 46:10a (NIV)** *Be still, and know that I am God...*
- Take a few moments to be still, relax your shoulders, neck, hands, face, etc. Take some deep breaths and focus your heart and mind on Jesus.
- Any anxious or distracted thoughts you have, or tasks that need to get done... prayerfully give them surrender them to Jesus.

Appreciate & Connect to Jesus

- **James 1:17 (NIV)** *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*
- **Psalm 100:4 (NIV)** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*
- Think of something you are thankful for: _____
- Briefly write down a time where you experienced what you were thankful for.
- Connect to Jesus. Ask Jesus to show you where He was in the memory and what He wants you to know. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Respond – in faith & love, do the right thing, obey the direction you receive from the Lord.

- Ask Jesus how He sees the situation you are facing. Write it down.
- Ask Jesus how He wants you to respond in the situation. Write it down.

Day 6

Obedience

1. For this final day, we want to focus on **OBEDIENCE**, as we as disciples are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). The Bible clearly teaches that obedience is a clear echo of our love for God (1 John 5:3).
2. It is also through obedience that we find blessing and our lives are built on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
3. ***Take this lesson and quickly scan the title and headings – do not re-read the entire lesson.***
4. Humbly go before God and ask – “**what is one step of obedience that I can take as a result of this lesson?**”
5. Perhaps have a section in your journal where you record this step (and steps from future lessons). Or put it in the calendar on your phone. This shows God that we are both intending and committing to obey.
6. Write or speak out a prayer of commitment based on the step.

