

## **Aware Part II: Hearing God's Voice**

# ***Will You Hear?***

**July 17, 2011**

As Kitti said, today we're moving into Part II of our *Aware* series. We're trying to become more conscious of God's presence and activity in our lives ... and one surefire way to become aware of God's presence and activity is to learn how to hear His voice.

We're going to talk about how you can do that in detail over the next five weeks but today, we're going to focus on the prerequisite condition, the single quality that has to exist before it ever becomes possible for us to hear. See, even though God is speaking there are many people who do not hear because this condition – this quality – does not exist in their lives.

Now, I could just tell you what the condition

is and pray for you (and for me) – pray that we would be blessed with this condition or quality – but, several months ago, I saw a movie which so vividly illustrated it for me that I decided I just *had* to use it in this series.

**It's called *The King's Speech*. How many of you have seen this movie?**

I'm going to suspect that those of you who have not seen it probably had the same reaction that I did when, Jetta, suggested that we go see it, I was not excited at all. I mean, a two-hour movie about a guy who overcomes a speech impediment didn't seem like it would be that entertaining to me, even if it was a true story, even if the guy was the King of England and even if it *did* win four Oscars (Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay). But, when you're married, sometimes you just say "yes" because it's not all about you.

And I have to tell you I'm glad that I did. I also have to tell you that this movie brought tears to my eyes on several occasions. And it just knocked me over as a metaphor for what I want to talk to you about today – the one condition that's non-negotiable if we're going to hear God's voice in our lives.

So, let's get started. Let's watch part of the opening scene which sets up the whole movie.

**DVD Clip - SPEECH PROBLEMS (1.9 min)**

B: Bertie walking up to mic in fear

E: Elizabeth looks down

That was painful was it not?

The person in front of the microphone is the second son of King George V, Prince Albert.

The occasion is the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley on October 31, 1925. At that time, Europe was recovering from World War I, but it wouldn't be long until a man by the name of Adolf Hitler began his rise to power.

Unfortunately, for Albert (or Bertie as he was called by his family), that meant that he and his older brother would need to spend more time encouraging the nation through even more public speaking ... as his father, King George, explains.

**DVD Clip - DO IT! (1.2 min)**

B: King George: "Herr Hitler intimidating half of Europe ..."

E: George: "Do it!!!"

Obviously, Bertie's *problem* is going to be a *problem*! And obviously, his father is part of

the problem – a fact which will become clearer a little later.

So, Bertie's wife, Elizabeth – the future Queen Elizabeth I – for those of you who are into royalty – decides to take matters into her own hands. After dragging Bertie to several speech therapists, none of whom are able to affect a cure, she learns of one whose methods are said to be "unorthodox and eccentric" and visits him on her own – incognito, of course ... as "Mrs. Johnson."

Let's watch.

**DVD Clip - MY GAME/TURF/RULES (1.2 min)**

B: Lionel: "Where's Mr. Johnson?"

E: Lionel: "Good Afternoon"

The "doctor" to whom Elizabeth is speaking is not really a doctor (though he never claims to be; she just assumes that he is).

He's Lionel Logue, a self-trained former actor who has successfully cured many people with speech impediments ... who is totally unaware that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are the Duke and Duchess of York.

However, after Logue turns her away, Elizabeth identifies herself and her husband and Logue agrees to take the case. But the deal remains the same: It doesn't matter if "Mr. Johnson" is a Duke or a Prince or anything else. It's still "my game, my turf, my rules."

And when I first saw this movie, that particular phrase is what got my attention that there might be some kind of spiritual metaphor here because that's the way God works, isn't it? This is God's game we're in, not ours. This world is God's turf, not ours. And therefore, He's the one who makes the rules, not us.

*"Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."*

*1 Chronicles 29:11 (NIV)*

And I could talk for a long time about that idea and I have on many occasions because many people struggle mightily with "God's rules." Some want to minimize the fact that God is "head over all" and so they become "licentious" believing "rules shmules – everything is OK as long as no one else gets hurt." Others go the complete opposite direction and become "legalistic" believing that going above and beyond his rules makes you better than everyone else, so they add to his rules.

But, that's not really the point of this message, so let's move on. Elizabeth finally convinces Bertie to give "doctor" Logue a try. But their first meeting doesn't go so well.

**DVD Clip - BETTER IF WE'RE EQUALS (2.5 min)**

B: Bertie: "Aren't you going to start treating me Dr. Logue?"

E: Bertie: "then we shan't speak"

Do you sense the resistance in Bertie? He's sitting in the room of a man who can heal him but he's not willing to engage at the level Logue requires. "It's better if we're equals," Logue says. But Bertie, because of his position, can't even conceive of such a thing.

And that's the first hint as to what the condition or quality is that's necessary in order to hear God speak. And I don't mean that you see yourself as equal with God!



What I mean is that *if we're going to engage with God, we have to engage at the level He requires ...* which is somewhat similar to the idea of "my game, my turf, my rules" but it's much more relational than that. And you can see that in this scene, can't you? Logue's approach isn't dictatorial – it's personal. If anything positive is going to happen to Bertie in this treatment, it's going to come out of a personal relationship with Logue. Keep that in mind.

Now, even though the first meeting doesn't go so well, Bertie does come back for another session. As we watch what happens, pay particular attention to the shift in Logue's strategy.

**DVD Clip - SIMPLE MECHANICS (1.2 min)**

B: Bertie: "strictly business - no personal nonsense"

E: Elizabeth: "that's all we ask"

"Alright," Logue says, "you want mechanics instead of the personal approach? I can do mechanics."

And that's what they do ... mechanics. And the results speak for themselves – pun intended.

**DVD Clip - IT DOESN'T WORK (1.9 min)**

B: Lionel voice (empty couch): "Take a nice deep breath ..."

E: People standing in semi-circle (cut before "father")

"It doesn't bloody work!" ... as evidenced by the look on the faces of those suffering through Bertie's speech delivered with the proper mechanics.

And I have to tell you that when I saw this

part of the movie, I was reminded of how God often works with us. At some point in our life (and maybe at many points in our life), we realize that we're messed up and we need help, so we turn to God. And He says "OK, I want to help you, but it's my game, my turf, my rules" but not to be dictatorial. He says that because He loves us and He knows better than us.

But a lot of times we think we know better. And so we say, "God, I'll listen to what you have to say as long as it fits in this box; as long as it matches up with my preconceived notions."

And a lot of times what God does is exactly what Logue did. He says, "OK, have it your way and let's see how it turns out."

In fact, the Bible is full of examples of this.

**In Psalm 81, God speaks through Asaph and says ...**

*"My people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices."*

*Psalm 81:11,12 (NIV)*

... and the result of "following their own devices" was 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans of others who did the same kind of thing.

*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.  
Romans 1:22-24 (NIV)*

“You want to worship the creation instead of the Creator? Ok,” God said, “I’ll let you.” And the result was degradation – slowly but surely sinking to the level where they treated themselves and everyone else like animals instead of people created to reflect the glory of God.

**In addition, Paul writes ...**

*They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.  
Romans 1:28 (NIV)*

"You want to ignore me?" God asks. "Ok, I'll let you." And the result was depravity.

*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Romans 1:29-31 (NIV)*

It's amazing – so many people think that God's limits are designed to arbitrarily squash freedom when in fact they're designed to keep us from ruining our lives. But God *will* allow us to ignore Him and go our own way. But that way often leads to failure and, in some cases, destruction.

Fortunately, in the movie that doesn't happen to Bertie. Instead, he learns from his failure and decides to try it Logue's way. Remember what way that was? Personal. Relational.

But, as this next clip shows, it's not personal just because Logue wants to be friends (although he *is* a friend.) It's personal because ... well, you'll see.

At this point in the story, Bertie's father, King George has died and the two men are discussing Bertie's childhood. Let's watch.

**DVD Clip - GETTING PERSONAL (2.1 min)**

B: Lionel: "Did David ever tease you?"

E: Lionel nods

Wow!

Logue wanted to get personal because he

wanted to bring Bertie face to face with the real issue, the real problem, which *wasn't* mechanics. The real problem, the real issue with Bertie – as it was with almost everyone Logue had cured – was *fear*. Fear was the cause of the stammering. But it wasn't simply a fear of public speaking. It was deep-seated fear that he wasn't enough and never would be and because of that he would be rejected – just as he was in his childhood.

And when I saw this scene, once again it hit me that this is so often how God deals with us. He doesn't stay on the surface. He always drives to the root issue.

**As He once said to the Prophet Samuel:**

*"The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD*



*looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel  
16:7 (NLT)*

He’s looking beneath the surface.

Jesus was a master at this.

*“You have heard that it was  
said to the people long ago,  
‘You shall not murder, and  
anyone who murders will be  
subject to judgment.’ But I tell  
you that anyone who is  
angry with a brother or sister  
[without cause] will be  
subject to judgment.”  
Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV)*

What’s he saying? You can *look like* you’re doing the right thing on the outside (you don’t murder anyone) but still be a mess on the inside (you’re full of anger and unforgiveness). And you might not even realize it until someone points it out to you.

... which is exactly what He once did for the religious leaders of his day.

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*

**Look out, he said, because ...**

*"You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean." Matthew 27:23 (NIV)*

Now, how would you respond if someone got down to the deepest darkest level of your heart and called it out like that? It would hurt to have all your pretenses stripped away. You'd probably be angry because when people are in pain, they lash out.

That's what happens when Logue pushes in on the deepest darkest issue in Bertie's life – his fear. The situation is that Bertie's older brother, David, is to be crowned as king in succession of their father. But David has "issues" that would prevent him from being king.

As we watch, pay attention to how Logue hits the nerve.

**DVD Clip - YOU'RE A NOBODY (1.4 min)**

B: Lionel: "what's the matter? why are you so upset?"

E: Bertie walking away

And the sessions *are* over for several months until David, Bertie's older brother abdicates the throne and marries Wallace Simpson of Baltimore ... which means that *Bertie* is now the king.

Let's watch as that reality hits home with him ... and pay particular attention to what *Bertie says about himself* in comparison to what *Logue said*.

**DVD Clip - NOT A KING (2.5 min)**

B: Elizabeth enters

E: Shot of Lionel.

What did Bertie say about himself? "I'm not a king." Three times he said it because he didn't believe he had what it took to be a king. *But Logue believed* (which is why Bertie went back to him and apologized).

And again, I just love this imagery because I think this is how God is. We say "I'm not enough to be or do what You have called me to be and do." But God says, "Yes, you are. I *have* made you enough and I *will* make you enough."

For example, when God came to Moses and said, "You're the man to lead my people out of Egypt; out of captivity and slavery," Moses responded by saying, "I think you're mistaken. That's a speaking job and I have never been eloquent in my life. In fact, I am slow of speech and tongue."

*The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"*

*"Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." Exodus 4:11-12 (NIV)*

And that's exactly what happened. Moses became quite eloquent. In fact, he ended up writing the first five books of the Bible as well as a couple of the Psalms – the praise and

worship music of the Old Testament.

See, a lot of times, we don't believe in ourselves but God does. And I'm not talking about some sappy "oh, you can do anything you want if you just believe and try really hard" because that's not true. That's a recipe for disappointment. What I'm saying is you can do anything *God has asked you to do* because He will give you the power in spite of your weakness.

### **The Apostle Paul once wrote ...**

*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2  
Corinthians 4:7 (NIV)*

Not until Jesus returns will God do a whole lot about our weak and fallible human existence – the jar of clay that we are. We're

pretty much stuck with it. But in spite of that, God can empower us to be and do what we're to be and do.

-----

Now, at this point in the story, Logue and Bertie resume their sessions. And since Bertie is going to be crowned as king, Logue begins to prepare him for the ceremony at the hallowed Westminster Abbey where kings throughout the centuries have been crowned. It's very intimidating and Bertie is glad to have his help until something is revealed that shakes his faith in Logue and he is faced with a crisis of belief.

Let's watch.

**DVD Clip - NO CREDENTIALS (2.2 min)**

B: Bertie: "I vouched for you and you have no credentials"

## E: Shot of Bertie

I just love the end of that scene. I love how Logue once again reaffirms Bertie's worth and capability, but also how he takes everything that Bertie considers sacred and thoroughly dismantles it. "This is just a chair. This is just a rock. All the kings that came before you were not gods. They were mere mortals just like you."

And it's at this point that Bertie finally begins to trust Logue. He begins to truly hear what Logue is saying to him. To borrow a phrase from Jesus, Bertie has "ears to hear." He is finally open to listening. And that's the non-negotiable condition I referred to at the beginning of this message.

**"Ears to hear" – you must be *open to hearing*.**



“He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” Jesus often said, implying that, even though he was talking, even though God was speaking and his voice could be heard, only those who were *open* to hearing *would* hear.

Now, if you asked a bunch of people whether or not they were open to hearing God’s voice, I’d bet a huge majority would say “of course I am.” A lot of *us* would say that. But even though we’d say that, we don’t hear God speaking into our lives. And it’s because we don’t understand what openness to hearing looks like.

So what does it look like? We’ve just seen it in this movie. I’m sure it wasn’t the intention of the producers, but they created a masterful metaphor of what it means to be open to hearing from God.

It means ...

**Willingness to admit "God's game, God's turf, God's rules."**

Just like Bertie and Elizabeth had to say "Logue's game, turf and rules" we have to say the same thing.

It means ...

**Willingness to engage in a relationship with God the person (not "God the fix-it-genie")**

Just like Bertie had to engage in a relationship with Logue that went beyond mere mechanics.

It means ...

**Willingness to lay aside preconceived notions of what God ought to say or do.**

Just like Bertie had to lay aside his notions of

what a speech therapist ought to do.

It means ...

**Willingness to allow God to address the real issues in our lives (even if it's painful or wounds our pride).**

Just like Bertie had to allow Logue to push on the fear that ruled his life.

It means ...

**Willingness to accept God's assessment of our worth and capability.**

Just like Bertie had to believe in what Logue saw in him instead of what he saw in himself.

It means ...

**Willingness to let go of the idols we're trusting.**

Just like Bertie had to take everything and everyone else off the pedestal and stop allowing them to rule his life.

That's what it looks like for a person to have "ears to hear" – the non-negotiable condition for hearing God's voice. And the creators of this movie have illustrated it beautifully.

But they also illustrated the benefits of hearing from God.

In the final scene of the movie, the leadership of Great Britain realizes that they must make an attempt to stop Hitler. Bertie, as king, is charged with making a speech to the British Empire all over the world.

Here's what happens just before the speech and right after it.

## **DVD Clip - THE SPEECH (2.5 min)**

\*\* NOTE: THERE IS A SHORT FADE AT ABOUT ONE MINUTE IN BUT CLIP RESUMES\*\*

B: Shot of typewritten text with markup

E: Movie fades to black

### **Jesus once said ...**

*"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*

*Matthew 7:24-25 (NIV)*

That's the benefit of being open to hearing from God and then actually hearing from him. It allows you to build your life on a rock

instead of shifting sand.

So, this morning as we close, I want to invite you to sing a prayer with our band.

As we sing it I want us to sing it as a pledge of our willingness ...

1. To admit it's "God's game, God's turf, God's rules."
2. To engage in a relationship with God the person (not "God the fix-it-genie")
3. To lay aside preconceived notions of what God ought to say or do.
4. To allow God to address the real issues in our lives (even if it's painful or wounds our pride).
5. To accept God's assessment of our worth and capability.

6. To let go of the idols we're trusting.

Maybe some of us aren't ready to say those things just yet. That's OK, sometimes you just need to speak (or sing) something in faith.

Let's stand and sing together.

**Closing Song – “I Will Follow”**

**CLOSING COMMENTS**

Endnotes