

Resonate- How to hear God's voice – Part 2 – through the Holy Spirit.

August 6, 2023

Glenn Garvin

BIG IDEA – God also speaks through the Holy Spirit.

scripture focus - Romans 8:9 NLT

“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. **You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.** (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

Hearing God's voice is absolutely important to grow and flourish as a follower of Jesus. Yes, the Bible is the primary and foundational means of knowing God; to listen and obey His Word. But Jesus clearly told us when He left the planet, that another would come and lead us into all truth. He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. Hearing and obeying the Holy Spirit is vital both in our relationship to God and keeping us on mission in the Kingdom of God.

I have a major bias when teaching about hearing God's voice through the Holy Spirit.

I've shared this before. My relationship with Jesus began because God spoke to me, not audibly, but in my head. I had little to no church experience nor any Biblical understanding of what I was experiencing. God made an offer I could not refuse and I simply said, "YES!"

After that initial time of hearing God's voice, it was very obvious to me when God spoke again when I was back at high school in my Junior year. I was stealing burritos from the school lunch line when **God first asked me what I was doing.** This was a favorite way for God to get my attention! I was slow to understand that God was asking

for a reason. After asking me a couple times, God said, "that's stealing, I want you to put it back." I hesitated, because I didn't want to put the burritos back and I didn't want to get caught for stealing. However, I obeyed.

This pattern of hearing God's voice wasn't supernatural to me, on the contrary, it was painfully difficult to submit to God's voice and obey.

I didn't know it was controversial to hear God. I didn't know people thought it was strange or some even thought it was unbiblical! I was just a brand-new baby believer trying to know God and obey Him.

I would say that most of my experiences of hearing God were corrective, as he was teaching me discipline. But as I grew in my faith and grew in my understanding of the Bible, God's voice through the Holy Spirit began to lead me towards simple assignments. Talk to this person or pray for that person. Most assignments were not hard, but I was asked to speak or pray with complete strangers. I often protested and tried explaining to God that I was not only shy, but I was also invisible and preferred staying that way. I couldn't figure out why He didn't pick on more "qualified" people, you know way more spiritual than me. God never answered those questions. He just quietly repeated what He was asking and waited for my obedience.

All this time, growing in my walk with God, I did not know all the ins and outs of theology and how God works among us. I didn't know anything about the trinity or God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I just knew God as God and later learned that it was the Holy Spirit that was speaking to me and changing my life over time.

One last thing. I was shocked to find out much later that many believers had not ever experienced hearing God's voice and I really toned down the whole, "God said," or "I heard from God." I mostly kept it all to myself, only talking that way to Robin, our kids, and close friends.

I'm here today to let you know that hearing God's voice is possible, it's Biblical and it's helpful in knowing God and obeying what He says.

So, how do we hear from God? Last week we discussed that the Bible is the best way, but it's not the only way. Let me show you in scripture why I believe that.

The New Testament is filled with God speaking through angels, visions, promptings, and directions. But there are specifics about God speaking through the Holy Spirit, which is one of the characteristics of His mission as the parakaleó (the one who comes alongside).

How Jesus heard God's voice through the Spirit

John the Baptist helps us answer that question in

John 3:32-34 NLT

"He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit."

Did you hear that? John the Baptist said, God gave Jesus the Spirit without limit!

Jesus explains how he hears from God

John 5:19-20 NLT So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. **He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.** For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, **the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man.** Then you will truly be astonished. **[what Biblical examples would be considered "greater works?"]**

John writes this interesting word for “see.” It’s blépō – Its primary definition is to physically see. But it also means to perceive or discern properly.

When would Jesus hear or perceive God’s voice through the Holy Spirit? When he got away to pray!

- **Mark 1:35** - Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.
- **Luke 4:42** - At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place...
- **Luke 5:16** - Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
- **Luke 6:12** - One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.
- **Luke 9:18** - Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?'
- **Luke 9:28** - He took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.
- **Luke 11:1** - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'"
- **Luke 22:39-41** - Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.' He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed.

What is a good example of how hearing the voice of God, through the Spirit, works?

John 4:1-6 NLT John records the perfect illustration!

Perfect Timing: Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. **He had to go through Samaria on the way.** Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and

Jesus, tired from the long walk, **sat wearily beside the well about noontime.**

Perfect insight: John 4:16-18 NLT

“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her. “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. Jesus said, **“You’re right! You don’t have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!”**

Perfect Love: John 4:25-26 NLT

“The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then **Jesus told her, “I Am the Messiah!”**

Perfect Motive: John 4:31-34 NLT

“Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.” **But Jesus replied, “I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”** “Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other. Then Jesus explained: **“My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.”**

You might say, “yeah, but that’s Jesus. Are there any other examples?” Yes, there are plenty of them in the Bible. Let’s look at how hearing the voice of God through the Spirit works in the Apostle Paul’s life.

The Apostle Paul reaffirmed the means of hearing God’s voice through the Holy Spirit – he told the churches in Corinth exactly how it happens.

1 Corinthians 2:10-13 NLT But it was to us that **God revealed these things by his Spirit.** For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets. No one can know a person’s thoughts except that person’s own spirit, and **no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit.** And **we have received God’s Spirit (not the**

world's spirit), **so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.** When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.

[What do you think Paul means when he writes, "received God Spirit not the spirit of the world."? Is it possible that the "spirit of the world," speaks to us as well?]

Acts 16:6-10 NLT Paul and Silas hear three distinct but specific directions from the Holy Spirit.

Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, **but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.** So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. **That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"** So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there."

Acts 16:13-14 NLT - Paul and Silas just "randomly" wandered down to the river?

On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, **where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.** One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying."

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NLT – Paul's received a direct word from the Holy Spirit.

So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from

becoming proud. **Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."** So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

Like I stated at the beginning...

The New Testament is filled with God speaking through angels, visions, promptings, and directions. But there are specifics about God speaking through the Holy Spirit.

Examples of God's voice in a vision through the Holy Spirit

Acts 9:10-12 NLT - Ananias Vision

Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. **The Lord spoke to him in a vision**, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord!" he replied. The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.

Acts 10:3-6 NLT – Cornelius Vision

One afternoon about three o'clock, **he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him.** "Cornelius!" the angel said. Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.

Acts 10:9-10 NLT – Peter's Vision

The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

God's voice in a direct word through the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:26-29 NLT - Philip gets a direct word from an angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit specifically directs him.

As for Philip, **an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.”** So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. **The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.**

How would I even start? I have some simple steps in a few links posted in my notes.

1. Listening for God's voice by spending time reading the Bible. Start with a prayer: God, speak to me through your Word.
2. Develop a life habit of seeking him daily, known as a Quiet Time.
3. Be open to what the Holy Spirit might whisper or nudge you to do. **Remember God is far more concerned about forming the image of Christ in us** than He is just using us in supernatural ways.
4. When the Holy Spirit speaks to an issue in your life, yield and obey. It's best to start in this area anyways. Just learn to listen and be quick to obey. You'll start seeing patterns and ways God wants to speak to you.
5. If the Holy Spirit asks you to be bold and gives you a simple assignment, use a set of filters to discover if it is God speaking: Does this line up with the Bible? Is this just me making something up? Are my motives pure and not selfish? Ask God for confirmation if you're not sure. Be patient with yourself. God knows you well.

When trying to hear God's voice, even in correction, I must be careful I'm not listening to and believing a lie that is not from God nor His Word. If it's about sin, then confession and asking for forgiveness is the response. It is not wallowing and feeling guilt and shame or feel like giving up. That is not from God!

When processing an assignment to be obedient to talk with someone or pray about something specific with them, I use the same decision grid: Is it Biblical? Is this just me? What are my true motives? Speaking encouraging words to folks are sometimes just as scary.

I have a very specific decision grid point I will share with you next week. In the most difficult assignments where the Holy Spirit asks me to bring correction or warning I have to be very careful.

Next week we'll talk about hearing God's voice through others, especially within the community of faith.

NOTES

Scriptures

John 3:32-34 NLT "He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit."

John 5:19-20 NLT So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. **He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.** For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, **the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man.** Then you will truly be astonished.

John 4:1-6 NLT Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. **He had to go through Samaria on the way.** Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, **sat wearily beside the well about noontime.**

John 4:16-18 NLT "**Go and get your husband,**" Jesus told her. "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "**You're right! You don't have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!**"

John 4:25-26 NLT “The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then **Jesus told her, “I Am the Messiah!”**

John 4:31-34 NLT “Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.” **But Jesus replied, “I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”** “Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other. Then Jesus explained: “**My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.**”

1 Corinthians 2:10-13 NLT But it was to us that **God revealed these things by his Spirit.** For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And **we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.** When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.

Acts 9:10-12 NLT - Ananias Vision

Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. **The Lord spoke to him in a vision,** calling, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord!” he replied. The Lord said, “Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.

Acts 10:3-6 NLT – Cornelius Vision

One afternoon about three o'clock, **he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him.** “Cornelius!” the angel said. Cornelius stared at him in terror. “What is it, sir?” he asked the angel. And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.

Acts 10:9-10 NLT – Peter's Vision

The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

Acts 8:26-29 NLT - As for Philip, **an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.”** So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book

of the prophet Isaiah. **The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.**

Acts 16:6-10 NLT Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, **but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.** So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. **That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!”** So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.”

Acts 16:13-14 NLT On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, **where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.** One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.”

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NLT So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. **Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.”** So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.”

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 NIV

“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”

Questions

Q: What Biblical examples would be considered “greater works” that Jesus spoke of?

Q: Do you believe that God still speaks through the Holy Spirit today?

Q: What do you think Paul means when he writes, “received God’s Spirit not the spirit of the world.”? Is it possible that the “spirit of the world,” speaks to us as well?

Q: Have you ever “randomly” ran into the will of God and found it was providential not coincidental?

Q: Share a time when you felt nudged or prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Q: Do you have specific ways you discern or process when you believe you have heard from the Holy Spirit?

Commentary

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

John 3:34

The words "by measure," in the sense of limitation, are frequent in the classical and rabbinical writings. The Rabbis seem to have applied the phrase to prophets and teachers, saying that the Spirit dwelt in the prophets only in a certain measure. The Son who cometh from above is above all. There is no gift of prophet, or of teacher, which is not given to Him. He has the fulness of the spiritual gifts which in part are given to men, and He speaks the very words of God. It will be noted that John is still expounding to his disciples the meaning of his own declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

John 3:34

for God giveth not the Spirit by measure—Here, again, the sharpest conceivable line of distinction is drawn between Christ and all human-inspired teachers: "They have the Spirit in a limited degree; but God giveth not [to Him] the Spirit by measure." **It means the entire fulness of divine life and divine power.** The present tense "giveth," very aptly points out the **permanent communication of the Spirit by the Father to the Son, so that a constant flow and reflow of living power is to be understood** (Compare Joh 1:15)

Internet Links

[Rick Warren, Former Pastor of Saddleback](#)

Learn How to Recognize God's Voice – 7 filters.

Pastor Rick Warren teaches seven ways to test your ideas, impressions, and thoughts to know with absolute certainty you are hearing the voice of God. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Does it agree with the Bible?
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
Luke 21:33 (NIV)
2. Does it make me more like Christ?
In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.
Philippians 2:5 (NCV)

3. Does my church family confirm it?
In the multitude of counselors there is safety.
Proverbs 11:14b (KJV)
4. Is it consistent with how God shaped me?
God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.
Romans 12:6a (LB)
5. Does it concern my responsibility?
Jesus: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."
John 21:22 (NIV)
6. Is it convicting rather than condemning?
There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.
Romans 8:1 (NLT)
7. Do I sense God's peace about it?
Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then, you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

"God's voice and nudges are not part of us learning some "spiritual technique."
No! They are all about relationship!

Listening for God's Voice

You're aware, of course, that there are many voices floating around our heads (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17):

- **God's voice** -- the real thing.
- **The World** -- voices of others, peer pressure, worldly standards of success, etc.
- **The Flesh** -- our own desires and thoughts, many of which are selfish.
- **The Devil** -- demonic temptation and misdirection from Satan and his forces.
- **The Conscience** -- our moral sense of right and wrong that we obtain from our upbringing. Sometimes we are hindered by a skewed sense of justice or righteousness -- perhaps an extreme legalism, or an insensitivity to certain sins. Our conscience is strongly influenced by the culture we grow up in. However, the conscience can be educated by the Word of God as we seek his way.

How do we discern the difference between these? Frankly, it's a learning process, and any such process involves mistakes. That's why being part of a caring, supportive Christian community is valuable in this learning process.

Dr. Wilson gives a super practical list that I have read and agree with:

Lessons for Disciples

- **Listening for God's voice is a Bible pattern that we see throughout the Old and New Testaments.** God communicates to us by means of his Spirit.
- Jesus demonstrated before his disciples a pattern of getting away to a solitary place to talk to his Father (Mark 1:33-38). It was there he learned what to say and do (Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28b; 11:1; 22:39-41).
- Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing..." (John 5:19). When he took on flesh, Jesus voluntarily laid aside his prerogatives as Son of God (Philippians 2:6-7). Listening to his Father was the lifeline for his life and ministry.
- Through the Holy Spirit we have access to the very mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:10b, 16b).
- Since Jesus is our example, **we need to develop a life habit of seeking him daily, known as a Quiet Time. This is essential to developing a growing relationship with God -- and becoming sensitive to the voice of the Spirit.**
- In the Bible, the Spirit sometimes speaks to believers in words -- sentences with content -- such as instructions to Ananias (Acts 9:10-19), comfort to Paul regarding his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and instructions to Samuel on how to anoint David king (1 Samuel 16:1-2).
- God also leads us through nudges, in articulate leadings, that consist usually of brief instructions. You see this in Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-27) and Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16:6-10).
- We need to become sensitized to God working around us. Ask: Where have I seen God lately?
- We prepare our hearts for the Spirit's voice by humbling ourselves as servants who are ready to obey what God speaks to us without questioning (1 Samuel 3:9-10).
- **We prepare ourselves by recognizing and clarifying our own desires in a matter so we can surrender our desires fully to God. Without doing this we can confuse our own desires with the Spirit's leading.**
- Hearing the Spirit is a learning process where we'll make some mistakes as we learn. **We are learning to discern between God's voice, the world, the flesh, the devil, and the conscience.**
- Don't be afraid to seek to hear the Spirit's voice. It springs from the immense privilege we have -- through the Holy Spirit -- of getting to know God personally. He will speak to you as you learn to listen.

[Glenn] We have God's voice, our own voice, the world's voice, and the slanderer's voice. **How do we know one from another?**

Paul specifically acknowledges three of these influences in his letter to the churches in Ephesus.

Ephesians 2:1-3 NLT

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. **You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.** He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.** By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

But now, because of the work of Christ, we are also able to hear and obey God:

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

For we are God's masterpiece. **He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.**

Paul loved using the phrase, the world, the flesh and the devil to describe exactly what we are up against when making forward progress towards spiritual maturity and the Kingdom of God.