



UNMUTED

LISTENING FOR GOD'S VOICE

WEEK 2 – NUDGINGS

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... on a scale from 1 to 10, how good a driver are you? Do you drive like a grandma on a Sunday cruise, or do you plow your own road, rules be darned? Discuss!

OPENING PRAYER

Great Shepherd, be patient with us when we ignore your voice, and grant us the ability to hear the subtle ways in which you guide us.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to week 2 of our series, “Unmuted,” where we are addressing a desire that exists within each of us: the desire that God will speak to us. We all want to hear God’s voice. We want to know what path we should take for our lives. We want to know we’re not alone, that we’ll get through a tough time. We want to know God is listening and heard our requests. We want to know next week’s lotto numbers. We want to hear God’s voice. And there’s good news... God

does speak to us! In fact, God is always talking to us... constantly. In every moment of life, in multiple ways, all around us, directly and indirectly, God is speaking. We just have the volume muted. We ignore the obvious and subtle ways God communicates in our lives. And so, for this series, that's what we're talking about... how to UNMUTE God's voice. Last week, we looked at how God speaks to us directly. Today, we'll talk about how God might communicate indirectly, like putting orange road cones in our path to guide us where we should go. Will you see them or just plow those puppies over?

Review Question: Last week, we talked about getting revelations from God. Did God speak to you in the last week? Did you get your burning bush? (It was probably way more subtle than that.) What has God been trying to tell you?

SCRIPTURE

Kinda like your TV or your phone, there's always signal going to it, you just might have it on mute. How often do we put our phones on silent, get to doing stuff, look back down, and we've missed 87 calls. We do the same thing to God. We put God on mute, go about our lives, and if we had a way of tracking it... God would have left us 87 voice mails. And so, last week, we began looking at the three basic ways God to unmute God's voice. And a story from Exodus where God speaks to Moses through a burning bush gave us our first way God speaks to us... what we call...

REVELATION

Revelation is when God speaks to you directly. Now, we don't have many burning bushes anymore, but there are ways God speaks to us directly... sometimes, God will allow you to just *know* something. Occasionally God will allow you to just *feel* God's response. Or, in rarer experiences, you might actually *hear* God's direct voice. (For how those all work, go back and watch last week's reflection.)

Okay, what about the time in between revelations? If God is always speaking to us, how does God communicate in the in-between times? Well, that's what we're going to move to today. As much as we want grand revelatory experiences, God usually speaks to us in much more *subtle* ways. And if you've got God on mute, you'll blow right past these without a second thought. So, to get at this second form of how God speaks to us... we're going to look at a scripture from John's version of Jesus's life. Jesus is attempting to explain his role as the Messiah, what he's trying to do, and what he wants his followers to do. And they're just not getting it, so he uses a metaphor he thinks they'll understand.

Read John, chapter 10, verses 27 through 30.

Herding sheep was prevalent in those days, so this was a metaphor Jesus's listeners would have connected with. Even if they weren't shepherds themselves, they knew the trade. It's an apt metaphor

even today. Even if we don't know the ins and outs of herding sheep, we still get the idea... if we're going to get where we want to go, we have to learn how to follow the voice of our Shepherd.

Question 1: Consider this story from Jesus. If you were in the crowd listening to this “sermon,” what would you have felt or thought? What chord does it strike within you? Is it comforting, challenging, or would you have just been confused, like, “uh, sheep are dumb”? Discuss!

REFLECTION

Here's why this is an apt analogy. Sheep don't know English, (or in Jesus's time, Aramaic.) So, when Jesus says, “they know my voice,” he doesn't mean he's giving them verbal instructions like a GPS. “Okay sheep, go through this valley, turn left at the Trader Yosef's, and you'll be at the new pasture.” No, a shepherd has a lot of other ways to get his sheep where he wants them to go. Yeah, they know his voice, but it's not just direct communication that gets the flock to move. God operates the same way with us... it's not always direct revelation. We might know the shepherds voice, but as we follow, there are a whole lot of other ways we, as the sheep, get to where we're supposed to go. God often uses more subtle clues to speak to us. We call these...

NUDGINGS

Sometimes, God doesn't speak to us as blatantly as a burning bush. Often, it's a lot less obvious. But these messages are always there if you're looking for them. To mix analogies, if *revelation* is flashing signs on a roadway telling you where to go, *nudgings* are the little orange road cones that direct you onto a different lane. If you're paying attention, if you're looking for these nudgings, God can guide you down the road he'd like you to take. Alternatively, you can be oblivious to them, and drive right over those suckers, but you probably end up somewhere you don't want to be.

Question 3: We talked about how good a driver you are. Now, let's connect the metaphor to listening for God's voice? Are you someone who hears God's voice or sees God's presence in the smaller more understated ways? Or do you just plow through those road cones and it takes a burning bush to get your attention?

So, what are some of these *nudgings* and how do we recognize them? Well, let's go back to our sheep-herding analogy. Well, first, one of the ways a shepherd drives his sheep is just as Jesus said, the sound of his voice. A shepherd's voice is unique, so his sheep will follow that sound. They may not know the words, but they know the voice... they sense the tone, the character. They know when it's *their* shepherd. The same can be true for us. The closer and closer we follow Christ, the easier and easier it is to know when we're following his will. The more time we spend developing that relationship, the more obvious the right decisions become.

Second, I think God's favorite form of these nudgings is when God speaks to you through others. A shepherd doesn't have to get *every* sheep to do what he wants. If you get one or two lead sheep to go somewhere, sheep will simply just follow. The same is true for us. You may not be able to hear the shepherd's voice, but if you've got your trusty sheep around you, you can still get where God wants you to go. It might sound like a friend who helps you sort out a decision. Or, a conversation at Connect Group will suddenly click and you're like, "this is exactly what I needed to hear." Maybe a friend in the faith will just start talking about something they're going through, and it will be the very thing you're struggling with. This is a nudging. And so, if you are paying attention, God will use others to speak to you.

Finally, another way a shepherd gets his flock to move, is by using a sheep dog. If you've ever seen a video of a well-trained border collie herding sheep, it's a thing of beauty. The sheep could still hear the shepherds voice, they are amongst other trusted sheep, but sometimes, it just takes a sheep dog to get them in line. The same can be true for us. You might be in tune with God's voice. You might have your trusted sheep around you. But sometimes, you just need a border collie, (a pastor or mentor or friend,) to nip at your heels and really sort out where you need to be.

Question 4: Two parter... 1) In which of these ways does God tend to speak to you most often? Are you someone who is simply in tune with God's voice, and you just kinda align with His will? Do you rely

on the voices of others? Does it take a “sheep dog” nipping at your heels?

2) Who are the border collies in your life? Do you have a trusted mentor that gives you tough love when you need it? Maybe there’s a pastor or author or podcaster who is a good source of Godly wisdom, and something in a sermon, book, or episode often serves as God’s voice in your life?

CLOSING

Now, there’s one more way a shepherd gets his sheep where he needs them, and that is through use of his staff. Now, I’m not saying God whacks us upside the head. It might feel that way sometimes, but that’s bad theology. God does not cause us pain to teach us something. We don’t have a vindictive God like that. Instead, when we see those road cones and just plow right through them, or we wander away from the flock and gets stuck in the brambles, or we follow the wrong sheep right off the cliff, God uses that staff to rescue us, to pull us back where we need to be. When we do it our way and end up hurt, God reaches out with that hook, might be through the voice of others, might be through God’s unmistakable presence, might just be through the right words or the right sermon or the right song at just the right time, but there’s a nudging that says, “I told you what would happen... but it’s okay, come back, you’re safe, I’ve got you.”

So, this is the 2nd way I think God speaks to us... through nudgings. Sometimes, we get that direct revelation... we get our burning bush. But in between those times, God nudges us along the path we should take. So, this week, look out for those nudgings. Spend time with the shepherd so you know the sound of his voice. Listen for God speaking to you through other sheep, making sure you're with sheep you trust. And have a few border collies in your life, people God seems to use more directly to speak to you. Then finally, when you do get yourself stuck in the brambles, know that God has that shepherds staff held out to rescue you. Be good sheep who knows the voice of The Shepherd.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**