

Lent Group – Learning to hear God for others and myself

God is a God of revelation. He is speaking all the time. He wants to share his heart with us.

John 15 : 15..... " *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS, for everything that I learned from my father I have made known to you.*"

Listening is so important. Jesus listened out of listening to the Father.

- **John 5:19....** " *I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself ; he can only do what he sees the Father doing..*"
- **John 12 : 49...** " *For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.*"

We need to believe that we all have this inbuilt spiritual capacity to hear God. We need to expect that God will be wanting to speak to us.

John 10

Verse 14...I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

Verse 4..his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

And each one of us has the ability to recognise God's voice

Many struggle to listen to God because they are working only on the rational level....expecting to hear words in well- constructed sentences.

We can over-complicate by thinking we've got to hear an audible voice or have a special vision. OFTEN WE MISS IT BECAUSE WE THINK IT'S GOING TO BE SOMETHING ELSE..

God's voice mostly comes through the intuitive channels built into our system through a holy Spirit inspired imagination:

Ways God speaks (10)

❖ **Audible voice (often in visions)**

Acts 10:17-20Peter is told by the Spirit to go to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius.

❖ **impulses of our heart / hunches within our spirit**

Read I kings 19 : 1-18

Elijah expected God would speak to him in the earthquake, the wind and the fire, but it came in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19 : 10-18)

Revelation often comes in a whisper to the heart.

" *To know by intuition is to know without being able to say how you know.*"

Think how children learn to hear their parents. They understand long before they understand words.

- ❖ **Our natural thought processes.** Audible voices are rare. More often it's through an impression or sense that just grows. Often, it's just the next natural thought after you've prayed.

- ❖ **promptings**

Acts 8 -

The Holy Spirit spoke to Philip through an inner prompting...an intuitive hunch...an instinctive feeling.

How many opportunities have we missed because we didn't have the courage to act on an instinctive prompting or hunch ?

HEARING AND RESPONDING TO THE VOICE OF GOD CAN SEEM SCARY AND RISKY.

- ❖ **Verses from scripture**

- * **pictures in the imagination** (finding oneself thinking about an image or scene for no reason.)

- ❖ **Dreams** (the Lord spoke to Abraham in sleep)

- ❖ **Physical experiences, things that we see in nature,**

Sometimes God shows us things in the natural world that have supernatural relevance. The Lord often drew the attention of Old Testament prophets to natural phenomenon e.g

Amos 8..the basket of fruit (Israel ripe for judgement)

The Lord may say to us...what do you see? He focusses our attention.

- ❖ **Through other people**

- ❖ **Through circumstances**

What matters is recognising the particular way the Lord tends to speak to you as an individual. Could be different from how he speaks to others. He works with your personality.

1) WE NEED TO BE AVAILABLE TO GOD

Jesus' time belonged completely to the Father. He was completely available for his Father's desires.

Jesus chose the apostles that they might be with him. Their first task was availability to him rather than ministry for him.

Intimacy with Jesus has to be the foundation for all ministry. After all we are available to our closest friends because we love them and want to be with them.

Prayer is ultimately about simply being in God's presence

When we stop listening, the relationship diminishes – until it becomes a chore we attend to rather than a person we are connected to.

(Mark Yaconelli)

God is speaking all the time. The question is not "does he speak, but do we listen?"

Learn to pray and listen to God at all moments of the day. Don't think God will only speak in the religious bits of your life. Any event, any scene, any conversation or meeting may be an occasion through which God is trying to speak.....a setting for the prompting of the Spirit.

Make a decision to be more open to the promptings of the Spirit.

2) Spiritual discernment is based on our willingness to do the will of God. Jesus speaks to those who are willing to do whatever he says to them. Jesus heard the Father's voice better than anyone else because of his utter obedience. (John 5:30..." *for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*")

Why should Jesus speak to us if he knows we won't do what he asks.

3) Don't be paralysed by a fear of making mistakes. Anyone learning to hear God and speak out what he has said is bound to make mistakes.

What do we do when an impression comes along...immediately censor or squash it. We must guard against that and trust God to sanctify and fill our thought processes with his Spirit. When we pray for the Spirit to speak to us, the important thing is to be open...and to guard against immediately censoring / squashing impressions that come to mind.

When it comes to hearing God, the thing we have to be prepared for is that a lot of the time it seems strange. God reminds us in Isaiah 55:8-9,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Don't worry if it seems foolish and bizarre. May well have meaning for another person. What comes may not seem rational. **You may not feel you have the interpretation...may still be meaningful to the other person.**

4) There's a very close connection between hearing God and having a child-like faith. Faith plays a large part in hearing God.

We have to pray for faith to believe it is God communicating and to walk out in it. If we're prepared to give away and act on promptings, faith can become like an exciting adventure.

5) It takes practice to learn to distinguish the voice of the Spirit from all the other voices within us.

THE MORE WE PRACTICE LISTENING TO GOD, THE MORE WE WILL BE ABLE TO DISCERN HIS VOICE AND DEVELOP SENSITIVITY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

All of us listen to negative "life scripts"...can sometimes be like curses deafening us to life giving messages. Common one is "Don't be foolish, you can't ever expect to hear God. He couldn't possibly want to use you."

Only way through is to learn to listen to them, so you can identify them.

6) If God doesn't seem to be saying anything, don't invent things for him.

Don't try and fill the gaps when God seems silent.

Ask for confirmation – **does it stay with you ?**

Does it encourage / provide hope/ bring peace or does it accuse?

Ask God for further interpretation as to meaning.

Is this revelation for you, another individual or the church?

Ask for wisdom for how to handle the revelation

If we're proud, if we become puffed up about our abilities, we will not hear God. We need to know that we are utterly dependent...that revelation comes as a gift.

One of the problems with hearing God is that **we easily become preoccupied with the supernatural experience, rather than with the Lord himself.** Revelation and power become more important to us than our friendship with Jesus.

Sharing words for others

Be willing to submit our impressions or words to the leaders of church for them to weigh or test. Prophets need to recognise the authority of pastors.

We should always be loving in the way we offer words. People should be able to feel God's kindness and love through us. Any unloving use of the prophetic gift can be hurtful.

No matter how God speaks to us it will never contradict scripture.

Be prepared to take a risk. It will always involve the exercise of faith. The word you have may not seem rational or sensible.

If we make a mistake – that's ok...churches should be places of love and acceptance where we're free to fail.

Don't say more than you feel God saying. The temptation will be to pad things out a bit, especially if your word seems very general. Don't add to the revelation.

Don't assume that because you've been given an impression, that you've necessarily been given the interpretation of that revelation.

Don't assume that you automatically know what to do with the revelation you've been given. **We need to pray for God's wisdom to know how to apply the word.**

Pray for the person with whom you've shared a prophetic word...that they'll know what it means and what to do with it.

Don't be afraid to let God be silent. Don't speak for him if he's not speaking.

Sometimes God might not be shy of letting us appear foolish.

Don't seek prominence. Ask yourself: whose glory am I really seeking here...God's or mine?