

Discipleship Groups — Level II

WEEK 4 LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE

Hello everyone

In our discipleship classes we have already talked about the disciplines of:

1. Prayer
2. Reading and studying the Bible
3. And fasting.

Today I want to share with you about the discipline of Listening to God's Voice. Something that is good to clarify is about the difference between hearing and listening.

Hearing is an involuntary action and simply refers to the perception of sounds through the sense of hearing. It is a physical process that does not require attention or conscious effort.

Listening is totally different from hearing. Listening is a voluntary and conscious action that involves paying attention to the sound or message that is received.

Listening requires discipline, concentration, and effort to understand what is being said to me.

As an introduction to this topic of listening to God's voice, let me read to you what Job writes in the Old Testament of the Bible.

*"Why do you complain that God doesn't answer you? You are very wrong; God is greater than we are. We may not realize it, but God does not stop speaking to us; Sometimes he speaks to us in dreams, while we are fast asleep; At other times he speaks in our ears; He clearly warns us not to do evil anymore or continue to be proud; Thus he delivers us from death."
— Job 33:12-18 (NLT)*

Since God does not stop speaking to us, then we should always long to want to hear His voice. The writer Robert Foster in his book *Celebration of the Disciplines* comments something very true:

"In today's society, our adversary (the devil) specializes in three things: noise, haste, and crowds."

These three things keep us from hearing God's voice.

1. The **noise** generated by vehicles, planes, machinery, and people.
2. The rush. Everything is **in a hurry** in this world. It is a world where everything is fast and dynamic.
3. The **crowds**. We are always surrounded by people.

In addition to these three things, we immerse ourselves in what this world offers, hyperactivity. We keep ourselves very busy, doing a lot of things. In other words, the enemy's great strategy is to use these things I mentioned to turn us away from God and not listen to his voice.

Seeing this panorama, it seems very difficult to hear the voice of God.

I have good news for you. Listening to God's voice is very easy. It's not complicated at all. God wants to speak to us and He wants us to hear His voice.

As the book of Job says ... *"He does not stop speaking to us"*

The Bible relates that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve talked to God and God spoke to them. They listened to God's voice. We also see in the Bible God speaking to Cain, Abel, Noah, and Abraham and many more.

The Bible says in the book of Exodus 33:11 that God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

God always wants to speak to us. Like a father talks to his child.

A great example of this is the relationship of God the Father with Jesus his son. The Bible tells us that Jesus often walked away from people to hear God's voice.

Luke 5:16 says, *"But He withdrew into deserted places and prayed."* Jesus longed to hear the voice of God, his father.

A question we can ask ourselves is the following—To whom does God speak?

Well, here are some answers.

1. God speaks to people like you and me. We are His creation.
2. God speaks to people who long for His presence and His voice
3. God speaks to people who desire His guidance and direction
4. God speaks to people who are willing to listen to Him and obey Him.

Hearing God's voice is an exciting and personal experience that is accomplished through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Another question we could ask ourselves is— How does God speak to us?

God in His sovereignty speaks to us in different ways

God speaks to us:

1. Through the Bible

The Bible is the word of God. We want to hear God's voice, read and study His word. Remember, God inspired everyone who wrote the Bible and through what they wrote in these 66 books He speaks to us.

The Bible in the second letter to Timothy chapter 3:16-17 tells us:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, wholly equipped, unto every good work."

This text tells me that when God speaks to me he does it for various purposes, when he speaks to me he **teaches** me, when he speaks to me he **guides** me, when he speaks to me he **corrects** me, when he speaks to me he **encourages** me, when he speaks to

me he **strengthens** me, when he speaks to me he **warns** me, when he speaks to me he **instructs** me and when he speaks to me he equips me.

All this should always encourage us to want to listen to God's voice.

2. **Through the Holy Spirit**

Let us remember that Jesus dies, on the third day he rises and ascends to be at the right hand of God His Father. After this, God sends us the Holy Spirit to accompany us always.

We can read this in the Bible in John 14:16 and 26—These are the words of Jesus to his disciples.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforter to be with you always, the Holy Spirit." "...the Holy Spirit will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

In the book of Acts, which we were reading on level 1, it mentions the different occasions where the Holy Spirit was speaking on behalf of God to the disciples. Here I point out some verses where this is mentioned.

The Bible in Acts 13:2 NIV tells us:

"As they were participating in the worship of the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart now Barnabas and Saul for me for the work to which I have called you.'"

Here the Holy Spirit gives direct instructions to the church in Antioch to send Paul and Barnabas as missionaries.

Also, in John 16:13 (TLA) Jesus explains to the disciples how the Holy Spirit is going to speak to them.

"When the Holy Spirit comes, he will tell you what the truth is and guide you, so that you may always live in the truth. He will not speak of His own accord, but He will tell you what He hears from God the Father, and He will teach you what is about to happen."

Today the Holy Spirit speaks to us from God. For me this is very exciting. Listen to God's voice through the Holy Spirit.

3. **Through dreams and visions**

God has used dreams and visions as a means of communicating with people. He did this with several characters in the Bible and continues to do so today.

In my case, God has spoken to me on different occasions through dreams and visions.

Dreams are a channel that God has used to convey important messages while people sleep.

The Bible tells us in the book of Matthew 1:20-21 NIV

"...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said to him, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for she has conceived

by the power of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Also, in Matthew 2:13 (NIV) tells us how God speaks to Joseph again through dreams.

When they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to look for the child to kill him."

God can also speak to us through Visions

Visions, unlike dreams, occur when the person is awake. Through visions, God has shown spiritual realities, given instructions, and revealed the future:

Some biblical examples.

- The prophet Isaiah had a vision of the throne of God, where he was called to be a prophet and to proclaim His message to the people of Israel (Isaiah 6).
- Ezekiel had several visions, including the vision of the dry bones, which symbolized the restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 37).
- The apostle Peter had a vision in which God showed him unclean animals and told him to eat them. This vision was a revelation that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles as well, which led to the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10).
- The apostle Paul had several visions, including one in which the Lord called him to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10).
- In the book of Revelation the apostle John received several visions of the end times, judgment, and future glory.

Something very important

Although God can speak through dreams and visions, it is important to have discernment, as not all of them are divine messages. We should pray, compare what we have received with God's Word, and sometimes seek spiritual counsel to correctly interpret what God may be saying.

Finally, God Speaks to Us

4. As he wants

The Bible, in Deuteronomy 10:17 (TLA) tells us:

"He is the sovereign God of all gods, of all kings, and of all nations. His power makes everyone tremble."

Within His sovereignty God can speak to us through people, situations, or circumstances. God looks for a way to communicate with his children, as he wants.

In the book of Numbers, God used a donkey to speak to Balaam.

The Bible says in Numbers 22:28 (KJV)

"Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have scourged me these three times?'"

God speaks to us today through people, situations, or things that happen to us or that happen to others.

One last question

If God wants to always speak to us and if God uses different ways or forms to speak to us, then ***why do I not listen to Him?***

I have two answers for you

1. Because of hardness of heart

The enemy takes advantage of the hardness of our hearts to steal God's word from us. The enemy has deceived many into believing lies about God. The enemy lies when he says that:

God has favorites,
that God only speaks to the super spiritual,
that listening to God is complicated,
that God spoke only in the past,
that you have to go to a specific place to listen to God.
And so many more lies.

Hardness of heart is the best terrain for the enemy. So the softer your heart is, the more you're going to hear God's voice.

The Bible says in Hebrews 3:7-8. RVR60

"If you will hear his voice today, Do not harden your hearts."

2, Because I'm far from God

We get so far away from God that we don't listen to Him anymore.
Sins are what keep us from God

Disobedience takes me away from God We are very superficial, and appearance governs us. Look at what the Bible says in James 4:4 and 8 KJV

"Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

- THE HIGHER THE RELATIONSHIP, THE GREATER THE COMMUNICATION
- THE CLOSER I GET THE MORE I LISTEN TO IT
- THE FURTHER I GO, THE LESS I LISTEN TO IT

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

"It is their sins that have separated them from God. Because of those sins, he turned away and will no longer listen to them."

This concludes this lesson 4 of the second level of discipleship.

We hope that all this information is of great value for your life. Our purpose is that you can have a clearer and expanded vision of each topic we are presenting to you and help you in your growth as a disciple of Christ.

See you in our next Discipleship Level 3 class.