

HEARING (GOD'S VOICE)

SESSION 3 – Listening Principles

One of the big challenges we face when it comes to listening to God:
He often speaks differently than what we want or expect.

Acts 15:1-2, 22-23a, 28¹ - While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved."²Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.

²²Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders— Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas. ²³This is the letter they took with them...

²⁸"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements..."

Questions to help determine God's direction

1. Have I prayed about it?
2. Is it scriptural?

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3. Do I enjoy it?

- **Psalm 37:4** - *Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires.*

4. Does it line up with prophetic words I have had in the past?

5. Do others in my life agree with it?

6. Is it an open door?

7. Do I have peace about it?

When we satisfy some or all of these questions...

"it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and me..."

**If we are truly open to God leading,
He will not allow His direction to be hidden from us.**

Acts 16:6–8 - 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.⁷ 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.⁸ So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

Reflect on your own experience:

1. Did God use it even though it went wrong?

2. Would you have been willing to listen if God had warned you in the methods mentioned earlier?

Hindrances to Hearing

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-22 - *He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:*

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!

¹⁸“Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: ¹⁹The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. ²⁰The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. ²²The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.

HARDNESS

(Matthew 13:19) The sower sowed seed, some fell on the path.

SHALLOWNESS

(Matthew 13:20–21) Some seed fell on shallow ground.

- It sprang up quickly, but it withered in the heat. A shallow spirit, a response to God that has little depth.



THORNINESS

(Matthew 13:23) Some seed fell on thorny ground and the thorns choked it.

- Luke 21:34 – *Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware.*

PRIDE

Pride keeps us from hearing from God.

PREJUDICE

At times Jesus speaks through instruments that we don't like.

- John 1:45–46 – *Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"*

LACK OF DISCIPLINE

Sometimes we are undisciplined in our hearing.

Three ways we sense God's voice

- "Seer"
- "Hearer"
- "Knower / feeler"

ACTIVATION EXERCISE

Pray, and then ask open-ended questions.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the user to write their prayer and open-ended questions.