

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



To Whom Are You Listening?

KEY PASSAGES: John 14:26; 16:13 | Hebrews 1:1-2 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:13

SUMMARY

In the midst of our electronic generation of instant communication, information, and entertainment, is anyone listening to God?

He wants to communicate with us and has been speaking ever since creation. In the Old Testament, He spoke through prophets. In the New Testament, through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). He continues communicating now through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The issue is not whether God is speaking, but if we are listening.

SERMON POINTS

Our ears are tuned to whatever holds our hearts and minds.

If this world is our main focus, we'll hear its messages. However, if our hearts are set on Christ, we'll take time to quietly listen for His guidance and instruction. But many people have never learned to discern His voice.

What are the primary reasons people don't listen to God?

- **They don't have a relationship with Him.** Although the Lord calls everyone to salvation, those who reject His offer will find that they cannot hear His voice.
- **Many people don't expect the Lord to speak to them.** But this would be inconsistent with His character since He desires to guide His children throughout their lives.
- **The messages of the world drown out God's voice.** Instead of being concerned about the things of this world, believers should seek to know what is going on in God's mind and what He wants to do in their lives each day.
- **They don't think He has ever spoken to them.** Therefore, they don't believe He ever will speak clearly to them.
- **Their minds are closed to His voice.** They no longer listen to hear Him speak.
- **People are too busy.** If Christians don't spend time with the Lord, their ears won't be tuned to hear His voice.
- **They may fear the message.** Sometimes believers don't want to hear what the Lord has to say because He may ask them to do something they don't particularly want to do.
- **A poor self-image causes them to doubt that God would speak to them.** Those who struggle with self-esteem issues don't realize how precious they are in God's eyes and how much He desires to communicate with them.
- **Sometimes people are angry with the Lord.** They don't understand why He has allowed hardship and pain in their lives, and in anger, have closed their ears to His voice.
- **They have neglected reading and meditating on the Bible.** Ignoring the Scriptures increases worldly thinking while decreasing a desire to hear from the Lord through His Word.
- **Some people have a rebellious spirit.** They try to satisfy the emptiness in their souls with the pleasures of sin rather than God.
- **They are deceived by the sounds of the world.** They have so tuned their minds and hearts to what the world offers that they have no interest in hearing from the Lord.
- **Sin has prevented them from hearing God.** Anytime believers harbor sin in their lives, it blocks their spiritual ears.

How can we identify God's voice?

When we can't discern whether we're hearing from the Lord or from our own minds, look for these marks of distinction:

- **His voice will be consistent with His Word.** Whatever He speaks in our hearts must match what He has spoken on the printed page.
- **His message will often conflict with human nature.** Sometimes the Lord may require of us something that seems beyond our abilities. But, He is faithful to enable us.
- **It will always clash with fleshly ideas.** God never leads us into activities or relationships that contradict His Word.
- **The Lord challenges our faith.** Because He wants us to grow in faith, God sometimes calls us to face our fears and trust Him more.
- **His voice is often quiet.** Instead of answering our prayers in dramatic ways, the Lord often speaks to our hearts quietly and unexpectedly in the normal course of the day.
- **He speaks specifically.** The Lord loves us so much, He wants us to know exactly what He's saying.

Why do we need to listen to the Lord?

He'll guide us and provide what we truly need:

- **To make decisions.** Because God is interested in every aspect of our lives, He wants to guide each choice we make.
- **To be encouraged.** No one can encourage our hearts like the Lord, but we have to listen to Him, or we'll miss it.
- **To receive comfort.** Sometimes we just need to be reminded that He loves us unconditionally and is always ready to help us through difficult circumstances.
- **To be strengthened.** Whenever we need the will, determination, and confidence to keep going, God can strengthen us.
- **To know the Father's will.** When we're seeking to understand His will, we must stop talking and

listen to hear His voice.

- **To receive God's best.** The Lord always does what's best when we heed His instructions.
- **To have assurance of salvation.** The only way to silence doubts is to listen to the Lord. He saved us once for all time and eternity.
- **To benefit from His protection.** When we follow the Lord's guidance and make good choices, He protects us from wrong relationships and activities.

What are the consequences of failing to listen to God?

- The world will draw us away from Him.
- We'll be easily deceived by all the other voices.
- We will make costly decisions based on human reasoning rather than divine guidance.
- We'll make choices that appeal to the flesh.
- Our decisions could cause us to forfeit God's best and all that He wants us to have.
- We'll miss out on the will of God for our lives and suffer consequences that could affect us for years.
- Wrong decisions hurt families. Everyone suffers when one member refuses to follow the Lord's guidance.
- There will be eternal consequences. For unbelievers, their eternal destiny is at stake. But Christians who ignore God's voice will lose heavenly rewards.

RESPONSE

- Are you listening to the Lord and walking obediently before Him every day? If not, how can you implement a daily strategy--beginning today--to purposefully listen to God? How can your friends, family, and church be of assistance to you in your endeavor? Walking with Him is the only way to reap the greatest harvest in life now and receive eternal rewards hereafter.

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