



## SPIRIT – RECOGNISING HIS VOICE

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### Introduction

**We are on our journey in our series Church Alive. We're trusting that each one of us will be awakened in our God-given gifts and callings in a fresh way and begin to serve one another and make a difference in our city.**

We have examined the topics of Identity and the church as a Body and are now learning about the indwelling Holy Spirit, how He speaks to us and how to hear His voice. Today we will look at **how to hear and recognise God's voice.**

### Recognising His Voice

**The Christian's privilege** is hearing from God. It is part of our inheritance that you can either ignore or take hold of.

- I am His child: this relationship opens up a new world/communication
- God is always speaking (Hebrews 1:1-4)
- My receiver is not always tuned in

(Illustration: God is sending signals your way all the time; my decoder is not always set on the right channel)

The absolute foundation for hearing His voice is your intimate relationship with Jesus.

**Conversation / communication is key in every relationship. (We don't want or need answers like the 'bot' on a help function on a website. 'Please just hurry up and tell me what I need to know!') He desires us to walk closely and stay connected.**

He is the Shepherd; the sheep hear His voice. See the verses below, the way the Shepherd engages with His sheep

John 10:1-4; 14-16 NKJV

*<sup>1</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."*

*<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*

## 1. Positioning ourselves to hear:

- Asking / enquiring of the Lord:  
(We must pause to ask for direction)
- Yielding: Surrendering my will to His will  
(Otherwise, what's the point of listening?)
- Patience: Surrendering my time and my timing to Him  
(Taking time out with God; giving Him my ear)
- Quietness: Shutting down all the other noise  
(Busy/stressed/rush: finding a place of peace and rest)
- Goodness: Being convinced that His way is better!  
(I will see His goodness when I pursue His plan; even sacrifice leads to blessing; He knows what's best for me)

All these five aspects are seen when Jesus prays in Gethsemane.

These 5 approaches are relevant for the big decisions and the day to day stuff – if we want to be hearing God's voice.

## 2. How does God speak: (a quick recap from last week)

- Through Scripture (reading and highlighting)
- Through teachers whose source is the Bible
- Through difficulties (circumstances; affliction; persecution; tough times; He gets His people's attention)
- Through the Holy Spirit within (today's focus)
- Through the Holy Spirit's gifts (we will explore this further later in the year)
- Through His creation
- Through whatever and whomever He chooses (but never in disagreement with the Bible)
- That would include through dreams and visions and even an audible voice

## 3. Recognising communication from the Holy Spirit within

(His inner voice)

### Romans 8:9-16

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. <sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Holy Spirit is within and He wants to lead us! Why is it so hard?

3.1. There are three possible voices within: God's, the devil's and mine

What does God speak?

- Edification; comfort; instruction; love; healing; life-giving words; strength; correction; encouragement

What does Satan speak? (into your mind)

- Accusation; lies; rivalry; destruction; condemnation; temptation; murder; death; robbery

What do my thoughts sound like?

- Analytical; cognitive; thought out; reasoned out; responding to my surroundings

Exercise: *The shepherd sitting at a tree, calling his sheep by name. What is He saying to you?*

So, what does the inner voice of the Holy Spirit sound like?

- Often His voice is sensed as a spontaneous thought, idea, word, feeling, or vision.
- It is a thought, but not one that is the product of my thought processes.
- It has a different source. The source is my spirit, not my mind, because I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

3.2 **Recognising God's spontaneous thoughts within (thoughts that are actually the Holy Spirit's voice within us):**

Holy Spirit is a communicator: Jesus taught us this in John 16.

John 16:12-15 NKJV

<sup>12</sup> "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

What will Holy Spirit do? (Guide / speak / tell / declare)

Characteristics of God's thoughts that will help us recognise His voice within more easily:

- i. They are like our own thoughts
- ii. **God's voice is often light and gentle** – and easily cut off by our own thoughts
- iii. God often speaks in the first person (He speaks for Himself)
- iv. **God's voice often has unusual content (somewhat different to our own thoughts)**
- v. **God's voice often causes a spiritual reaction within us (witnesses with our spirit: joy, peace, excitement)**
- vi. **God's spoken word carries with it** the strength to carry out what He says (faith; boldness; strength; courage). This is imparted as we receive His word.
- vii. What God says never puts us into bondage
- viii. God normally speaks into our area of responsibility

Distinguishing between our thoughts and God's thoughts is part of our walk with the Holy Spirit that we can develop in - but let's engage, let's go for it, let's learn, let's discern. Let's press in right now:

#### 4. Practical steps

- Exercise: **Close your eyes. Let's ask him to show you someone who you can encourage** (it might be someone you know, it might just be a face or a picture); let's focus on that specific person.

Let's ask Holy Spirit to show you how you can encourage them; what words do they need to hear; do they need an act of kindness perhaps; how will you share those words with them – face to face; text them; phone?

(Capture what you have just received; and action it; don't disregard it as just your own thoughts. Those ideas didn't just come from your cognitive side; let's believe that they were prompted by the Holy Spirit.) Let's become aware of those thoughts that just 'alight' on our minds and seem to come from nowhere; acknowledge that the Holy Spirit could just be speaking to you.

- Develop this aspect of our walk with Holy Spirit
- Engage, learn, practice, discern (Hebrews 5:14 – develop it by use)
- **Don't disregard what you hear**
- Distinguish between your thoughts and His thoughts

We do need to learn to distinguish between our own thoughts and desires and those thoughts that come from the Holy Spirit, but this is a beautiful part of the Christian life and we are so much poorer without His voice.

#### Conclusion:

**Let's keep on developing our friendship with God** - and our conversation with Him as two way communication. Fix your receiver; get your decoder on the right channel; God is speaking and He has a lot to say to you! Remember what we read in Romans 8: You can be a son or daughter of God who is led by the Spirit of God!

- Keep on developing your relationship with God
- Engage in two-way communication (even in daily prayer)
- Recognise His voice within
- Be a son or daughter of God who is led by the Spirit of God

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#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we position ourselves to hear God's voice?
2. In what ways can God speak to us?
3. Why is it sometimes hard to hear God's voice within us? (*the "three voices"*)
4. What does the inner voice of the Spirit sound like?
5. What are the characteristics that will help us recognise the Holy Spirit's voice within us?