

Hearing God: Are You Listening with Your Heart?

Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Kings 19:11–12; Isaiah 30:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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I am blessed. Being the pastor of this church is a blessing to me. My family is a blessing to me. I'm telling you this because when I'm not listening for God's voice, I miss out on His blessings. So, when I am listening for His voice, I see His blessings.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV) You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah lived in terrible times of national turmoil and godlessness, but he kept seeking God.

We are living in a time when our nation is divided. I don't have to tell you about the division in our nation. It's more than politics; it's also ideology and people are taking it personally. In some cases people are feeling threatened and even being hurt.

As Christians our world today is almost like living in exile. What was once thought to be a Christian nation no longer looks like it. We need to keep seeking God and calling upon others to seek God.

Jeremiah the prophet lived during one of the most turbulent seasons for the city of Jerusalem and his nation. There was a succession of one godless rulers and kings after another. They ignored the Lord. They rejected the Lord God Almighty. They listened to false prophets. They were defeated and carried into exile.

All this time Jeremiah listened to God and shared God's Word. As a result, he was verbally attacked, ridiculed, beaten and even thrown into a pit to die. Jeremiah eventually died for his faith in God. He was a martyr for speaking God's word to people who refused to listen.

Jeremiah kept listening for God's voice. Jeremiah kept following the Lord's commands. Jeremiah spoke the truth he heard from the Lord. When the people of Jerusalem were defeated and taken away to captive in Babylon false prophets kept speaking without hearing from the Lord. They lied to the people. they promised what God had not promised. Jeremiah sent them a letter, words given to him by God. In the letter, the people were told to prepare for a long time in exile. The people needed to settle in the city and to do the right things to prosper. They also needed to seek and to listen to the voice of God.

It's not about personal satisfaction but always seeking our Lord, Jesus Christ. The people in exile wanted their freedom back. They wanted their personal comforts. They wanted to go home. The false prophets kept giving them these promises. Jeremiah's only satisfaction is that He was hearing and sharing God's word. He was filled with sorrow that the people would not listen and follow the Lord.

We live in an era of history of unprecedented sin, rejection of God, and ignorance of God. Today people are not seeking God. They aren't preparing their lives to follow the Lord. They aren't hearing God's voice.

Believers of every age need to listen to God. We need to be ready to follow the Lord. Our listening needs to be with our heart, in all earnestness and all sincerity.

1 Kings 19:11–13 (NIV) *The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.”*

Elijah lived in godless times when evil ruled the nation, but he waited to hear God’s voice. The evil Queen Jezebel and her fearful husband King Ahab terrorized God’s messenger. Elijah listened to the Lord and spoke against the king and queen. They were idol worshippers, filling the minds and hearts of the people with their false gods. They attacked every person who spoke against them. They had many people killed for speaking God’s word. More than once they threatened to kill Elijah.

But, Elijah listened for God’s voice and followed the Lord. He gathered together all the priests of the false gods. He challenged them to make a sacrifice to their gods. When their gods could not light a fire under the animal sacrifices, Elijah did as the Lord commanded. He prepared an animal sacrifice then had it drenched in water. When Elijah called out to the Lord, fire from heaven and consumed both sacrifices.

Now instead of rejoicing, Elijah ran away in fear of what Queen Jezebel might do to him. While he ran God kept speaking to him. When Elijah found a place to hide God kept speaking to him. The mistake we make is the same one Elijah made while listening. He thought God would speak in the wind or earthquake, but God was speaking in the small voice.

Like Elijah, we might miss God’s voice speaking to us. God doesn’t always speak in large, loud, dramatic ways. God most often speaks in quiet and simple ways. His voice can be a whisper. He can say one word or a thousand words. Elijah teaches us to listen when we are triumphant or when we’re frightened. Keep listening, God is talking. Keep listening, keep following.

The loudest, most destructive voices may be trying to drown out God’s voice. If God is speaking quietly to His followers, it’s easy for the other noises, especially louder ones to block His voice. It is no accident when the loudest voice gets heard. It is intentional for loud noises to enter our lives and distract us. The devil doesn’t want us to hear God. The devil is trying to keep us from following the Lord.

We need to be listening for God’s voice in the chaos. We need to hear God’s voice among all the other voices. We need to be tuned into God’s voice as the volume of the other voices gets louder.

Isaiah 30:21 (NIV) *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

Isaiah lived in godless times, was killed for his faith, but when he heard God’s voice he followed. Opinions come from every direction, but when we are listening God’s voice will overcome them all. Isaiah spoke God’s word at a time when Jerusalem’s leaders were seeking advice, but not from God. After speaking about the weaknesses of others and their coming destruction, Isaiah shared what God would do.

Eventually, these kings in Jerusalem had Isaiah killed. This sounds like a reason to be silent when God speaks. Many times we ignore God’s voice. Many times we listen to the noise all around us. Many times we only want to hear what will make us feel good.

Sinners and the saved alike in ignoring God's voice so we can hear what we want. This is desparate and foolish. An attitude like this only draws us further away from the Lord. Everyday we need to be closer to the Lord. With each passing moment we need to be near Jesus.

I've been guilty of listening to the noise instead of listening to God. Everyone has blocked out God's voice and listened to the foolishness. I'm not talking about major issues, but about the small stuff, the common daily stuff. Our reason for not hearing God's voice is our willingness to hear what pleases our bodies. Are cookies speaking louder than the Lord? Does fear talk louder than Jesus? Is being in control a stronger voice than God's?

Somewhere in your physical desires is a voice that is blocking out God's voice. Somehow we've decided that voice is more important than Jesus' voice. If we are listening to the foolishness, then we aren't following God. In those moments we become foolish.

Recently I almost fell for a scam. Had I not been listening to God, who spoke through my wife, I would have lost us almost \$10,000. It was all because I wanted to hear what the scammer was saying. Red flags were flying and lights were going off all around me. But, I kept listening to the foolishness, and not to Jesus.

Listening and following God's voice leads to peace and strength to live your life glorifying God. Something great happens when we listen and follow God's voice. He drowns out all the noise. His voice pierces through the lies and distractions. The deception and chaos is exposed as foolishness.

We know the truth that God is speaking. It rings true in our minds and in our spirits. Our very souls come alive, renewed and refreshed. When we listen and follow God's voice there is peace. God is not the God of deception, but the God of Truth. Though God's truth may trouble our human desires when we first hear it, God's voice sets our hearts at peace. When we listen to God's voice, acknowledging God's voice we are empowered. All the other voices may tell us we're wrong and we're weak. God's voice makes us strong. God's voice empowers us to overcome. God's voice gives us the strength to faithfully endure as His follower.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV) Pray continually.

The apostle Paul tells us to be in a constant state of prayer. This church is where Paul was persecuted and the first believers were at the hands of a mob. It is no wonder that he told them to pray continually. There are no mobs pounding on the doors of this building. The crowds aren't gathering around our homes to drag us into the streets. But we need to keep praying.

Remember your prayer life is talking to God and listening for His voice. Quick prayers are heard by Jesus. The Holy Spirit understands when we can't pray. Our Father in heaven wants more in our relationship with Him.

Think about your relationship with Jesus. Are you talking to Him only when you want something? Are you paying attention only when it's what you want to hear?

Jesus wants to you hear how to follow Him everyday. Jesus is speaking to you about what do when your'e alone. Jesus is telling you how to live when you're at work. Jesus is leading you in every converstation.

It's hard for me and I know that it is hard for you to hear Jesus. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elijah were just like each one of us. We think they were great men of faith because they shared prophecies. God looked at them just like He looks at us. God said important things to them, He is saying important things to you.

You may not be called to be a prophet. You may not every have to stand before the leaders of our nation or community and proclaim God's word.

Jesus is speaking to you. He is telling you how to live your life. His voice may not be loud, but the Holy Spirit is making known to you what God desires.

As we go through our day lets seek to be in a continual converstation with Jesus. Keep talking to Him, but also be ready to listen. Hearing God's voice means praying and trusting in Jesus.

God speaks to everyone. God through His Holy Spirit is calling sinners to repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and calls us to trust the death and resurrection of Jesus to save us from our sins.

Since trust Jesus to be the one who died for our sins, to take away our sins, to give us a new life, let's also trust Jesus to speak to us.

Let's trust our Savior and Lord to lead us upon the right path.

Let's open our ears, our hearts, our souls to be renewed and empowered by His voice.

Let's pay attention in the midst all that happens to hear the voice of God.