

Sermon Notes
Hearing God
Week 7

Hello everyone. This week's sermon notes will be pretty simple. I'm including a segment of Dr. Wanda Walborn's book called *Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get Close To God?* The portion that I'm including is called → *Nine Scriptural Tests For Hearing God's Voice*. I find that this is incredibly helpful in helping us to learn what God's voice says and what He would never say. This has been a huge help for me since Wanda has been one of the most influential leaders in my spiritual life. These tests are Biblically based and they work 100% of the time. I am including this so that you can read them and then infuse them into your normal everyday pursuit of God's voice. Enjoy!

Nine Scriptural Tests for Hearing God's Voice

These nine tests from the Bible help us determine if what we are hearing is from God.

Strength, Encouragement, Comfort

The first test asks the question, does the word we hear strengthen, encourage, and comfort us as I Corinthians 14:3 directs? Even a difficult word will accomplish these three things. Hearing we need to cut off a toxic relationship that impedes our relationship with God is the Lord. We know deep down that the relationship is not healthy, but we've conveniently ignored all signs and stayed in it. The Lord has now made it clear to us that we need to cut off the relationship, and we are strengthened, encouraged, and comforted to know that God will be with us as we walk it out.

Agreement with Scripture

The second test asks the question, is the word we hear in agreement with Scripture? "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2nd Timothy. 3:16a). The Scripture is a primary way in which God speaks, so anything outside it must align the word of God. This does not mean that every word can have a chapter and verse to back it, but the ways of God are also seen throughout Scripture so there is understanding and guidance of God through the overarching themes of Scripture. God will not tell a person to do something that is opposed to His written Word, because God doesn't contradict Himself.

Exalt Jesus

The third test for God's voice is does this word exalt Jesus? In John 16:14, Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit when He says, "14 He (The Holy Spirit) will glorify me (Jesus), for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Jesus goes on to say that "all that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you" (John 16:15). The purpose of relationship with God is to hear his words-words are from the Holy Spirit to exalt Jesus for the glory of the Father. Revelation 19:10 reads, "For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus."

Good Fruit

The fourth test is, does the word have good fruit? We will never know the outcome until we act on what we hear. It isn't enough just to hear it. Hearing and obedience go hand in hand. It takes trust that what you are hearing is from God. Then it takes faith to apply that to your own life or speak it out to someone else. Luke 11:11-13 reads, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" God is not going to give us something to hurt us, so we can trust Him in the process. We must learn what God sounds like, and one of the ways we can tell it is Him is by the fruit that is produced. Is it good fruit or bad fruit? Does a person feel loved by God, or do they feel judged, belittled, criticized, or hopeless?

Accurate Prediction

The fifth scriptural test for God's voice is if the word predicts a future event, does the event happen? Deuteronomy 18:22 reads, "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. It is important that a person is both credible and accurate. 1st Thessalonians 5:19-21 cautions the reader by saying, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good." Not every single word given will be 100 percent accurate 100 percent of the time, because we are fallible human beings; however, that doesn't mean we should throw out all prophecies, quench the Spirit's fire, and despise all words. We need to test everything, so we hold on to the good, ponder what we have heard, and wait for the Lord to reveal more to us so over time, we can piece together what He is saying.

Turns You Toward or Away From God?

The sixth test for hearing God's voice is, are people turned toward God or away from Him? Deuteronomy 13:1-3a reads,

"If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, 'Let us follow other gods' (gods you have not known) 'and let us worship them,' you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer."

The voice of God will draw people to Himself, not to another human being. The apostle Paul extensively charged Timothy in 2nd Timothy 3:1-5 to beware of the following kinds of people:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."

Sometimes the person giving the word is simply immature. It is easy to ignore their word by judging their looks, their age, their experience, and even the delivery of the word itself; however, we need to be careful with this, because sometimes God offends our pride and gives the word to us through someone we don't like or respect. That doesn't mean the word is wrong

and we should reject it. We need to be wise and discerning and align the spoken word with the written words of God. The voice of God draws people to Himself.

Freedom or Bondage?

The seventh test for God's voice is does the word produce freedom or bondage? Paul wrote in Romans 8:14-16,

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

As a son or daughter, we have full rights and privileges of our father's inheritance. All that belongs to God now belongs to us too. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). Paul warns the reader to stand firm and not let yourselves be burdened again. Staying free requires believing the truth about who we are and what we've been given—this is by grace through faith.

Life or Death?

The eight test for God's voice is, does the word produce life or death? The letter of the law produces death because of the impossibility to keep it. It is harsh, judgmental, and critical. The voice of God produces life to those who hear it, giving hope and healing to all who are willing to receive it. Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The works I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life." (John 6:63)

Witness of Holy Spirit

The final test for God's voice is, does the Holy Spirit bear witness that the word is true? Jesus told his disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). This brings assurances to know that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.

General Truths about how God's Voice differs from Satan's Voice

- So how do we know we are hearing God and not the enemy? The voice of our enemy, Satan, is a vague, condemning voice that leads to feeling shame and despair, and produces fear in us. The Bible is clear that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The voice of the enemy is an accusing voice that taunts, harasses, and torments us. The convicting voice of the Holy Spirit is specific, is restorative, leads to repentance, gives hope, and produces love and peace. God's voice provides solutions and freedom. It is important to distinguish these voices, because many people attribute to God the voice of the accuser. That voice is NOT God! The voice of God always shows us the way out of trouble by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Whether sitting alone to listen to God or listening when praying for a friend, faith and action are needed in the process. Humbly receive the word you heard, weigh it against Scripture, and then humbly and lovingly act on what you heard. In this way, you will figure out what the Lord sounds like. God will make himself heard. Wait for Him.

