



Listening to God

(1 Samuel 3:1-21)

How well do you listen to other people? Would you rate yourself as someone who is an excellent listener or someone who still needs to work on this area? What about God? How well do you listen for God's voice? Last Sunday, Pastor Dave Lindner shared with us five keys to listening to God, using 1 Samuel 3:1-21 as his main text.

But why should we listen to God? Does He even want to speak to us? Believe it or not, God does want to speak to us. Pastor Dave's first point was **believe that God wants to speak to you**. The story of salvation in the Scripture points to this. In the beginning, while Creation was still perfect, God spoke with Adam and Eve (e.g., Genesis 2:16-17). He had a relationship with them and even walked among them (Genesis 3:8). But then sin entered Creation and it separated mankind from God. Mankind could no longer fellowship with its Creator. So God introduced the old covenant, where He lived among His people, Israel, in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:22). After this, Jesus, God in human flesh, came into the world (John 1:1), so that Man could have a relationship with God through the new covenant. Then when Jesus left His disciples, He promised them—and us as well—that there would be Someone else who would help, lead, and live within them, the Holy Spirit. In the Book of Revelation, we see a beautiful picture of what God intended for the Garden of Eden, fellowship between God and Man (Revelation 22:1-3). So we know that God wants to have a relationship with us because it is clear in His Word.

We also need to hear from God. Jesus declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, ESV). He compared the words of God to food, which we need in order to live.

Now that we have settled that God wants to speak to us, what is one practical way to do that? We should **find a time and a place for God to speak to us**. In this modern age, our lives can be full of noise and distractions, like Netflix, smartphones, or video games. We must make time to read God's Word, pray, and listen for His voice in our schedules, instead of waiting for free time to come up. If we just go through our day waiting for free time, we will just end up not doing it at all. Do you have a place and time where you intentionally listen for God's voice?

In his third point, Pastor Dave said we should **learn the ways God likes to speak to us**. In our text, God spoke to Samuel with an audible voice. Nowadays God does not do this commonly, but there are still other ways He can speak to us. Ways He can speak to us include circumstances, people, dreams, visions, and, of course, His written Word.

But in this process of listening for God's voice, we must be wary, for not every voice or thought in our mind originates from God. The Devil, who "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14, ESV), can be one voice in our heads. Another major voice is, quite obviously, our own. That is why it is important to **verify what you think God is telling you**, before following through with it. Pastor Dave proposed a trustworthy process we can go through to discern. First, we must ask, "**Does it line up with what the Bible teaches?**" If it contradicts what God has commanded, then it is obviously not from Him. Second, we should ask, "**Do those who are mature in the faith agree that this is God?**" We can ask people who are more spiritually mature than us when we think God is telling us to do something, especially if it involves a major decision in our lives. Ask, thirdly, "**Is it consistent with what God has previously revealed?**" If it contradicts something that you are sure God has told you to do in the past, then it is not from God. Lastly, **put it to the test**. We can ask God to show us if it is really Him who is speaking.

And if it has passed this process, we can proceed to the fifth and final key: **be obedient to what you have heard**. When we listen for God's voice, we must do so with obedience in mind. May Samuel's prayer to the Lord be ours as well: "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10, NIV).

Listening to God (cont'd)

Review (Knowledge)

Please take a few minutes to read the summary above. What are some ways that God “spoke” to people in the Bible?

Sharing/Discussion (Practical Wisdom)

1. In general, how would you rate yourself as a listener? Excellent, average, needing work? Why is it difficult for you to listen to God?
2. Please share a time when God spoke to you in the past. By what means did He do so?
3. Why is it important to verify that what you are hearing is really from God? If you think God is speaking to you about something, who would you share it with to verify that it was God?

Prayer

Is there is anything that God has been speaking to you about that you need prayer for?