

61 - Hearing God/Receiving Power

John 10:22-40

Let's reflect for a moment on our walk with God. When was the last time that you or I did something because we felt God told us to do it, and then He showed up and did some sort of miracle or we would have failed? If the answer is never, or it was so long ago we can't remember, what we're going to talk about today may be challenging to understand, but we have to try, because according to Jesus hearing from God and depending on His power is the normal way every believer is supposed to function. The spiritual world is very real, and we are all capable of functioning at that dimension, but if we haven't been taught how things work, we may be hesitant to act or doubt that what we are sensing is accurate. In our lesson today we will hear Jesus tell us how He walked with God, and then we will hear Him pray that you and I will do the same. And then we'll examine four ways God speaks to us, and nine ways His power helps us.

Three terms, one meaning

On a winter day in Jerusalem, surrounded by members of Israel's highest religious court, Jesus described His walk with the Father using three terms He repeats on several occasions in the gospel of John. He spoke of the "works that I do in the Father's name" (v25); He spoke of being "one" with the Father (v30); and He said the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (v38). I believe these three terms are three ways of saying the same thing. All three describe His relationship with God the Father. Everything He did, He did in the Father's name; He and the Father worked together as one; and this was possible because the Father was "in Jesus" guiding, revealing and empowering Him, and Jesus was "in the Father" representing Him, expressing His character, submitting to His will, and depending on His power. By observing Jesus people could see what the Father was doing or saying in that particular situation. Like a glove over a hand, He perfectly expressed the Father's will. The Son submitted to and obeyed the Father's guidance so completely that to see one was to see the other.

One

• DBS (Sunday, Monday)

Jesus' prayer

This unity between the Father and the Son is a beautiful truth, and we might be tempted to admire it from a distance, assuming that it is a special relationship meant only for the Father and His only begotten Son. But Jesus doesn't let us think that for long. Time and again He said to His followers that because of His cross and resurrection we would be given the opportunity to have this same relationship, only our relationship would be with the Father and Jesus. In a prayer He prayed in the upper room just before He was arrested, Jesus specifically asked the Father to give us the same relationship that He had, but in His request He included Himself. Now our relationship would be with the Father and Jesus. Listen:

"I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are" (Jn 17:11).

"I do not ask on behalf of these (eleven disciples in the upper room) alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me (the Holy Spirit) I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one. I in them and You in Me that they may be perfected in unity" (Jn 17:20-23).

In this prayer Jesus used the same three terms He used in His dialogue with the religious leaders that we just read (Jn 10:22-39). He prayed that we would remain in the Father's name, that we would be "one," and that we would be "in" the Father and the Son, just as He had been "in" the Father. In other words, He prayed that you and I would have a relationship with God exactly like the one that He had. But for His prayer to be answered you and I have to learn two basic spiritual skills: First we have to learn how God communicates with us. For us to walk with God like Jesus walked, we have to be able to recognize His guidance. And second, we have to learn how to let the power of the Holy Spirit work in and through us. He's calling us to live in the realm of miracles. But it all starts with hearing from God, so let's ask: How does God communicate with us?



LIFE LESSONS

WITH DR. STEVE SCHELL

Teaching the Bible
practically & understandably
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the truth of the Gospel

The four Vs

Believe it or not, the problem isn't that we need to get God to start communicating with us; He already is. He has been since we were born. You and I don't become spiritual when we give our life to Jesus; we have always been spiritual. God created all humans "in His image" which means we're spiritual beings. When we give our life to Jesus the barrier between us and God is removed, and because we now want to obey Him, our relationship with Him changes. But our spiritual capacities have always been there. Here are four ways God communicates with us:

- 1) Verbal: This form of communication is in words. We hear God say something to us, but very seldom do we hear His voice with our physical ears. Our spirit can hear things said in the spirit, so we know what we heard, but we can't tell you how we heard it. The problem in this area arises because we can hear other voices besides God's. Sometimes what we might think is God's voice is actually coming from our own mind, or on occasion there may be doubts or horrible thoughts that seem to be inserted in our minds by a demonic source. Learning to distinguish which is which, and to ignore or silence one while listening carefully to another, is a very important way we mature as believers.
- 2) Visual: This form of communication is in pictures which we see in our mind or dream in our dreams. We might become aware that we are watching ourselves do something in a visual image, much like a day dream. Sometimes we may see the same image more than once. But those images, just like words, must be tested to see if God is truly the Source. Again there may be self-generated images or ones that have been placed in our minds by the enemy. On occasion God might show us a picture that contains a symbol (a tree, rainstorm, darkness, color, animals, the glory of the Holy Spirit, etc.) that we do not understand when we first receive it. We must prayerfully seek God for the interpretation or seek help from others.
- 3) Visceral (viscera are the organs in your body cavity). This form of communication is in feelings. There are times the Holy Spirit touches our emotions to tell us something. For no apparent reason we might feel alarm and realize we are in danger, or a great peace or boldness might sweep over us during a great trial. In some of our weakest and darkest moments we may suddenly be immersed in His love; we may start to grieve while talking to someone or feel joy. Just like words or pictures, emotions can have human or demonic sources, so they too need to be tested, but some of them are sent by God. He's trying to tell us something.
- 4) Verseral (as in "verses" of the Bible). This form of communication is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing to mind certain statements from the Bible. It is one of God's most common and effective forms of communication. In the midst of a trial, when we're feeling overwhelmed, suddenly a promise from Scripture bursts into our thoughts though we weren't thinking about Scripture at all. Or a verse that warns us not to do what we are about to do shouts at us and commands us to stop. In a lonely moment we remember Jesus' promise that He will never leave us; in a desperate moment we remember His pledge to protect us. This is also one of the most accurate forms of spiritual communication because unless we are twisting the intended meaning of a verse, and that does happen, we can be certain that the statement is accurate because it is from God's Word.

The gifts of the Spirit

Knowing what God wants us to do in a particular situation is not enough. We must be able to draw on His divine power to help us, or we will fail. In a letter to the Corinthian church, Paul listed nine ways in which God helps us. Of course he could have listed more ways than nine, but these describe the most foundational ways God's power is given to us. Let's review them briefly:

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom (we know the solution to a problem), and to another the word of knowledge (God tells us something we didn't discover through natural means) according to the same Spirit, to another faith (the inner assurance that our request has been heard and will be answered) by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings (physical disease is instantly gone or begins to recede) by the one Spirit, and to another effecting of miracles (God does a wonder that can't be explained by natural forces), and to another prophecy (a person speaks what they hear God say), and to another the distinguishing of spirits (recognizing the true source of some word or event whether it is from God, the flesh or the devil), to another various kinds of tongues (letting the Holy Spirit speak through us in a language we don't understand), and to another the interpretation of tongues (understanding what a person is saying when he or she is speaking in tongues)" (1Co 12:7-10).

Other than speaking in tongues or the interpretation of tongues, Jesus expressed every one of those gifts at one time or another, and Paul is telling us that now that the Holy Spirit has been given to us, we can expect all of them to be at work in our lives.



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A step of faith

Once we discover how God communicates with us and learn to recognize the ways in which His Spirit helps us, there is still a barrier that all of us must overcome before we can enter into a relationship with God like Jesus had. Once we perceive God's will, there is nearly always an uncomfortable step of faith that must be taken. We have to do something or say something before we see the Holy Spirit step in and perform a miracle. That first step never really becomes easy because God is constantly asking us to do something impossible unless He performs a miracle. Yet gradually, over time, as we do what He tells us to do, and the Holy Spirit shows up our confidence builds. We become capable of taking larger steps.

The question you and I have to answer today isn't "can we do this?" We can! The Father gladly answered His Son's prayer. The question you and I face is "will we seek God's guidance and then take that step of faith?" If we do, another part of Jesus' prayer will be answered:

“, so that the world may know that You (Father) sent Me, and loved them as You have loved Me” (Jn 17:23).

Questions

- 1) Name a time when you did or said something because God told you to do it or say it. Did the Holy Spirit show up?
- 2) Review the Four Vs. Pick one and tell us how God spoke to you through that V.
- 3) Have you experienced one or more of the nine “gifts of the Spirit”? Pick one and describe what happened.