

Paradise Lost and Restored: Hearing God's Voice (Part 2)

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I. Introduction

When you were in high school, did you know what you were going to do with the rest of your life? When you were twenty-something and struggling to figure out what you were supposed to do with your life, wouldn't it have been awesome if someone told you exactly what you were meant to do? Maybe you're 40, 50, 60, or 70, and you're still unsure of what you're supposed to do. What if you could ask God and He actually answered you?

II. Does God Speak to Us Constantly, if so, How Can We Tell?

When does God want to talk with us? One of the dangers of hearing God's voice is thinking that every little thing that happens in our lives is somehow God communicating with us. Does God speak to us constantly? To answer this we need to see God as He is, a Parent. When do parents want to talk with their children and when do they want their children talking with them? Isn't the answer, "Always"? That is, from the moment a baby is born to the time they graduate from university to the time they get married and have their own children and beyond, don't parents always want communication with their children? And don't parents also want their children to communicate with them, especially during their most challenging moments?

So it is with God, He's often trying to get our attention. Why? Because He's a Loving Father. He always wants the best for us. And since He knows the answer to every problem and knows that our lives will be filled with many challenging moments, He's always ready with a word of encouragement, comfort, love, wisdom, and hope. He wants to laugh with us, cry with us, celebrate with us, and especially fight with us. That is, He knows that the enemy is always after us, ready to steal from us what He's given us, John 10:10; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8. So He's always ready to advise us on how best to defeat him. Basically He wants things for us here on earth to be as they are in heaven, that is, full of love, joy, and, peace, Matthew 6:10; Colossians 3:1-17.

Therefore, God loves to break into our lives when we need to hear His voice the most...

God speaks, *God shows up with a word of encouragement*, Joshua 1:1-9; 5:13-15. Joshua is facing the challenge of his life. He's about to lead over 2,000,000 people into the Promise Land which is filled with fierce armies. So God speaks. He tells Joshua that victory is assured and no one will be able to kill him in battle. Finally, He tells Joshua that the key to this victory is listening to and following God's voice day and night.

God shows up with a word of rebuke, 1 Samuel 15:1-31. Sometimes God, as any good parent, has to rebuke our bad behavior. But even in this, God is loving. Though Saul completely disobeyed Him, once Saul repented, God allowed him back into His presence, 15:30-31.

God shows up with a word of love, 1 John 3. Above all, God loves you. This is the thrust of 1 John. Some read it and think it's about sin, God warning us that if we sin, we're of the Devil and no longer His children, 3:8. But this couldn't be further from the truth. We are and always will be His beloved children, even if we sin, 3:1 (1:9). The reason He speaks of sin is because He wants us to know that His Son died to free us from our sins, 3:5. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil, 3:8. Therefore, that's how we should live, striving to look more and more like Jesus, 3:2-3.

God shows up with a word of correction, Acts 9. Paul wanted to be the greatest religious teacher ever, the Pharisee of Pharisees, Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:3; 23:6; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:4-6. He was partly right. God made him to be a great religious teacher, but not the way he thought, Acts 9:3-22; Galatians 1:15-16.

Applying what we've learned, when it comes to hearing God's voice, it can happen in one of two directions: He will speak to you as He answers a question you asked Him. So, whether you're 7 yrs old and don't know what to do about the bully at school or 80 yrs old and you still don't know why you were born, ask God. Whatever issue, problem, dilemma, challenge, situation you're facing, you can ask God about it. If you don't know what to do about your daughter-in-law, granddaughter, son, friend, boss, stranger, whomever, ask God about it.....and after you ask, listen for His answer.

Or He can speak to you as He answers a question you should have asked but didn't. So if you're stuck and don't know what to do, but you haven't asked God about it, look around you. Has He answered a question you haven't asked, but should have? Do you see anything in the circumstance, relationship, challenge, etc., where God is trying to get your attention in order to tell you what to do next? Anytime you're struggling in life or don't know what to do, God is right there, just like any loving parent, waiting for you to ask Him.

III. Conclusion

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."