

Introduction

I believe a very important message we all need to hear after we have been saved is that God is communicating with us. God speaks to His people and when He speaks we are to recognise His voice. Jesus says in John 10:14, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me."*

- In Bible days, sheep were very valuable. The shepherd would literally live with the sheep day and night. Because of this His sheep became very familiar with His voice. They knew the voice of the shepherd.
- In fact, often the shepherd would carry a lamb under his arms or on his shoulders for days on end.
- It was so important for the sheep to know the shepherds voice because it was a matter of life and death.
- With just a call of his voice the shepherd could call the sheep back from danger or led them to greener pastures.
- At times several shepherds would lead their sheep into town on the same time. All the sheep from all the shepherds would mix and gather in one place.
- How did the shepherd find his own sheep? The sheep knew his voice so he would stand at the gate and call and his sheep would come running.

Jesus is the good shepherd, and it is vital that we learn to recognise His voice as He will warn us of dangerous situations, lead us to greener pastures and in general, take care of us. But it starts with knowing His voice. Each one of us here have been called for a specific purpose.

In John 12 a fascinating event takes place....(27) "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (29) Therefore, the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him. Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake" (John 12:27-30).

The audible voice of the Father came from Heaven while Jesus was speaking to the crowd. The people acknowledged hearing something, but none of them knew what it was. Not only did they fail to realise that it was the voice of God, but it also never occurred to them that this usual event had any meaning for their lives. Verse 30 *"Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake."*

- 1. The people's hardness of heart and/or how they believed God spoke, blocked what was said and who was speaking. It's the same for us....**
2. Some thought it was thunder - an impersonal act of nature.
3. Others thought it might have been an angel - spiritual, but just not for them.

Romans 8:14,16 says *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."* To be led by the spirit we need to know how God speaks.

Hearing God is the essential element of the Christian life. His voice strengthens us, nourishes us, reassures us leads us in the right direction. To hear the voice of God is what I like to call it the ultimate meal. We need natural food to live (keep this body going) but we also need spiritual food. Jesus puts it this way *"Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matt 4:4). Or, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me"* (John 4:34).

In our Christian walk the sooner we learn how to hear and recognise God's voice, the more we position ourselves to do His will on earth. For some, recognising His voice will come quickly and easily and to others, it may take a bit longer.

When we look at this subject, we must understand that God is very creative, and Scripture reveals that He speaks to us in a variety of ways. Job 33:14, *"For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. (15) In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds."*

1. Prophecy
2. Unusual Coincidences - Baguio
3. Angelic Visitations
4. God's audible voice

For time's sake I want to look at, what I believe, are two of the main ones. If I get to share another day, I might look at a few of the others.

Firstly, The Word of God

(16) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105).

Scriptures are the basis for all **"hearing"** from God. While God will not violate His Word, He often violates our understanding of His Word. When Jesus spoke about a Kingdom what did the Jewish leaders think? Natural Kingdom. But Jesus was speaking about a Spiritual Kingdom. He violated their understanding of the Word.

When we speak about the "Word" there are two Greek words that describe Scripture which are translated "word" in the NT; *"logos"* and *"rhema"*.

Logos is often used to speak of the written Word, the Bible, or Jesus, who is the Living Word. *"In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word (logos) was with God, and the Word (logos) was God"* (John 1:1). *"For the word (logos) of God is quick, and powerful"* (Heb 4:12).

Bible reading is the most common way to receive instruction and learning how to recognise His voice. The Psalmist writes, *"Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against you"* (Psalm 119:11).

The Bible is where we find the Kingdom principles for life. They work for anyone who applies

them. If we generous with our finances, God will bless us financially. If we show ourselves friendly, we will have many friends, if I want to be treated well, then I treat others the way I want to be treated. So, the Bible, the logos, tells us how to live our lives.

Rhema - is the freshly spoken word. It's a now word and it carries an aspect of immediacy with it. Often God breaths upon His Word, (logos) and gives life to a verse or passage for "now". How many of you have been reading the Word, (logos) and suddenly a verse jumps out at you? A *Rhema* word is a verse or portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention with application to a current situation or need for direction

- When Jesus told Peter to cast out the fishing nets... (Luke 5:1-7) Verse 5, *"But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your Word (Rhema) I will let down the net.'"* When the angel told Mary that she would have a child, *"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word (Rhema).'"* (Luke 1:38)
- When we get the Rhema word, or God breathes on His Word, it creates faith in our hearts to do what He has called us to do.
- Personal example...cricket, picking up a hitchhiker.

How do we get a rhema word? In the regular course of our daily reading of God's Word (*logos*), we need to **ask God to speak to us through His Word and give us insight into it.** The Holy Spirit can cause certain passages to stand out with significant meaning or application for our lives. These are the *rhema's* of Scripture and should become a part of our daily thoughts and actions.

Secondly, God has a Still, Small Voice

(11) "Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; (12) and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." (1 Kings 19:11-12).

This is a quiet voice or impression of the heart. Probably the most common way that people hear from God. Sometimes you might have heard a Christian say, *"I just felt like I was supposed to do such and such."* Or *"I just had this feeling that you need to hear this."* The still small voice is an impression which will come into your spirit not in your head. In fact, sometimes the impression makes no logical sense.

- Salvation....

At times we confuse God's still small voice with our own inner voice - our own thoughts and ideas.

It takes wisdom and practice to learn to recognise His still small voice from our own thoughts and ideas. **At times we just need to take the risk of getting it wrong to learn what is right.**

In other words, if I believe I have heard from God, I feel to do something or speak to someone, then I do it. If it was the right thing, then I know I have heard from God. If it was the wrong, then I know not what to listen to next time, it was my own inner voice, my thoughts, and ideas. What am I doing? I'm training my senses. By stepping out in faith I'm developing my sensitivity to God's still small voice. I'm learning what is right and what is wrong.

One of the ways we can learn to recognise God's voice is to know what God does NOT do. God is never *"pushy"* or *"forceful."* He will never pressure you. That's the work of the enemy, the devil. Also, having an inner peace is also very important. Isaiah 55:12 says, *"For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace."*

A minister once said, *"You know you have heard from God whenever you have an idea that's better than one you could think up yourself."*

This morning we have looked the importance of hearing God's voice in our lives. Remember, Romans 8:14,16 says *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."* We have looked at how God speaks to us through His Word and in a still small voice. I want to encourage you, as you read the Bible this week be open to receiving a **rhema word** and as you go about you daily activities, be open and responsive to **God's still, small voice. His spirit speaking to your spirit. Let's pray.....**