

Intro: Abt 5 yrs ago in Cuba: Sunday Preach RAIN Not get there on time "I'll call a friend!" 10:30am Music Already

Today we start a new series on how to HEAR and RECOGNIZE the voice of God in your life. One of the things I hear all the time when I am talking with people is, *"I just wish God would speak to me...give me a sign...help me understand what He wants me to do!"*

The Bible tells us that God is always speaking...we just don't know how to hear and recognize His voice, because He often speaks to us at times and in ways we don't expect, ways that we aren't ready for and don't recognize.

Today I want to talk about "How To Hear God" by looking at 2 biblical stories. One from the OT and one NT.

- First let's look at the Elijah, and see how WE try to hear from God and some of the mistakes we make
- Then look at Jesus! As He shows us how to do it right...and live out hearing from God in everyday life.

1. Elijah: The Wrong Model of Hearing God. Listening AFTER we are in trouble! 1 Kings 19:9-13

- The background of Elijah: 900-800BC Or, How We Got Here!
~Elijah is a prophet: Go between, bridging the gap between God and the nation of Israel, Speaking to people
~He is living during the reign of a wicked king and queen: Ahab and Jezebel (EVIL) Cruella on STEROIDS!
~Amazing spiritual show down: Elijah(1)Prophets of Baal (450) Fertility rites/Sacred Prostitution Child Sacrifice
~God shows up, Baal doesn't! Elijah has the false prophets destroyed, That Makes Jezebel furious!
~Jezebel threatens Elijah's life: He RUNS! Not sure why...just faced down 450...She must have been terrifying!
~Runs for 40 days & nights: Country: Desert Mountain.... hides in a cave....and throws an EPIC pity party!

1Kings 19:9-10

3 Things I Want You To See Here About How And When God Speaks

- *God OFTEN Speaks To Us Loudest and Most Recognizably During Times Of FEAR, STRUGGLE, TROUBLE*

~Elijah was terrified: That's why he ran. Vs 3: Afraid: Lit = *"he ran for his life!"*

Vs 10: Out to kill me! *"They want to take my life!"*

~In a panic We don't know if Elijah ever even stopped to ASK God if he should leave...or if he just ran! Most of us react that way when we are afraid. First we REACT...then we go back and ask God...Did I do that right?

~ He was desperate to GET AWAY...FAR FAR AWAY He goes to the desert...not just the desert...but 40 days into the desert...Into another COUNTRY! Judah vs Israel...Then Mountain...Then Cave! HIDING

TRUTH TO HOLD ON TO: God speaks loudest during trouble. We are focused: Open Then we can think THEN WE CAN HEAR GOD, In the moment, We can't...or don't listen But after...we see what is important! From everything we can see, Elijah never stopped to ask God what to do BEFORE HE RAN...JUST RAN

- *God Often Speaks To Us Loudest And Most Recognizably When We Are ALONE!*

~Vs 3 *Left his servant at the edge of the desert...kept on running!*

~Vs 6-7 *angel comes gives him food:* Evidently he doesn't like that...so he runs some more!

~Elijah was alone...He made sure of it! He ran as far and as fast and as alone as he could get!

Illus: Have you ever been in a place where you just want to get in bed, pull covers over head...and hide?

That's where Elijah is! He doesn't want anyone to know where he is, how to find him or talk to him.

~What he didn't take into account is that you can never run so far that God can't find you:

Psalmist: 139:7-12 *"Where can I go from your Spirit, where can I flee from your presence!"*

Jonah *God said go to Ninevah; Jonah ran the opposite direction...found him...one way ticket back!*

~Just like us...Elijah was probably trying to run away...even from God: Simply isn't possible: God finds/speaks

TRUTH TO HOLD ON TO: When we get alone with God...we can Hear Him better! Problem for most of us is, we NEVER do that! When we get in trouble we run...but often we run TO people...to collect advice, get input to see what everyone around us has to say. Nothing wrong with good counselors...GOOD... but ultimately We need to hear from God in those times...and we need to hear HIS VOICE! He speaks to us one on one best

- *God Speaks To Us Loudest and Most Recognizably During Times of QUIET!*

Vs 11: Go stand on the mountain: I have something I want to say to you Elijah
~Notice: He's already TALKING...but God is making a point...here...for Elijah...and for us
~Sends A Great and Powerful Wind: Earthquake: Fire (Fire is LOUD!)

~Finally there is a soft, gently Whisper: God was in the WHISPER: He is teaching us...listen to me in the QUIET
Even our world knows that: Meditation; Isolation Tanks; We all know the value...just don't do it! BOAT

~I have been saying for YEARS: If God STILL speaking in a whisper...MOST will never hear Him...NEVER QUIET
Our lives are full of chaos and noise, IPOD and busyness. When we do find quiet...we have to fill it w sound
TRUTH TO LIVE BY: If you want to hear from God...go find a quiet place...listen there! Psalm 23: Still Waters

SO THAT IS OUR MODEL: God speaks: Through STRUGGLE....Through Being ALONE....Through QUIET!
Now I Want you to see this LIVED OUT Through the Life Of Jesus at Easter...It will all fall in place
ELIJAH LEARNED THIS THE HARD WAY...JESUS LIVED IT OUT FOR US TO SEE HOW TO DO IT RIGHT!

2. Jesus Spent Time With God BEFORE Times of Trouble! He PREPARED BEFORE trouble came!

The last week of Jesus life was a non-stop time of trials and trouble. Deserted by His friends, falsely accused by His enemies, illegally tried and unfairly convicted, beaten, scourged; slapped, spit upon, cursed, crucified, mocked: NOISY

But, Jesus didn't wait until there was trouble...Jesus PREPARED Himself for the trouble He knew was coming!
There is an important lesson for us in this. Most of us seek God AFTER we have a problem...Jesus lived spiritually ready
Luke 5:16 *"Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray!"* HE LIVED READY! HE knew life is hard...ready for it!

- When Passion Week starts: We find Jesus talking with God Finishes the LAST SUPPER intimate time disciples
Mt 26:36 Across the Valley of Kidron (Small mountain!) Garden of Gethsemane... Praying! Getting ready
When they came to arrest Jesus...He was in the Garden...Preparing His heart for what was to come! USUAL
- When Jesus walked that last week...He walked it ALONE: From time of Prayer to the Crucifixion: Alone
~Gethsemane: Left the 9then the Other 3...stepped away...and they all fell asleep! 3X
~When arrested Jesus, His disciples deserted Him, when Peter was identified, He denied knowing Him
~When on trial no one spoke up: Where were all those who received the miracles? Blind, Lame, Demonized?
Where were the thousands that were fed, the hundreds that were healed...the ones raised from the dead?
~When He was crucified...he was alone there on the cross...even the criminals cursed him...except one...wanted
~When He breathed His last...He did it alone...Crying Out...*"MY GOD MY GOD WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKE ME"*
Because of my sin...and yours...He died alone...paying the price of sin...Father turning face away from our sin!
- When Jesus once again heard the voice of God...He heard it in a QUIET place...in the tomb!
~All of that week was loud....chaotic...noisy, Crowds calling out Crucify Him, Criminals cursing Him, Soldiers and people Mocking Him, Nails being driven in hands and feet ringing out, False witnesses testifying, Soldiers laughing, dice rattling, and when He died the sun darkened, earth shook, ground split, the tombs broke open, veil in temple tore from top to bottom. It was a nightmare. *Last noise we hear in Bible is the sound of stone being rolled over the entrance to the tomb...grinding...then thudding into place...and it is over.*

~Then...only then...was it quiet. It was deathly quiet....quiet as...a tomb. From Friday night til Sunday am
(*I have been there: Even today it is quiet Crowd of hundreds...enter...people speak in whispers..(IT IS EMPTY)*)
~And it stays that way...Quiet: All Friday night...all day Saturday...Until Sunday morning...next sound recorded is earthquake...rolling away the stone...It's not the sound of the resurrection...just showing resurrection done

HERE IS TRUTH FOR YOU TO HOLD ON TO: EVERY OTHER EVENT THAT WEEK NOISY! NOT THE RESURRECTION
When God spoke to the dead body of Jesus in the quiet tomb, raised Him back to life...No Noise...No Wind..no Fire, no Earthquake. Scripture is ABSOLUTELY SILENT: NO RECORD OF WHAT HAPPENED:

The Father must have spoken in a whisper...because no one KNEW IT HAPPENED!
Scripture is absolutely silent about it: Here is what we know: over 25 X in Bible: Statement: God raised Him
NOT ONCE do we ever see anything that gives us visibility...The Resurrection happened in QUIET!

God's most profound work is almost always done in quiet!

CONCL: God still speaks that way today:

He speaks QUIETLY...HE speaks when we are ALONE...Speaks To our STRUGGLE

The challenge we face isn't that God is not speaking...it's that we aren't listening, We don't put ourselves in a place where we can hear Him.

Maybe you are in a place today where you NEED to hear God speaking to you...giving you direction and guidance

Maybe you are in one of those tough times...and you need to hear from Him...HE's speaking...

Maybe...you want to be like Jesus...and get ready BEFORE trouble comes!

Get alone with Him...And Get Quiet...And listen: As David said in 23rd Psalm...*He leads me beside still waters...restores*

Some of you know I spent two years learning how to help people do EXACTLY that! I trained at one of, if not the best program in country to be certified as a Spiritual Director. (*Think hunting or fishing guide: Doesn't do it...helps you*)

One of the most significant skill sets we trained on is recognizing the voice of God...and helping others do the same.

Let me make an offer to you this morning. I'm going to start a small group in the next couple of weeks designed to help you learn how to hear God. Wednesday nights for an hour This is a group for EVERYONE...maybe this is your first day EVER in church...and you came hoping God would speak to you. This is the group for you. I can help you learn how hear Him...and recognize His voice

Maybe you have been a follower for years...even decades...and you need to learn how to hear Him better...you will fit right in. Here is what I want you to do. Open the church app...connect card...take the handout and sign up

Riva Link Box or Welcome Tent

Say...I want to be in the group. If you don't have the app...get it...or just stop by the welcome tents and give them your name and email...I'll be in touch this week. I'm starting that group on Wed nights in a couple weeks. Love to have you come. Don't need any background...Maybe this is your FIRST time ever in church...no problem.

I remember the very first time I heard God. I was 17, talking with men that were helping me discover how to know God and hear from Him. Told them, I just need God to tell me what church...denomination I need to go to! I want to get it right...but I don't know what church is right...Afraid...pick the wrong one!

He told me: Dennis...what you need is a personal relationship with God through Jesus. You wouldn't recognize His voice if He was to speak to you...you don't know Him. What you need to do is...

Confess your sin...Your need for Him...Ask Him to forgive you...invite Him to come live in your heart and guide you. When you KNOW Him...You will hear and recognize His voice. I did that...and He immediately led me to the right church!

You CAN hear God's voice...if you prepare your heart...get alone...and get quiet...and learn how to recognize Him when He whispers.