

Lesson One

Hearing God's Voice

Introduction

Objective: This lesson is designed to help church members be more attuned to God's voice and walk in close communion with him on a daily basis.

It is our hope that believers will be better able to abide in Him through prayer, study, fasting and thus, hearken to God's voice.

Hearken means to listen and obey.

Unit 1

Introduction

John 10:27:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Revelation 3:20:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Mosiah 11:128 & 136:

And he that will hear my voice, shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church; and him will I also receive . . . Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.

Jeremiah 33:3:

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Introduction

Habakkuk 2:1-2:

I will:

- *stand upon my **watch** [alert & listening] and*
- *set me **upon the tower** [find a quiet spot], and will*
- ***watch to see what he will say unto me** [come in faith expecting God to speak], and*
- ***watch to see what I will answer** when I am reproved [receptive to the truth].*

Joel 2:12-13 & 28-30:

*. . . turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. **And rend your heart**, and not your garments, and **repent**, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you . . . **I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh**; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth . . .*

Numbers 11:29:

. . . would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.

Our Relationship With God

The Prayer That Changes Everything: The Hidden Power of Praising God by Stormie Omartian, p. 7:

“If you’re like me, you don’t want to live a lukewarm, mediocre, “barely making it,” sad, lonely, hopeless, miserable, frightened, frustrated, unfulfilled, meaningless, ineffective, or fruitless existence. You don’t want to be imprisoned by your circumstances or chained to your limitations. You want to live an extraordinary life. A life of peace, joy, fulfillment, hope, and purpose. A life where all things are possible. The kind of life I just described can only happen when we enter into a close relationship with God. I mean really close. There are many people who believe in God.

. . . Yet not many are really close to Him . . . close enough to know him intimately. Close enough to communicate your whole heart to Him on an ongoing basis. Close enough to be able to direct your attention away from yourself completely and place it on him entirely . . . loving him with all your heart and letting him love you . . . What an awesome gift! When we praise and worship God, his presence comes to dwell with us.”

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

1. CREATION

God provides evidence that there is an intelligence that formed the creation we see around us.

Psalm 19:1:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Romans 1:20:

For God hath revealed unto them the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, which are clearly seen; things which are not seen being understood by the things that are made, through his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

2. Conscience

God gives every person who is born on this earth a moral sense, an intuitive understanding about right and wrong.

John 1:5 & 9:

*And the light shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not . . . Which was **the true light, which lighteth every man who cometh into the world.***

Romans 2:14-16:

*. . . **the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law . . . which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel.***

D & C 83:7c:

*And the **spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.***

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

3. Scripture

God has preserved divinely-inspired writing that reveals his will to us.

Alma 16:52-55 (Alma 2 to Korihor):

And now Korihor said unto Alma, If thou wilt shew me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, shew unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words.

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

4. Circumstances

We sometimes receive direction from God as **he opens and closes doors of opportunity in our lives**. In situations where we are attempting to be of service to God, there may be times that the enemy of our souls places obstacles in our way. We have to exercise discernment in this regard. Perhaps our prayer to the Lord should be, *“Lord, if it is your will, open this door of opportunity to me.”*

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

5. Prophetic Utterance

There may be times that **God speaks to us through his earthly servants**. It is not unusual for a fellow believer to deliver a *“Thus saith the Lord . . .”* unto any member of Christ’s church.

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

6. Visions & Dreams

It is possible for **the Lord to project images and pictures on the screen of our imagination** that perhaps tell a narrative. There are times when we have the strong impression that such a narrative is a message from God. We then have to pray for discernment to correctly interpret their meaning.

Joel 2:28-30:

. . . I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth . . .

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

7. Angels

Angels are “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:7 & 13-14) who can **deliver God’s word to his children**. We see examples of this throughout scripture.

Moroni 7:29-33:

And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, hath miracles ceased? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, shewing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is, to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.

What are Ways That God Speaks to Us?

8. God's Still, Small Voice

Probably the most frequent way God conveys his will to us is through direct communication when we are focused on him in a moment of silence. Most scriptures were probably conveyed to the prophets through that milder, quieter inner voice that speaks to our souls on a regular basis. Elijah experienced this on Mt. Sinai in 1 Kings 19:12.

1 Kings 19:11-13 (Elijah on Mt. Sinai or Horeb):

*And he [God] said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks . . . and after the wind an earthquake . . . And after the earthquake a fire . . . and after the fire a **still small voice**. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came **a voice** unto him . . .*

3 Nephi 5:4-5:

*. . . they heard **a voice**, as if it came out of heaven . . . And it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a **loud voice**, nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being **a small voice**, it did pierce them that did hear, **to the center**, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; **yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.***

After 40 days of fasting and walking across the desert toward Mt. Horeb (Sinai), Elijah the prophet was shown God's power and then God spoke to him in "a still, small voice." God is not limited in how he can speak to us. God can speak in a whisper in the solitude of our minds, or he can speak in a dramatic way through a strong wind, an earthquake or a fire (1 Kings 19:11-12). But most of the time, God seems to use a quiet, inner voice, and that can sometimes make it difficult to discern between God's thoughts and our own thoughts.

Reflection

Reflection

Reflect for a moment on the ways God speaks to us. As we've just discussed, He is a God of infinite variety, meeting our needs and His purpose in limitless ways.

Which of the ways we've discussed has He spoken with you?

What are some other ways He's spoken to you?

Do you think there are times He's spoken to you and you did not realize it at the time?

What Prevents Us From Hearing God's Voice?

Thinking We Are Too Busy to Talk With God

It is often in the midst of being overcommitted and overwhelmed that we suddenly realize we need to spend time with God. It's frequently the case that we do things in a backward fashion. Instead of consulting God as an afterthought, we should have started our day asking for his guidance.

The enemy of our souls wants to distract us from talking with God. When we awake, we're often anxious about that day's activities and quickly direct our energy toward things that we hope will make that anxiety subside. It's often the case that we race through the entire day without stopping to ask for God's counsel.

However, the greatest antidote for anxiety is not ticking items off of a to-do list. Rather, it is knowing that I'm living my life in the will of God and walking in close relationship with Him. If I can start my day with the assurance that I am acting within His will, it's possible for me to experience inner peace in the midst of trial and hardship.

When I think I'm too busy to talk to God, I need to ask myself what activities are preventing me from talking with Him. What aspects of my life cause me to be so anxious that I'm distracted from a time of prayer? We are called to "stir up" the indwelling gift of the Holy Ghost that was given to us at confirmation.

2 Timothy 1:6

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

What Prevents Us From Hearing God's Voice?

The Flood of Information & Influences That Invade Our Lives

Today, we are bombarded by news and drama on television, streaming and social media on our cell phones, messages on our watches, home electronic devices, radio, etc. In this cacophony and tumult of words, the enemy often wants to drown out the voice of God. We are again distracted by the many choices we have. Entertainment can momentarily distract us from the turmoil and even pain of this life, but only momentarily. News can make us informed citizens, or it can be used in an attempt to shape our thinking. We can give so much time to streaming that we never really engage in real life.

In a world where so many different forces are vying for our attention, we must make a conscious decision regarding what we allow to influence our lives.

What Prevents Us From Hearing God's Voice?

Apathy

In an affluent society those who are doing well often do not see the need to hear God's voice. Money comes in. Time is filled with entertaining things to do. Seeking pleasure becomes the foremost priority (2 Nephi 12:9-12). The exhilaration that comes from entertainment and the comfort that comes from gluttony temporarily distract us from any problems in our lives. But those distractions and pleasures often do not last.

Instead of spending our energy filling our time with pleasure, we could find a greater sustained joy in aligning our lives with God's purposes and serving others. To do that, we must first desire to be with Him and listen to his voice.

What Prevents Us From Hearing God's Voice?

Ingratitude or Bitterness Toward God

For some of us it has been a rocky road. The pain and heartache of this life has been overwhelming. We sometimes waste our time comparing ourselves to others, seeing only what they have and we do not. Perhaps our lives have been so painful that we want to shake our fist at God and ask why. Perhaps we already made up our minds a long time ago that we know He doesn't answer prayer. Hope is extinguished. We might ask what's the use of even trying.

Ingratitude can lead to bitterness and then to cynicism. Our experience can shape our perception of who God is. In our cynicism we simply assume that God will not answer our prayers, or is not able to.

Knowing what the scriptures say about who God is can help us to focus on God's character and attributes, which will increase our faith, and give us hope, instead of despair.

To those who doubt, God says:

Matthew 7:12:

*"Ask and it **shall** be given you."*

What Prevents Us From Hearing God's Voice?

Ingratitude or Bitterness Toward God

Mosiah 2:13-20 (King Benjamin to the Nephites & people of Zarahemla):

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth. Believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth. Believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you. And now, if you believe all these things, see that ye do them . . . ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long suffering toward you unworthy creatures.

Alma 3:76-80:

*Behold, I testify unto you, that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken, are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you, **They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God.** Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days, that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for **the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.***

What Can I Do To Be In Tune With God's Voice?

First, I must come before God with a clear conscience and a pure heart (i.e., right desires). This may include removing worldly influences that tend to corrupt my thoughts or divert me from God's mission for my life.

Psalm 24:4-5:

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord . . .

Second, I must be willing to ask.

Matthew 7:12:

Say unto them, Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

What Can I Do To Be In Tune With God's Voice?

Third, I should exercise faith. If I just offer up a quick prayer to test God and see if he is there that is one thing. If I believe with all my heart that he is a God who answers prayer, that is a different matter. In doing this, I come expectantly before his throne with the assurance that he wants to bless his children.

Mark 9:45:

Seek unto my Father, and it shall be done in that very moment what ye shall ask, if ye ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive.

Hebrews 11:6:

*But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.***

Jeremiah 29:13:

*And ye shall seek me, and find me, **when ye shall search for me with all your heart.***

Fourth, I will take time to listen. A quiet location is important. We want to remove every distraction from our environment. When our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, it should be recorded. You might want to keep a journal of impressions that you receive from the Holy Spirit's counsel.

1 Samuel 3:10:

Speak, for thy servant heareth.

Unit Summary

Summary