

PRAYER

4 week series on prayer

Prayer – Lesson 4

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Prayer

Lesson 4: Recognizing God's Voice

Bible: John 10:27

Description: We can all agree that we want to hear from God, but how exactly does that happen? It can be difficult to hear and recognize God's voice when we have so many other "voices" speaking into our lives, so it's important to make sure we put ourselves in a position to know God's voice.

Supplies

- A recording of someone's voice (someone who has nothing to do with the youth group)
- A pack of Oreos
- A prize

Game: Can You Hear Me Now?

Choose one student to be the main player in the game. Have the rest of the group gather behind him or her.

Choose one student from the group behind her and tell them the number 3. Have the rest of the group choose any number between 1-10, as long as it is not the number 3.

Have the main student stand with their back facing the group. Give them the pack of Oreos. Tell them that the group is going to start saying numbers, and they have to try to pick out the number they hear the most clearly.

That number will represent the number of Oreos that they need to lick all the frosting off before winning. If they do the correct number of Oreos, they win the prize.

Important: Make sure that the students do not yell their number—they just need to say it in a normal voice.

When you say go, have the group behind her repeat their number over and over, until the student has finished what they think is the correct amount of Oreos.

Then, tell the student you are going to give them another chance to win the prize. This time, have the student that you told the number 3 to stand closest to them, while having the rest of the group a significant amount of space away from them, so that when everyone starts saying their numbers, the number they hear the most clearly will be the number 3.

If they choose 3 Oreos, they win the prize.

Teach

Have you ever wanted to hear from God? How many of you have ever wondered if what you were hearing was actually God's voice or if it was something else?

Today, we're going to talk about hearing and knowing God's voice.

The first thing about hearing and recognizing God's voice may sound like a no-brainer, but it's the most important part: in order to hear God, you have to know Him.

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. - John 10:27

If you've never read the parts of the Bible that compare God to being a good shepherd, let me take a minute to explain why the comparison makes sense.

Shepherds don't only lead their sheep, but they watch out for them, too. They make sure they don't wander away into danger, and they are constantly protecting them from dangerous predators.

In the days when the Bible was written, shepherding was not just a 9-5 job. It wasn't a job where you could clock in and clock out - being a shepherd was not just a full time job, it was a lifestyle. Shepherds were always with their sheep...they even slept in the fields with them!

Sheep recognized the shepherd's voice because they knew the shepherd. They knew him because he was always with them.

In the same way, if we have a relationship with God, we are like His sheep and He is our shepherd. And the more time we spend with Him, the more familiar His voice becomes.

Choose a volunteer to come up to the front with you.

Okay, we're going to test out a theory. You turn around and close your eyes and just listen.

Play recording of someone's voice.

Do you recognize that voice? Can you tell me for sure who it is?

Allow student to answer.

Now, let's try this again.

Have someone there who is friends with the volunteer say the exact same thing that the recording said.

Do you recognize that voice? Who do you think that is?

Okay, you can turn around now. So, was it easier to identify the first voice, or the second voice? Why do you think that is?

It's because you knew the second voice! Now, do you think you would know their voice if you had never spent any time with them? Of course not!

You cannot know someone's voice if you do not know them, and you cannot know someone without spending time with them.

If you don't spend any time with God, you won't have a good relationship with Him. And if you don't have a relationship with Him, you won't know His voice. It's as simple as that!

It's also important to remember that God's voice isn't the only one we hear. In fact, everything you allow in your life has a "voice." Friends and family have audible voices, but there are other things, too. The books you read, the movies you watch, the hobbies you have...those are all things that have a "voice" and influence your life based on the time you spend with them.

It is so important to make sure that you set your life up so that God's voice is the loudest one. If everything in your life is of equal priority, then all of those "voices" are going to be just as loud as each other.

In the game we played, we acted out two scenarios. First, we had all the voices in the same place, and then we had one voice much closer than the others.

Ask student who was the main player in the game: Was it easier to pick out the right voice when all the voices were in the same place, or when the right voice was closer to you than the rest?

It's the same way with trying to hear God's voice! The closer you are to Him, the easier it will be to recognize His voice.

If you spend hours a day playing basketball, and only five minutes a day praying or thinking about God, who do think you're going to be closer to? And who do you think is going to have a bigger influence in your life: The basketball team or God?

If you want to know God's voice, you've got to spend time with Him. He has to be your priority!

Let's look at another verse about hearing from God.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

This verse tells us a few helpful things about hearing from God.

First of all—do you ever think you've heard from God but you're not sure if you actually heard from Him or if it was something else since you're not sure if you recognize His voice?

The first thing you should do is ask this question: Does what I think I heard from God agree with the Bible?

Remember, the Bible is the word of God, and He will never contradict His own word. God's voice will always speak things that line up with what is in the Bible.

Speaking of the Bible, have there been things in your life that you just really wish you could hear from God about? Maybe you want to hear about certain lifestyle choices or certain friends. Maybe you're wondering if something is right or wrong.

Well, it's quite possible that many of the things you want to hear God's voice about He has already spoken to you about.

How? In the Bible!

You've heard me say that the Bible is the word of God, right? Well, what am I using right now to form my words? My voice!

So the Bible is the word of God, and it is His voice! There's nothing in there that did not come from Him.

So while you're busy trying to recognize if you actually heard God's voice or wondering why God won't speak to you about a certain subject, open your Bible! What you're looking for could have been in there all along.

If you were wondering if reading your Bible is important or not, let me tell you - it is so important. These are God's words, His voice! I know that you all want to hear from God, and I know that you can - you just need to open your Bible and read it.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." – Isaiah 30:21

A big part of recognizing God's voice is trusting in Him. Sometimes, we can be so focused on trying to hear an audible voice that we forget that He can talk to us through things like reading our Bible.

Having a relationship with God is all about trusting in Him. You trust Him with your heart and with your life. So why not trust that if He wants to tell you something, He will?

If you want to know God's voice, you have to do your part. First and foremost, you have to have a relationship with Him. But don't just stop at beginning a relationship - really get to know Him! That happens through praying and spending time with Him, just like you would with anyone else you wanted to have a relationship with.

Secondly, you have to read your Bible. Because God will speak to you through that - if the words in there are important enough that He spoke them, then they are important enough to listen to!

That's your part. Talking to you is up to God. He may speak to you in many different ways - sure, it may be an audible voice that you hear. But more often, it will be in small, subtle ways. Through a verse you read in the Bible or through a time when you're praying and listening.

It's your job to trust in God. Trust that He's going to tell you exactly what you need to hear, and trust that He will do that in the very best way.

We serve a big and powerful God. He is worth trusting in. Just like that verse says, God's voice will guide you.

Trust in your relationship with Him. Trust that He hears you when you pray. And trust that He will speak to you.

Small Group Questions:

1. Is God's voice something that you've wondered about before tonight?
2. Do you think that if God spoke to you, you would know it was Him?
3. Have you ever heard from God before? How?
4. Do you feel like God speaks to you when you read the Bible? What about when you pray?
5. Have you ever been asking God to speak to you about something and then found an answer on that subject in the Bible?
6. Would you say you really trust God? Is it hard for you to trust Him?
7. Do you believe that God will guide you in the way you're supposed to go?
8. Are there other "voices" in your life right now that are louder in their influence than God's is? Should you do anything about that?
9. Do you agree that you can't know someone's voice if you don't know them? What does this tell you about your relationship with God?
10. Do you think that you should be spending more time getting to know God?

Teach Close

We've talked a lot about prayer during this series, and something I want to make sure you remember is that prayer is a two-way street.

We've said before that when you pray, you aren't just aimlessly throwing words out into the air, hoping they get somewhere. You know that God is listening to you!

In the same way, you have to listen to Him. You can't expect to hear His voice - in any way - if you're not listening.

It is so important to put yourself in a position of listening for God's voice. How do you do that? By making sure you spend time with Him, by getting to know Him and His word, and by making sure there's room in your life for God's voice.

If you fill up your life with too many other voices, there will be no room for you to hear God's voice!

This week, I want you to review your priorities and the way you spend your time. Make sure that you are in a position to listen to God when He speaks to you. God's voice is the most important one of all, so make sure you are in a position to hear it!