

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE

Hearing God

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Various scriptures

SYNOPSIS

God speaks in a wide variety of ways if we will only listen.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Hearing God

We've been talking about getting to know God more and more. Last week we focused on how God's voice can suddenly change circumstances which seem impossible. When we've heard from God it stirs our faith and raises our hope. And, when you know you've heard from God, there is an unshakeable confidence and calmness to carry on.

☞ So, how many want to hear from God? **God wants to and does speak to his people.**

Bruce Almighty (show me a sign...)

☞ John 8:47

He who belongs to God hears what God says.

The story is told that Joan of Arc was mocked with, "She says she hears God's voice; why, I don't hear His voice!" Joan replied, "Don't you wish you did?"

God speaks to those who have time to listen.

---James Hamilton--- Before refrigerators, people used ice houses to preserve their food. Ice houses had thick walls, no windows, and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the ice houses, and covered with sawdust. Often the ice would last well into the summer. One man lost a valuable watch while working in an ice house. He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile. A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the ice house during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch. Amazed, the men asked him how he found it. "I closed the door," the boy replied, "lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking." Often the question is not whether God is speaking, but whether we are being still enough, and quiet enough, to hear.

That's sort of how it worked with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-13. God sent a powerful wind, then an earthquake, then a fire. Impressive! But when he spoke to Elijah, it was in a gentle whisper. He used all of those to get Elijah's attention and then spoke softly to him.

☞ **God speaks in a wide variety of ways.**

☞ The Bible

God has spoken through his word, the Bible. He will not contradict himself. He is consistent, the same yesterday and today and forever. He still speaks through his word today...

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.



Like when you read an old portion and something “jumps out” at you... but... don’t use the Bible as a Ouija board. For example, Matthew 27:5 says, “Then he went away and hanged himself.” Then, Luke 10:37 says, “Go and do likewise.”

As we are regularly in the word, God can and will speak to us. You’ll be amazed at how the portion you just happen to be reading on a certain day will apply to something you’re going through at the time. That’s God; he can do that.

There are many counterfeit voices out there... The more we know the original, real voice, the better we can tell it apart from all the other voices. So, we always start with the Bible, and then we can begin to tune in to the other ways God speaks. If we get that in the wrong order, we open ourselves to all kinds of deception. So, read your Bible first!

Conscience

Conscience is a walkie-talkie set by which God speaks to us.

God gave you a conscience and he uses it to direct you. Guilt and shame serve a purpose. They are there to motivate you to change. When your conscience is eating at you, you need to pay attention.

John 16:8 (Holy Spirit)

he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment

Now, condemnation is from the enemy, but conviction is from the Holy Spirit. If your conscience is feeling convicted, pay attention!

Acts 24:16

I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Counsel

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

One problem with being an expert on everything is that you cannot turn to anyone else for advice.

Sometimes you just need guidance from someone with more experience than you. God places those people in your life, so listen. We can all benefit from wise counsel. One significant source of wise counsel, which our modern society tends to disregard, is the wisdom of the elderly. **Job 12:12 NLT** says, “Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to the old.”

Even Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, consulted with the older men when making key decisions. It’s a little bit like healing of the sick. Sometimes God does a miraculous healing; other times he uses doctors to help us heal. So it is with wisdom – God can supernaturally guide us, but often he uses the wisdom of those already around us to give us counsel.

Circumstances



In Numbers 22, God was using circumstances to try to speak to Balaam. His donkey kept turning off the road he was traveling and Balaam got angry. But it kept on happening because God was trying to get his attention.

Jesus sent the disciples out as missionaries, saying that there would be some to host them in their homes as they went. How were the disciples to know which house they should stay at on their missionary journeys? Jesus said to enter their house with a greeting, and then see what happens. If the household shows you they are ready to help, then stay there. If the household turns out to not be willing to help, then leave it. Jesus didn't say, fast and pray until you receive a dream about which house you should stay in. He said let the circumstances that unfold in your life lead you. The same was true about which town they should do their ministry at. If the town received the word of God, they were to stay and minister there. If the town was not willing to receive the word of God, then that meant God wanted them to move on from that town. God was speaking to them through the circumstances in their lives. (Matthew 10:11-14)

- C.S. Lewis... *God whispers to us in our well-being; he shouts to us in our suffering.*
- *"It hurts when I do this." "Stop doing that."*
- *When you post an opinion on Facebook, get blasted for it, and you end up ticked off by all the commentary, then stop posting those opinions on Facebook.*

So, God uses some basic and simple ways to speak to us. The conscience is built in, counsel is all around, and circumstances come upon us. In all of those, God is speaking. But, he does sometimes also use more profound ways to speak to us...

Cowabunga Moments

Job 33:14-15

For God does speak — now one way, now another — though man may not perceive it. **15** In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds

The burning bush	Exodus 3
Balaam's donkey	Numbers 22
Gideon's fleece	Judges 6:36-40
Dreams	(77 times in the Bible)
Visions	(70 times)

Compulsion

Acts 20:22

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.

Now, don't mistake compulsion with craving. Just because you want something very strongly does not mean that God is speaking that for you. Today's popular notion to just follow your heart is all wrong! **Jeremiah 17:9** says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure."



I have a friend in ministry who rightly says that your feelings will lie to you. However, there are times when a thought just keeps coming back to you. And, especially if that thought is not something you would typically think or desire, then it may be from God.

I am compelled to preach. It was not something I ever aspired to, but God strongly directed me to it. Leading up to becoming a pastor, I had all of the above going on. My conscience was telling me that God was bringing change to my life. Circumstances were affecting me, so I sought wise counsel. And there were even some cowabunga moments leading me to become a pastor when I didn't really want to. And, then it all resolved with this last one...

☞ **Contentment**

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ **rule** in your hearts

This is probably the most important part of hearing God's voice. Peace is to play the role of an umpire in our life. Contentment is that inner feeling and impression that a certain choice or act is the right thing to do.

The phrase (or variation of) "go in peace" occurs over 40 times in the scripture. Could we apply this here and understand that when God gives peace, then that is when we should act (go)? If there is no peace, then we should continue waiting?

☞ I've learned over time that **the best way to be sure you hear from God is to decide in advance that you will obey whatever he says.**

James 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

--Corrie ten Boom... *When we are obedient, God guides our steps and our stops.*

We can learn to recognize his voice.

John 10:2-4

The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

☞ First, you have to **be quiet, as this cartoon illustrates...**

- *Animal sounds*

☞ Cat, ☞ geese, ☞ goat, ☞ horse, ☞ rooster

☞ Bear, ☞ hawk, ☞ sea lion, ☞ peacock, ☞ rhino



The more we personally know God, the more we know his will. It's like other relationships – spouses, over time, can make assumptions with great accuracy regarding their spouse's desires. Even coworkers can learn to “read” each other. To hear God, we must develop our relationship with him!

May we always be open to the way God communicates to us...

The man whispered, “God, speak to me” and a meadowlark sang. But the man did not hear. So the man yelled, “God, speak to me” and the thunder rolled across the sky. But the man did not listen. The man looked around and said, “God, let me see you” and a star shined brightly. But the man did not notice. And the man shouted, “God, show me a miracle” and a life was born. But the man did not know. So, the man cried out in despair, “Touch me, God and let me know you are here.” Whereupon God reached down and touched the man. But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on. Don't miss out on a blessing because it isn't packaged the way that you expect.

👂 **Listen!** God is talking. His voice has many various tones. Are you listening? When you think you've heard something from God, write it down and ask a trusted friend to comment on it.

Imagine if we all really began hearing God's voice. We would walk in confidence and assurance.