

THE AGONY OF VICTORY (PART VII)
LISTENING IN PRAYER (1 SAMUEL 3:1-10)

Studies show that many people spend 53% of their waking hours listening.

- 16% speaking
- 53% listening

Source: "An Investigation of Proportional Time Spent in Various Activities by College Students,"
Journal of Applied Communication Research 8, 1981, pp.101-109

Scripture seems to confirm that this is a right and good thing

- James 1:19 tells us we ought to be, "... quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger..."

And yet when it comes to our prayer lives... I fear:

- That principle (of being quick to listen and slow to speak)
- Is not often practiced
- And the previous percentage (53%...)
- Is not often true to life in our prayer lives

but much of the victory we experience in prayer is in listening to the lord in prayer

Be reminded this morning that inherent in the idea of prayer is:

- The concept of conversation
- A conversation requires that two people be speaking
- The fact that God wants to speak to His people
- John 10:27

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

And yet there seems to be a general lack of confidence in Christians when it comes to hearing from the Lord in prayer.

The problem with Christians not experiencing God speaking to them is not with God... but rather with us.

The clear command of scripture is that we are to...

- Isaiah 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God... (NKJV)

... That we might listen for the **“still small voice”** that the Lord sometimes speaks in...

- 1Kings 19:12

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a **still small voice**.

It seems that in our fast paced world slowing down to take time to listen to the Lord is too much to ask...

- It's like physical fitness or wearing seat belts...everybody knows it is desirable but finds it difficult to do on a regular basis.

In fact, this seems to be such a serious issue that it has demanded the attention of a major secular film corporation.

- The letter from 20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT
- Came in the mail Friday afternoon...

The letter is signed by the Director of Marketing...

- That means that the marketing dept. of FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT saw an opportunity to make money by producing a product that met an obvious need
 - You don't produce an un-needed product
- The need for Christians to learn to **LISTEN TO THE LORD IN PRAYER**

1 Samuel 3:1-10

What keeps us from listening to the Lord in prayer?

1. We don't believe the Lord wants to or can speak to us
2. We don't take the time to listen to the Lord
3. We don't know how to listen for the Lord
4. We don't position ourselves to hear from the Lord

First of all, He does want to speak to you.

Secondly, you must make the time to listen to the Lord or you

cannot really claim to have a relationship with Him.

Thirdly, listening to the Lord in prayer is (I believe) an art (as opposed to a science) that is pursued, discovered, and grown in throughout one's Christian life.

Fourthly, much of hearing from the Lord is positioning yourself to do so.

Lets look at how Samuel positioned himself to hear from the Lord

And Let me (simultaneously) share with you how it works out in my life:

SOMETHING I SAY CONTINUALLY AS A HUSBAND/FATHER/PASTOR IS, "LORD, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO HERE...WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY...HOW WOULD YOU HAVE US PROCEED... HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO PRAY..."

- **And then (because I've asked the Lord a question) I wait to hear the answer.**

THE LEADING THAT I RECEIVE IS THROUGH AN IMPRESSION

- **Meaning you just KNOW**
- **Becomes increasingly discernable as I step out in faith and receive confirmation**
- **An audible voice is possible and Biblical...not my general experience**

Isaiah 30:21

And your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it..."

- **But the impression is just as clear, knowable, and valid**

John 16:13-15

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

14 He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.

I LISTEN IN AN ATTITUDE OF PRAYER

- **A conversation**
- **Thanks and praise**

- Phil. 4:6 (...with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God...)
- [And then I wait](#)

▪ Child-like trust and faith

1. Samuel was a Child

1 Samuel 3:1

Matthew 11:25

At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes." (the childlike) NLT

Matthew 18:4

... whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

▪ Rejoicing in His character

2. Samuel was a Worshiper

1 Sam. 3:1

1 Sam. 1:28; 2:11, 18

cf. Acts 13:2

And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

▪ A resolve to obey his voice

3. Samuel was set apart

1 Sam. 3:1

Silence = Judgment

Jeremiah 7:23

But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'

Strenuous Obedience

Abraham

Gen. 22:1-3

- God gave him children as numerous as the stars of heaven

Joseph

Genesis 39:10-20

- Joseph became the CEO of Egypt

S, M, A

Daniel 3:14-19

- Came out of the furnace unbound

Peter and Apostles

Acts 5:17-29, 40

- Went away rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer for His Name

- **Concentration, Attentiveness, Patience**

4. Samuel was quiet and still

1 Sam. 3:2-3

Isaiah 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God... (NKJV)

(NLT=be silent) (NASB=cease striving)

Luke 10:38-42

Psalm 23:2

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

John 6:10

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Isaiah 30:15

For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing...

Overturning Distractions in our Hearts

- **A yellow light does not mean go**
- **Confusion is not the time to move ahead**

- Wait for clarity
- If God has you waiting it is because he is working

- Then I step out
 - If I was wrong I learn
 - If I was right I learn

- IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT I FEEL AS THOUGH I HEARD WRONG, OR DIDN'T HEAR
 - That is not so much a testimony to my ability to listen to the Lord, as it is His ability and willingness to speak to me (and to you!)
 - Notice: I did not say that I do not often make mistakes (period). I do and often. (But those are my decisions not the Lord's leadings)

- IF I FEEL THAT I AM NOT HEARING THE LORD...I LISTEN HARDER
 - Was the Lord telling me to wait and I mistook it for a non-answer?
 - Fasting
 - The Word
 - Counsel (Key people that the Lord uses to speak into my life)
 - They help me hear
 - Pray with others
 - Repentance
 - Worship...HUGE

- More time drawing near to the Lord

5. Samuel was near to the Holy of Holies

1 Sam. 3:3

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Matt. 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

God will manifest Himself in direct proportion to our passion for Him!

6. Samuel was a servant

1 Samuel 3:10

1 Peter 4:10
Ephesians 2:10

He loves to hear our voice, but do we love to hear His?