

Hearing God's Voice Week 2: Signal Strength

There are two questions that we need to ask ourselves as we dive into this series on hearing God's voice.

Do you believe that God is speaking to you? Is God silent or is he **trying** to speak to you? But, as I wrote this question, it really doesn't get to the heart of how we view or relate to God. Let's see if the next question gets to the heart of the matter. **Do you believe that God wants to speak to you?**

How you answer these questions has a lot to do with your view of God. Is he generous, loving, and good, or is he stingy, withholding, waiting for us to pass a performance review, easily bothered or irritated...

Even if you answer an honest "no," let me encourage you to lean into this series. Think about how you may have been taught the wrong view of God by your **parents** or other influential people in your life. **Test this and see** if what you have your doubts about could really be true.

Think about what it could mean if you could hear God's voice. Wouldn't that change everything for you?

The foundation of this series can be summed up in this statement: **God is always speaking and revealing his kingdom.**

The story of the Bible is telling this from the beginning to the end, from Genesis and creation, to Revelations and Jesus's return. We broke that down **last week**, so if you missed, jump on the website **erchog.org** and listen.

This is one of our key verses for this series. **Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."** ²⁴ Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, **the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more.** Mark 4:23-24

If we have the ability to hear, then we should listen. **Hearing is passive, listening is active or intentional.** My ears may actually be receiving the

sound waves, but I may not be focusing on the message that is being sent. Listening brings understanding.

But there's one more step. **He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Luke 11:28**

When we have the ability to hear and add to that intentionally try to listen for God to speak, then the **circle is not complete until we obey or align our lives with what God is saying.**

Today we want to look at the four channels or places where the signal is strongest. Before we got some extra towers, my cell signal could be weak in my office or in other parts of the church building. Sometimes I would have to go to one of the doors. We used to call the place between the double doors in front **"the phone booth."** Kids you have no idea what that is probably. Other times, I would stand near my office window, leaning toward the glass to get the strongest signal.

Where is God always speaking clearly? Where is the signal ?

If you were not raised in the church or have much background in the bible then this is your day. This is **foundational stuff. It is a way to picture and pull together all of these seemingly random stories from the Bible into something simple and coherent.** If you are early on in your journey, this can help you keep from getting lost in the grey areas. **If you have been walking with Jesus for a long time,** this is a reminder to keep it simple and not out think the room. **We don't need a lot more information we need to act on, to obey what we already know.**

He is always speaking and revealing his Kingdom clearly in these four places. **Therefore, if I'm having trouble hearing him or distinguishing his voice, then it may mean that I am not entering into these spaces with a desire to hear God's voice.** I need to be in the **right place,** but also with the **right attitude.**

If I take a Big Mac, a dozen doughnuts, and a 2 liter Mountain Dew into the gym, I'm probably not going to get the real benefit that is intended. That kind of sounds like a party doesn't it?

The first place that God speaks to everyone is... **Through Creation**.

They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Romans 1:19-20

This has been called **natural revelation**. This is where we can see something true about God by looking at and noticing what he has made. **The art reveals something about the artist.**

The context of this verse is Paul saying that **God has been speaking to everyone about who he is, but because of our sin and desire for self-determination, we suppress what God is saying.**

Look for evidence of design, provision, and beauty. Deb is a biology teacher, I should probably sit down and let her take this part of the sermon.

Design...How it all fits together and works. But you take one animal out of its natural habitat and suddenly there are problems. Not enough predators, too many deer getting hit by cars. Our bodies somehow work and last a really long time when there are all of these systems of nerves, blood flow, organs, the brain, keeping it all together.

Provision...God has created what we need. This earth provides air, water, and soil.

Beauty...Looking out at the Gulf of Mexico there were so many color changes in the water from shades of blue and green. Contrast that with the white sand and those weird birds that look like 80's punk rockers with Mohawks.

Here's another example of how God speaks through his creation...**but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts."** Acts 14:17

Paul and Barnabas heal a crippled man in a town Lystra. The Greek people think they are Zeus and Hermes disguised as men. **They try to turn the crowd's attention to the creator, God of the universe, who sent Jesus.** That is why they refer to him sending rain that produces crops for food. **This is evidence of how the true God has been trying to speak to them even before they have read any scripture.**

And that is why we cannot only rely on this one. Because it is open to interpretations that aren't what God wants to say. **Some look at creation and come up with the exact opposite** thing that Paul says it is saying about God. They think creation is eternal and we are just passing through. No, we are eternal and all of this will at some point no longer exist. **God speaking to us through creation and nature has to be supported by the other three.**

Why is this one vital? **This puts us in the proper perspective and it teaches us the fear of the Lord.** You can see his power and his enormity. (The rocky mountains, the force from Niagara falls, and the relentless pull of the tides.) **Creation keeps us from thinking we are the creators** and not the creation. Yes, we are at the **top of all that God made** and he loves us most and **we bear his image**, but we are still his creation. The pot doesn't think it's the potter or try to tell the potter what to do.

Pay attention when you are in nature, listen. Think about **God as loving creator who gives good gifts** to his people when you are out in nature and see if he doesn't speak to you. **The poet or the scientist can see God in nature.**

The second place God speaks to us clearly is... **Through his Word**...that means the Bible.

This is more objective. We can all look at the same thing and read it. It's not like **staring at a painting** in a gallery and interpreting what the artist is trying to say. **If we accept it as God's Word being spoken to us and, therefore, authoritative, then it has power.**

Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. ⁹ And because I preach this

Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 2 Timothy 2:8-9

It is alive and has **power and authority**. And there is a direct connection between the word of God and the "Good News" or gospel.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.**³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things by his powerful word.** After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Hebrews 1:1-3

Now he speaks, not through intermediaries, but through his son who carries the authority of God, because he is God and was a part of creation. Then it says that the very words he speaks are **holding everything together**.

As bad as you think it might be right now, God's Word is holding all things together, keeping everything from flying apart. **He spoke creation into existence** in the beginning. Now he is speaking his word through the Bible and that is holding the universe together.

I think God can speak through the story of Jesus that we read in the Bible if we will approach it this way. Again, it's about being in the right place, but with the right attitude.

If I go to study under a professor, but I sit in his class and mock what he is saying and discount it because I think he's a hack, then it doesn't matter that I'm in the right place.

As a youth pastor and a coach, I can tell when someone is in the right place, but doesn't have an attitude that will allow him or her to learn and grow. Some are outwardly defiant, others keep a poker face, but they really aren't interested either.

When we interact with scripture with the right attitude, then this is what happens. **For the word of God is alive 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. Hebrews 4:12

God's word being heard through the Bible, and particularly the Gospel of Jesus Christ, can cut through anything and get to the heart of the issue. Whatever your issue is, the Bible can cut through and do the surgery necessary for you to be who God created you to be. **And yes, that means it will judge our thoughts and attitudes.**

I've said this many times here at Eagle Ridge Church of God, but I'll say it again. **If you want to remain as you are, with the same attitudes, behaviors, schedule, priorities,** then by all means I implore you, please stay clear of the Bible.

God spoke to me through reading Jesus' story in John and focusing on his ways and means. God spoke to me when I read through the **Sermon on the Mount** and realized that it is all about the kingdom. That led me to see that **the Kingdom is the beginning of the gospel.** God spoke to me and it has changed everything.

Why is this vital...**Because it is the only one that is both objective and specific.** Our brains operate in the realm of **story.** This is a way of telling God's story from beginning to us and into eternity. **It is the record of God's activity in our world.**

Life transformation takes off after interacting with scripture four days in a week. Start where you are. This does not mean hours of deep study four days a week. It is interacting with scripture with the right attitude, asking God to speak through his word.

So we have creation, and the God's Word, the Bible. The third place where God speaks clearly to us is...**Through his Body.**

If you don't have a lot of background in the faith, this one demands a very simple explanation. Jesus had a physical body when he walked the earth. That body experienced real suffering and then death. That body was raised from the dead on the third day. Then when Jesus ascended into

heaven he sent The Holy Spirit, which is his presence that now resides in his people. **The people make up many parts of that body.**

That means both those gifted to preach/teach and those with whom we share our lives. That doesn't mean hearing God speak through the pastor preaching a sermon and that's it.

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. Proverbs 27:17

This is our relational contact with one another, worshipping together, reflecting, reading, and discussing the word... These are the ways we knock the rough edges off of one another so that we become more effective tools for God to use.

The Word that God wants to say to you through the Bible needs to land within a relational environment. The theory of living like Jesus that is taught in a sermon or a class gets transported into a living, breathing, moving, body of people.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12

The “you” or “your” the one being commanded to do something is really plural, not singular. It's not you right there. It's all of you, as the church in fellowship with one another.

We work out our salvation in the body of Christ in relationship and fellowship with others. This is not simply an individualistic statement. **It's not simply me, my Bible out in the woods, and now I can hear God clearly and accurately.** It's just God and me. That's not how it was ever intended to work.

Bridge Groups are important because we see real life examples in our context of people living like Jesus. That is corporate reflection on scripture and life.

Why is this vital...**Because we are flesh and blood, not simply spirit.** We were created to be in communion. We are designed to be relational and communal. **The church is God's method for reaching the world, it is his mission. We together are an example of a redeemed community.** As individuals, we make the kingdom present for others. It helps avoid the weirdness that comes from isolation.

So we have creation and God's Word, the Bible, and his body, the church. The fourth place where God speaks clearly to us is...Through [The Holy Spirit](#).

I am telling you these things now while I am still with you.²⁶ But when the Father sends the **Advocate as my representative**—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will **teach you everything** and will **remind you of everything I have told you.**²⁷ **"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. John 14:25-27**

What does the Holy Spirit do?

- Advocates...someone who pleads on someone else's behalf.
- Teaches everything you need to know.
- Reminds you of what Jesus has said to you.
- Brings peace as God's gift.

The Holy Spirit speaks through prayer the spirit of Jesus to our spirit. This is subjective. Sometimes it comes in **the form of being drawn to something of God.** If you want something that is absolutely good, morally, ethically right then that is the Holy Spirit. **If you want more of God or, as the bible says, you hunger and thirst for righteousness,** then that is the Holy Spirit.

This can work through what we call conscience, or our emotions. When something that **breaks God's heart breaks yours,** then that is the Holy Spirit.

Examples...Marie having challenges with a relative who doesn't know Christ. As she was talking, a phrase came into my mind that I had been taught. "You cannot impact anyone's life who is not moving toward you." If they are moving away from you and you continue to pursue, they will run.

Why is it vital? The Holy Spirit is what enables us to hear God clearly through the creation, word, and body. We cannot understand Jesus or hear his voice through the Bible or another believer, if the author of what is being said isn't with me.

The Holy Spirit is the glue that connects all four. Because the Holy Spirit is our compass when things are not black and white. It enables us to interpret, understand, and apply what the others' voices are saying. It empowers the word and the body and creation.

By itself, without the balance of seeing the enormity of God in creation, read God's story in the Bible, in its objective form, and the body of Christ to give me other perspectives and context. I will most likely get full of myself and make a mistake.

What would happen if you ignore the fact that your mom gave birth to you?
...refused to read what she wrote to you in cards, emails, texts and letters?
...refused to spend time with her having conversations face to face?
...refused to hang out with the other people in your family?
Answer: You would stop hearing your mother's voice.

Do I have fellowship with God or abide in him through these four outlets?

Remember, these are not for special people; they are for everyone and anyone.

One of these might be your sweet spot, because it fits your personality or because you have heard God's voice through it in the past. That does not mean you can ignore the others. You won't get the clarity, you will be living with partial hearing.

Take one the legs off of a three-legged stool.

When we have ears and listen in these three places where the signal is particularly consistent and strong, we will have something that can hold us up in times like these.

Practice listening.

1. Have I been avoiding one of these places?

With creation it's not like we are avoiding it, but rather failing to notice it and hear God speak through it. **It's most likely that it's either Word and Body that we are particularly avoiding.** Avoiding the word is filled with excuses of why I can't do it. The body is always about time and priorities. We don't think it's important. **And I don't mean this setting.** There's too much distance here. I'm only getting a taste of how God can speak through his body. I mean getting into a place where iron can sharpen iron. **It's about getting into the space where Jesus did his best work.** Yes he taught large groups, but he didn't do it as much as we do. He spent **80% of his time with 12 people.** **If we ignore this setting, we will never really hear God's voice clearly because it's me, the spirit, and my Bible without the body to give balance.**

Do you feel a like tag, that's me? Then you are hearing God's voice. Don't let the enemy turn that into **guilt and shame.** "You've tried this before and it didn't work." Or, you failed when you've made big plans in the past, what makes you think now is any different. **Don't listen to those voices, rather start small and ask God to give you the desire for the word and fellowship.** Because he is speaking and wants to speak to you through his word and body.

2. Intentionally enter that space this week.

Visit a bridge group. It's real easy to find out where they are and when they meet. You don't need any particular knowledge. The discussion is over the sermon and you've just heard it.

3. Tell someone about it.

The first eagle I ever scored in golf was on this little course near Alma. I was all alone and so I couldn't really share it with anyone. **There was no one there to celebrate, high five, reflect upon how I played it, learn from it...Telling someone makes it real.**