

Hearing God's Voice
Week 3: The proper mindset

Do you believe God wants to speak to you? This is where we want to start this series. It's the question we keep coming back to. The base idea of scripture that we are trying to build upon is, **"God is always speaking and revealing his kingdom."**

It's not typically spectacular and it isn't for really **special heroic or religious people**. No, that's not the story of the Bible.

Hearing is passive; listening is active and is something we can develop. The ability to not just hear, but listening leads us to **the final step, which is to obey or align our lives to what God is saying.**

Today's topic is "The Proper Mindset". Meaning, what is the mindset that we need in order to hear God's voice? **Mindset = the established set of attitudes held by someone.** That is where **racism** or other types of bigotry come from. I have an established set of attitudes towards people of a different skin pigmentation or cultural background.

A mindset can change when you meet someone who doesn't fit the story you have already written for them. When you meet that person and see them for who they really are, **then you are able to hear them.** The same goes for hearing God.

What's your **mindset toward God** or...**How do you view the one speaking?**

Some of us have a mindset, or established set of attitudes toward God, that are not based in reality and, therefore, keep us from hearing his voice clearly or even at all. These are usually caught and taught in our formative years. **If the people who we are supposed to trust and count on don't behave in a way that is trustworthy, then this mindset is beginning to get formed** in us as attitudes toward God get established.

This is not an inclusive list, but I think, as categories, it sums up the mindset that makes it pretty hard to hear God.

I want to see if your heart, mind, or even body reacts to one of these. This may be **God speaking to you** about the mindset that you have toward him that you aren't even really aware of.

Angry... This is where you are **walking on eggshells, trying not to wake the sleeping bear for fear that it will maul you.** God is perpetually cranky because **you are such a disappointment to him.** He listens and spends time and energy on you **begrudgingly.**

Ambivalent... You are kind of **irrelevant.** Doesn't feel particularly strong about you or what you are going through. **If you do everything really well it might get his attention and garner some sort of affirmation.** So keep jumping and maybe he'll notice.

Absent... He's just never there. Doesn't want to be present with you because **it's too much trouble or he has better things to do.** You are trying to **make up for what you are missing but wish you had.** (3 faces diagram)

These words I'm using may be **wounding** you right now. **That's the Holy Spirit telling you that your mindset,** which was affected early on in life and through pain and suffering, is **fighting back against the grace of a loving God.** It's trying to hang on so that you don't hear the voice of love and grace.

I want to read a couple of quotes from someone I've learned a lot from, Brandon Cook. This comes from "Learning to Live and Love Like Jesus." **He's talking about this wrong mindset** that we have concerning God. **Still, they often hold sway over our hearts even if we would disavow them on an intellectual level.** We may know they aren't 'true' but nevertheless hold them sub-rationally, **beneath our doctrine and theology, where they are very hard to get at.** I know that God is love and he is good. Those are facts that I accept at a thinking level. They don't reach the heart. **Indeed, as a pastor, my experience is that if you drill down deep enough, into the heart, most people harbor some malformed view of God. And when there's a conflict between the belief of the mind and the belief of this heart, the latter carries the day.**

"Learning to Live and Love Like Jesus," Brandon Cook, pg. 23-24

If we can begin to take on these malformed views of God, then we can start to gain a greater ability to hear the one who really does want to speak to us.

Our mindset is molded or malformed by these wrong views of God making it difficult, if not impossible, to hear God's message of love and grace. Next, we need to unlearn some things. That means...**Unlearning the human mindset**.

Here's a picture to help us understand what I mean by the human mindset. This is viewing God through only a human viewpoint or lens. **Before I talk, just look at it, allow God to speak through it.** (Add The human mindset diagram)

What did you notice? Ignore the words, just look at the image?

If you want to put an x up there where the cross is, then it becomes a mathematical problem. I take steps toward a goal or whatever x is to me.

Keep in mind the human mindset works in almost every other instance in our world other than when God's and his grace is involved. Working hard in school to get into college or a trade so that you can get a good job to buy a house. When we opened Beaverton, we had a goal of a new, fresh, bright, inviting new facility, open for Advent.

Let's get back to the goal or x. Maybe that is for you're the American dream, or proof that God is blessing my life...a good relationship with my spouse...my kids following Christ and not going the way of our culture. I want peace that looks like my depression or anxiety going away...I want to get on God's good side so that bad things don't happen to me...being able to get victory over some addiction or persistent sin problem...breaking free from the pain that I experienced in my past...

Are you seeing things that are wrong about this picture? Those are good things aren't they, so what's wrong with making one of those my goal as a follower of Jesus?

I'm putting the finish line where I want it. It's my plan. This does not demand trust if you don't have the destination already plotted and decided.

Abraham didn't know where he was going, he just followed. His desire was to follow, obey, and remain connected to God.

I love the way Brandon Cook describes this as religion. "He seems to say that we humans create religion to shield us from the reality of God and His goodness, because we are more comfortable with control than surrender and real relationship with the Divine. 26 The human mindset is about religion, **the practice of some sort of belief system,** not about responding to what God has done for us through Jesus.

The main question to ask if we approach God with this human mindset is..."How am I doing?"

- Am I doing it **well enough?**
- Am I **getting God's attention?**
- Can I **satisfy his anger?**
- Can I **please his ambivalence?**
- Can I get the **absent God's attention?**

Am I making progress getting close to you? Am I climbing up to your level?

Initially, it seems or even feels right because my focus should be on me getting better, improving, making progress, or becoming more like Jesus. But it actually isn't focused on God and his grace through Jesus. My focus is on my effort and me. My focus is on me, and what I am doing in order to achieve closeness with God, not God himself.

Let me stop and remind you that there is effort in hearing God's voice, because that is what listening is. God's grace is not anti-effort it's anti-earning, performing, controlling my own destiny.

So what's the problem?...With this mindset?

1. You never arrive...Is there any arriving when it comes to God? No, when you think you've arrived, you either have the **depressing realization that you really haven't reached the finish line or you give into **pride and arrogance** and pronounce yourself "mature".**

2. **It's about me**...We kind of hit this one already. **If what I want to "get out of this Jesus thing" is anything less than God himself, then it is an idol I have created for myself.** It is not about me, it is about God and what He wants to do through me.

3. **Spiritual practices are ruined**...Pick a spiritual practice of your choice. It could be **coming to church** on Sunday, worshipping and hearing God's word. It could be **reading the Bible**. It could be **joining a bridge group** or Bible study. It could be serving in the church or at Cultivate at the mall. **What happens to those if they are the steps to get somewhere instead of simply ways that we meet the presence of God and he speaks to us and transforms our lives?** Again, if the goal I have isn't achieved, then I can say of church, Bible reading, small groups..."**It didn't work**". **Preacher, you told me** if I'd do these things, I'd get where I want to go which is close to Jesus.

4. **This is not Jesus' story**...If you were here for our series through the book of **Philippians**, what can you see wrong about Jesus on a hill that we climb up doesn't sound right?

"74 story" of Jesus Philippians 2...1. Was God but didn't use that to his advantage...2. Gave up his divine privileges...3. Took on the position of a slave...4. Was born as a human...5. Humbled himself...6. Obedient to the point of death...7. Even death on a cross.

When I'm striving, it's hard to hear someone speak. Everyone yelling at a **wrestling match**, but the athlete cannot hear because he is straining, pushing, breathing hard and has his face smashed into the mat. **When I've set the destination, then it really isn't about listening for God's voice and trusting him to set the path and where it will lead me.**

If not the human mindset, then what? We need to begin by...**Accepting the Jesus mindset.**

(Jesus Mindset image)

No earning, you're already in. No getting closer because you are already as close as you can get. You can, however, learn to listen and follow better.

Here's what I mean. Let's start with Paul's words to the church in Corinth. This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become **a new person**. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, **who brought us back to himself through Christ**. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a

When you trust your life to Jesus, when you **repent, believe, and begin to follow**; you are a new person. And it is God who has not been waiting for you to get to him by achieving something, but he **"brought you back to himself through Christ."** That doesn't look like you climbing up to him, does it?

Paul again to the church in Ephesus...**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.** ⁴ For he **chose us** in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Ephesians 1:3-4

Blessed, past tense, meaning he's already done this. We aren't achieving or earning it. And it says that **he chose me to be all of those things that I cannot possibly achieve or earn.**

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 1 John 3:1

Now we get that very important keyword, adoption. He called us or named us his children and that is what we are. **We have been adopted into his family, into his presence, brought close, even though we are broken, sinful, and undone.**

And if we are adopted children of the king what does that make us? **Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.** Romans 8:17

I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable kingdom. This describes adoption.

The punch line to that string of scriptures is that you can't get any closer than Jesus being in you through his Spirit. Stop trying to get somewhere when you are already there. Stop trying to achieve something that's already been achieved through Jesus.

Therefore, if you are already there, the only thing to do is called...Abiding.

Living into the new reality of adoption or not returning to the human mindset.

This takes us back to the hotspots from last week; **creation, word, body, and spirit**.

If you see any **repetition**, mark in in your Bible or your notes page. "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ **You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.** ⁴ **Remain in me, and I will remain in you.** For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and **you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.** John 15:1-4

Remain or abide is to continue to be present, to be held or kept. This is about **avoiding hurry or mentally moving on** to the next thing. **We are to remain in the reality that God has adopted us** and we are already in, so stay there.

As we get further into this series, we are going to suggest some **spiritual practices** for you to try. **They aren't about getting close to God, they are about remaining, abiding in his presence, where he can transform our lives.** He becomes present with us and then we can hear his voice. **We get to practice listening** because we are giving him our attention and focus. **We are living into, or practicing the new reality that we have been adopted, chosen, and heirs of the king.**

The human mindset is so strong, so what do we do to combat it? Continually refocus by asking, "God how can you be so good."

Here's the whole picture. (Whole diagram pg. 35)

This all boils down to God being good. It starts and ends there. If that isn't the case, then why listen.

There are two categories of talking about God's goodness:

1. God's grace toward me, a sinner.
2. How I see his goodness or kingdom coming around me.

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. James 1:17

"Asking 'God, how can You be so good?' is powerful and transforming because the question bypasses our doubts and anchors us in a powerful assumption: that god has indeed already brought us close to him." 36-37 You can actually trick yourself into ignoring your wrong views of God so you can hear the God who is gracious and good.

We ask this question at the beginning of all of our bridge groups. It helps us bypass our obsession with our striving and ourselves.

Practice Listening

1. How have you seen the human mindset affect how you hear God? Right now I want to challenge you to put that into words so that it becomes real. You can look at it and deal with it. Write it on your outline or in your phone right now.

This second challenge is a way to start praying or beginning your prayer time.

2. "God how can you be so good as to bring me close even though I am sinful and continually demonstrate your goodness through..."

Look at the two categories we used earlier. How can you be so good to me, a sinner, and then on to all of the things God is saying and doing around you that demonstrate his goodness?

3. Listen to scripture. We are going to do this together, but I want to encourage you to use these scriptures under the Jesus mindset this week.

Read them, meditate on them so you know the truth about how God loves you and has come close to you through Jesus.

Let's read this one together. As we read, I want you to shout out the bold parts. **This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!** ¹⁸ **And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a**

God is always speaking and he wants to speak to you.

Can you begin to put aside the wrong views of God and your desire to accomplish something and simply trust in his goodness?