

Four Requirements



Hearing God's Voice (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme, "Hearing God's Voice."

Let me begin my talk today with a brief, personal comment. In my own life, I find that hearing God's voice correctly is usually the key factor in achieving true spiritual success. I can't think of anything at this time that seems more important to me in my own personal walk with God than learning to hear God's voice and hearing it correctly.

In my talk yesterday I explained that we hear God's voice not with our physical ears, but with our heart. We were challenged yesterday by Solomon's prayer, "Give me a hearing heart," and we read that the Lord was pleased with that request. I asked you yesterday and I'll ask you again today, have you ever asked God for a hearing heart?

Conversely, we saw that when God's people fail to hear God's voice, the two words used to describe their heart condition were hard and calloused. This means that in order to hear God's voice we must cultivate sensitivity in our hearts in the same way as a blind person reading braille cultivates sensitivity in his fingers. A blind person can get results out of braille with his fingertips that an ordinary person could never achieve. The reason is he's cultivated a special kind of sensitivity and I believe we have to cultivate a similar kind of sensitivity in our hearts if we really want to hear God's voice correctly.

You see, one thing about God is He doesn't shout. Very rarely do you read about God shouting. Some people's picture of God is just a big man shouting with a loud voice, but that's not God at all. As a matter of fact, we'll look at some examples in the course of these talks where God spoke in a whisper.

Well, today I'm going to deal with four specific requirements for a achieving this kind of sensitivity of heart. The first two requirements go closely together and I would describe them as "attention" and "humility." Let me just say those two words again, attention and humility. These requirements are stated many times in the book of Proverbs and we need to bear in mind that Proverbs was written by the man who had asked God for a hearing heart, by Solomon.

Let me give you just three passages from the book of Proverbs where these two requirements are joined together. Proverbs 4:20:

> "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings." (KJV)

The two requirements: attend, incline thine ear. To incline your ear means to bow down your head. To bow down your head is a mark of reverent, respectful humility. You're not arguing with God. You're not dictating to God. You're waiting to hear from God. The inclined ear is an essential part of hearing from God.

Proverbs 5:1:

> "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding." (KJV)

Again, the same two conditions: attend and bow the ear.

And then again, in Proverbs 22:17:

> "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." (KJV)

The implication of the first part of that verse, "bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise," is that if we don't bow down our ear, we won't hear. If we don't have the right attitude, the attitude of humility, respectfulness, reverence, then we will not hear. So it says, "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." You see, always it's the heart that hears the voice of God and we have to apply our heart. We have to attend. We have to focus our attention.

Let me sum up those two requirements briefly. First of all, to hear God's voice we must give Him our undivided attention, attend, apply thine heart. Now, that's totally contrary to contemporary culture where most people are used to listening to at least two things at one time. I remember when I had teenage children that were still in high school. I remember seeing one of my daughters sitting there at the kitchen counter doing her homework and watching a television program at the same time. And my mind reeled. I've been a student; I've been a teacher, I've been a professor at a university, and I absolutely could never do that. If I'm watching television, I cannot focus on my homework. If I'm focusing on my homework, I could not intelligently watch television. Now I'm not saying she didn't achieve any results; I'm sure she didn't achieve the maximum.

But that's typical of contemporary American culture, culture in the Western world. People are afraid of silence. Do you know that? They always want some noise going on, background music, something somehow to distract them. But if you want to hear God's voice, you can't afford to be distracted. You've got to focus both ears and all your mind on God. You have to cultivate attention. It's a gift or a quality that many people just don't possess today.

Secondly, as I've said, we have to bow down our ear. We have to be humble and teachable. Many people read the Bible or pray to God with their own preconceptions. They believe they know what God should have said. They believe they know what God is going to say. And if God actually has said something different or does say something different, they're simply unable to hear. They're made deaf by their own preconceptions. Most people who belong to any kind of denomination read the Bible with their own denominational slant. They think, "Well, if it's not in my denomination's teaching, it isn't in the Bible." Believe me, I don't think there's any denomination of which that is completely true. There are things in the Bible that we don't hear many times in church, and if we only expect to hear from God what we've heard, maybe in church, we're spiritually deaf; we'll miss what God is saying to us. So, the first two requirements for hearing God were "attention" and "humility."

Let's look at the next two now for awhile. I would say the next two requirements are "time" and "quietness." Let me say that again, time and quietness. How remote those two words are from our contemporary culture. Two things that almost nobody has today are time to be quiet, and yet this is stated so many times in the book of Psalms about hearing God. For instance, in Psalm 46:10, it says:

> "Be still, and know that I am God..." (NIV)

Out of stillness we hear God's voice. An alternative translation of this same verse says this:

> "Cease striving and know..." (NASB)

And the alternative version in the margin of that is, "Let go, relax and know that I am God." Put those together: "Be still and know; cease striving and know; let go, relax and know." What does that speak to you about? To me it speaks of quietness and relaxation, and this requires time. We hear from God very many times when we take time to wait for God. God doesn't always speak the first instant that we would like to hear.

Psalm 62:1 says this. They are the words of David:

> "My soul waits in silence for God only." (NASB)

Tremendous words: "My soul waits in silence for God only." You have to wait. You have to be silent, and your attention has to be focused on one person only, God.

And then in Psalm 62:5, just four verses further on, David addresses his own soul and tells his soul how to wait.

> "My soul, wait in silence for God only." (NASB)

Have you ever said that to your soul, "My soul, wait in silence for God only." The emphasis is on waiting in silence for God, being in an attitude of attention, of reverence, of quietness, of relaxation, our hearts and minds focused on God.

I want to say that there is no better preparation through which we can achieve this attitude than the preparation of worship. This is beautifully brought out in another Psalm, Psalm 95:6-8:

> "Come, let us worship and bow down; [and again, the emphasis is on humility] Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (NASB)

Always that warning against hardening our hearts if we want to hear God's voice. So how do we prepare our hearts? Well, there is no better way of preparation than that which is outlined in those words I've just read to you, "Let us worship; let us bow down; let us kneel; let us come to God with reverence; let us open our hearts to Him; let us worship Him, acknowledge His greatness, His majesty, His sovereignty, His wisdom. The Lord is a great God," the Scripture says. We need to give Him all the respect and all the reverence of which we're capable. We need to appreciate the tremendous privilege of hearing from God that the Almighty God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe will speak to us, individually.

Today there's little respect for authority in our contemporary culture but God still demands respect. And if we come to Him, we must come to Him with respect, respect that's expressed in worship, in humbling ourselves before Him, in kneeling before Him if need be, in acknowledging His greatness, in opening our hearts to Him. So when you want to hear from God, approach Him with worship.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing with you how we have to let God set the time and the place if we are to hear His voice.

Radio Program

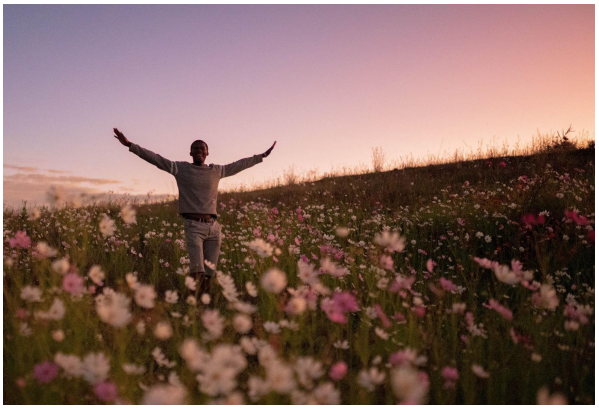
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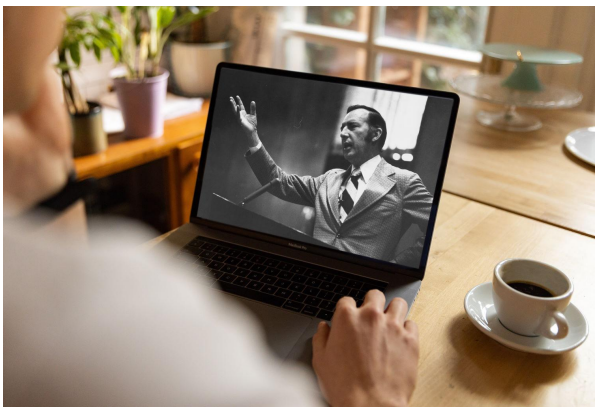
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