

Sermon Series: Name Your Need—Lord of Life, Westfield—2/25/2001

Title: “How do I know when God is talking?”

Texts: Hebrews 1: 1-3; Colossians 3: 16; & Romans 8: 16

Introduction: *Illus.: Making Dad listen*

Theme: Prayer is not a maneuver to get God to listen and answer but rather a spiritual faith exercise in Christ by which we focus our attention on Him and confidently wait and look for his answer

False ways to decipher God’s answer to my prayers

- **Leading God**
 1. The “*Bless this mess*” approach
 2. Running ahead of God is always a dangerous thing to do
 3. **Illus.: Settling for Something Less**
- **My feelings**
 1. **Illus.: The Art of Listening**
 2. Feel good spirituality which seeks to bending God’s will to support making us “*happy*”
 3. **Illus.: Guard Your Interpretation**
- **Majority opinion**
 1. Looking for associations who tell us what we want to hear
 2. Opinion polling what we think God and we ought to do
 3. **Illus.: “When a Simple Majority Won’t Do” Margaret Thatcher on Spiritual Discernment**

Knowing God’s expressed will so that we know what to listen and look for in His answer

- **God’s will for my life is that it be lived with purpose and power**
 1. Wonderfully made to live with a purpose *Psalm 139: 14-16*
 2. Restored to the “*image of holiness*” by the power of Jesus *Genesis 1: 26 and Ephesians 4: 24*
- **God’s will for my life is that I be saved for heaven**
 1. God never seeks to eternally harm me *This is good and pleases God our Savior. He wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth. 1 Timothy 2: 3*
 2. God desires to confirm and establish my hold on life *Ephesians 1: 13-14a*
- **God’s will is that I walk a holy life lined-up with God’s will**
 1. **Illus.: All Ears**
 2. Retraining from all sexual impurity (*It is God’s will that you keep away from sexual sin as a mark of your devotion to him. 1 Thessalonians 4: 3*)
 3. Imitating God in Christ (*Imitate God, since you are the children he loves. Live in love as Christ also loved us. He gave his life for us as an offering and sacrifice, a soothing aroma to God. Ephesians 5: 1-2*)
- **God’s will is that I shine my witness most brilliantly through suffering**
 1. Called to follow in Christ’s footsteps *1 Peter 2: 19-21*
 2. Answering to the hope that is within with gentleness and respect *1 Peter 3: 15*

Three sure-fired ways to hear God’s voice

- **Look for it in Jesus**
 1. **PRINT AND READ HEBREWS 1: 1-3**
 2. If you want to know what God’s final word on life—look to Jesus—He was God’s First Word (John 1) and His last
 3. If you want to know what “*the way*” is—look to Jesus as the Truth--not to new theories,psychologies, religious truths
- **Search for it in God’s Word and among His people**
 1. **PRINT AND READ COLOSSIANS 1: 16**
 2. When we set up home in God words (*in-dwell*) we will see more of God’s path for our life because it is scripted
 3. When we are around God’s people (fellow believers) we will have God’s word and will confirmed in our sharing
- **Listen for it in the Spirit’s inner prompting of your heart**
 1. **PRINT AND READ ROMANS 8: 16**
 2. The more we mature and grow in our faith the more we will be tuned into the Spirit’s inner voice
 3. *But as Scripture says: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him.” God has revealed those things to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches everything, especially the deep things of God. 1 Corinthians 2: 9-10*
 4. **Illus.: Hearing with our heart**

Settling for Something Less

Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, told a story about a goose who was wounded and who landed in a barnyard with some chickens. He played with the chickens and ate with the chickens. After a while that goose thought he was a chicken. One day a flight of geese came over, migrating to their home. They gave a honk up there in the sky, and he heard it. Kierkegaard said, "Something stirred within the breast of this goose. Something called him to the skies. He began to flap the wings he hadn't used, and he rose a few feet into the air. Then he stopped, and he settled back again into the mud of the barnyard. He heard the cry, but he settled for less."

The Art of Listening

The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.

Guard Your Interpretation

Reading God's hand into circumstances can be an evasion of genuine commitment to being His person in them. It can be an insidious alternative to giving Him your heart--because it keeps your attention directed outward rather than inward, where His chisel bites. ...

We have elevated coincidence to the status of miracle, and the interpretation of coincidence to gospel. We can routinely ask God to intervene in our circumstances while hoping He'll keep His nose out of inner things like our spiritual indifference and pride. Citation: John Boykin in *The Gospel of Coincidence*.

When a Simple Majority Won't Do

Ideally, when Christians meet, as Christians, to take counsel together, their purpose is not--or should not be--to ascertain what is the mind of the majority but what is the mind of the Holy Spirit--something which may be quite different Citation: English Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the *Saturday Evening Post* (July/August 1989)

All Ears

One day my three-year-old granddaughter, Beverly, was playing with her toys. Her mother, who was folding laundry across the room, noticed Beverly's shirt was dirty and needed to be changed. After calling two times with no response, her mother gave her the full three-name call: "Beverly Elizabeth Provost, did you hear me?" Beverly answered, "Yes, Mama. My ears did, but my legs didn't."

Hearing with Our Heart

In September 1993, with the Major League Baseball season nearing its end, the first-place Philadelphia Phillies visited the second-place Montreal Expos. In the first game of the series, the home team Expos came to bat one inning trailing 7-4. Their first two batters reached base. The manager sent a pinch hitter to the plate, rookie Curtis Pride, who had never gotten a hit in the major leagues. Pride took his warm up swings, walked to the plate, and on the first pitch laced a double, scoring two runners. The stadium thundered as 45,757 fans screamed their approval. The Expos third base coach called time, walked toward Pride, and told him to take off his batting helmet. *What's wrong with my helmet?* wondered the rookie. Then, realizing what his coach meant, Pride tipped his cap to the appreciative fans. After the game, someone asked Pride if he could hear the cheering. This person wasn't giving the rookie a hard time. Curtis Pride is 95 percent deaf. "Here," Pride said, pointing to his heart. "I could hear it here." Sometimes we hear things most strongly in our heart. Curtis Pride heard the fans' approval in his heart. It's in our hearts that God wants us to know his approval of our faith in Jesus Christ. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16).

Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our ancestors at many different times and in many different ways through the prophets. ²In these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. God made his Son responsible for everything. His Son is the one through whom God made the universe. ³His Son is the reflection of God's glory and the exact likeness of God's being. He holds everything together through his powerful words. After he had cleansed people from their sins, he received the highest position, the one next to the Father in heaven.

Col. 3:16

Let Christ's word with all its wisdom and richness live in you. Use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach and instruct each other about God's kindness. Sing to God in your hearts.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies within our spirit that we are God's children.