

Hearing God's Voice - Teacher's Notes
Lesson Five
Hearing God through Prayer

No meeting in December. Next meeting is January.

I. Review

The last two lessons we studied how God speaks to us through the Bible and through mediating on His words.

II. This lesson will be on hearing God through prayer.

Blackaby: (p.113) What God has to say to us is infinitely more important than what we have to say to him, yet we generally monopolize the conversation.

A. What is prayer?

- A relationship, not an activity
- Two-way communication, but not communication between two equal parties.

Blackaby: (p. 113) The single greatest reason to pray is to take the focus away from us and turn it to God.

- We are finite, weak, easily overwhelmed
- We easily exhaust our limited strength and knowledge.
- We are not the center of the universe. God is.
- He does not exist to serve us. We exist to serve Him.
- Prayer is the process by which God helps us rearrange our priorities.

We need fresh encounters with Christ.

- So the things in our world don't obscure His glory
- Prayer helps us experience and encounter God as he really is.
- Prayer helps us to know God.

Motivation for prayer....

B. Why do you pray?

- Should not primarily be what is on our heart but what is on God's.
- Lord's prayer.... "Give us this day our daily bread" ... but the key to this prayer is "Your will be done..."

Prayer does not come naturally.

Romans 8:26-27

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

NASU

We do not know what to pray unless the Holy Spirit helps us.

We should not begin asking God for things before seeking what is on his mind.

Otherwise we may ask for the wrong things.

Jesus said he only did what the Father told him to do. He heard from the Father and did according to what He heard.

As we hear God, he adjusts our hearts and desires to His.

C. To Whom Do We Pray?

Matt 6:9... Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the Father.

The perfect Father relates to his children with love.

He is always there. Responds to every need.

He is kind and there is joy in his presence.

God is not our equal.

Eccles 5:2

Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. NASU

Do more listening than talking.

Find ways to be quiet and listen for the Lord to speak. Clear your life of distractions.

Jesus went to a lonely place to pray...early in the morning...late at night.

Hearing God by Larry Krieger (p. 135)

There is a story told of a man who in utter frustration asked his pastor why God had not been giving him answers. Unable to hear the pastor's mumbled reply, the man moved closer, asking the pastor to repeat what he had said. Still unable to hear the reply, he moved closer and closer until finally his ear almost touched the pastor. Then he heard in the faintest voice, "Sometimes God whispers so that we will move closer to Him."

D. What Happens When We Pray?

Blackaby: (p121) Prayer is not designed as a means for us to change God. It is a time for God to change us.

Prayer is a transforming activity.

Blackaby: (p.122) The key to God transforming us is not found in what we say as we pray but in what we hear. As God speaks to us, we cannot remain unchanged.

Isaiah 6 - Isaiah saw God on his throne and was instantly changed. He was sent in a new direction by God.

Acts - Saul of Tarsus heard the voice of God and was changed into a new man...new vision...new calling.

Since God never changes...we must.

E. What Do God's Answers Look Like?

God always responds to our prayers.

But....answers don't always come as we expect them to.

Ex....Peter released from jail and those praying for him did not expect him at the door.

We can become frustrated when we pray for one thing and receive another.

Personal Example....prayed for a washer and received flowers.

YES.....God has many promises for us.

Jer 33:3

Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' NASU

Matt 21:22

You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it."
NLT

John 16:23

Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. NASU

No.... sometimes we must accept NO for an answer.

- We often pray without seeking God's will
- We do not always understand what we are asking for.
- We do not always see things from an eternal perspective.
- Ex. Jesus in the Garden....God said NO...What if he said YES?
- James...executed....Peter...miraculously released.

Yes, but not yet.....we must accept God's timing.

Ex. Abraham....had to wait 25 years.

Ex. Hannah...prayed for some years before God promised a son.

God never acts prematurely and he is never late.

His ways are best. We should adjust our schedule to His.

Waiting is hard to do...necessary for faith to grow...preparation time.

Silence.....

1. Consider Sin...

Ps 66:18

If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; NASU

Isa 59:1-2

Listen! The LORD 's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call.

² It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. NLT

Ps 24:3-5

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.

⁵ He shall receive a blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. NASU

If our prayers are met with silence, we should examine ourselves to make sure we are not harboring sin.

2. Consider Broken Relationships...

Matt 6:14-15

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. NLT

The sin of broken relationships keeps us receiving from God. When we face God's silence, we should examine our relationships.

3. Consider lack of faith....

Why ask God for something that you don't believe he will give? Jesus rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith. He praised faith in many who came to him.

F. God's Pattern for Prayer

1. God takes the initiative to cause us to want to pray. When we pray it is because God has summoned us into his presence.

2. The Spirit of God reveals the will of God through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit takes the words and truths of Scripture and impresses them on our minds. As we pray, he will bring specific Scriptures to our mind.

3. The Holy Spirit helps us pray in agreement with what God is saying. Our hearts and minds align with God's will in faith.

4. When God gives us direction in prayer, he will confirm that word to us through the Bible, circumstances, and other believers.

5. We adjust our lives to what God says. Once God speaks to us, we cannot remain the same. It is impossible to obey God without making adjustments.

6. We obey God. Why hear God if we are not going to obey.

7. God works in and through us to accomplish his revealed purposes.

8. We experience God through our obedience as the Holy Spirit revealed we would.

III. **Key thought:** Prayer is primarily about what God has to say to us.

IV. Questions

1. Do you prepare yourself before entering into God's presence in prayer?

2. Do you allow ample time in prayer for God to speak to you? How much of your prayer time is taken up with your speaking and how much is devoted to God speaking?

3. Is there sin in your life that is affecting how God is responding to your prayers? A broken relationship? Unbelief?

4. Are you awaiting an answer from God? What are you doing to prepare for God's answer when it comes?