

God Really Does Want To Talk To You

Luke 8:4-15

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I just love my cell phone. I love how I can stay in contact with people no matter where I am. But sometimes I don't have very good reception. Sometimes I can't get any service. Occasionally I'll be talking and realize there's nobody on there. That's called a dropped call. It's so frustrating. I have to hang up and call them back, sometimes over and over before I can get through. That's called having poor reception. How's your reception? Not your cell phone reception, but your ability to hear God speaking? How's your reception with God. God really does want to talk to you. He has so much he wants to tell you.

Now, I'll admit, one of the most dangerous phrases in the English language is the phrase, **"God told me to...."** How do you argue with that? **"God told me to...."** A lot of really stupid things have been blamed on God. Wouldn't you agree? When I hear someone say, **"God told me to...,"** I get a little nervous. I get a little skeptical. When someone says, **"God told me to...,"** I want to ask, **"How do you know it was God? And what were you smoking when you heard God speaking to you?"**

As weird as it may sound, God really does speak to people and he really does want to speak to you. Today we're going to look at how you can improve your reception so you can hear God when he speaks to you. God really does want to talk to you. In fact, God made you for that purpose - to be in relationship with him. He made you different from all the other creatures in the world. He made you with the ability to talk with Him. He's talking to you all the time. You just need to improve your reception so you can hear Him. Jesus says, ***"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."***-Luke 8:8. He's talking about improving your reception.

There's a story Jesus told that talks about the varying degrees of reception that people have with God. The story is called the ***Parable of the Sower***. Listen to what he says, ***"While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable. 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.'*** When He had said this He called out and said, ***'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"*** (Luke 8:4-8)

What's Jesus describing here? He's talking about a farmer who goes out to plant his field. He's not planting one seed at a time. He's broadcasting. He's throwing the seed out over the ground and letting it fall where it may. The seed falls on different kinds of soil and each kind of soil has a varying degree of receptivity to the seed. Jesus explains. The farmer represents God. The seed represents what God is trying to tell us - His Word. The soil

represents how receptive we are to God. He's telling us that our receptivity to God will determine the fruitfulness of our lives. It's not the amount of things you accomplish or the amount of money you accumulate that determines your productivity in this life, as the world would have you think. The productivity of your life in the eyes of God is measured by how receptive you are to what He tells you.

Having good reception with God is very important. First of all, **IT PROVES YOU ARE IN GOD'S FAMILY**, that you belong to Him. It verifies that you're a true believer. It confirms that you're a follower of Jesus Christ and that you have a relationship with Him. You know His voice when you hear it and you obey Him. Jesus says, *"My sheep recognize My voice and they follow Me"* (John 10:27). That's what it means to be a child of God.

Another reason it's so important to be able to hear God speaking is that **IT PROTECTS YOU FROM MISTAKES**. Hearing God speaking to you protects you from making bad decisions. It protects you from self-defeating and self-destructive behavior. God will warn you in advance and keep you from falling into sin and self-destruction. The Bible says, *"Listen for God's voice in everything you do, and everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track"* (Proverbs 3:6).

There's a third reason to improve your reception with God. If you do, **IT WILL PRODUCE THE BEST IN YOU**. God promises in Psalm 32:8, *"I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you."* Listening to God will give you the greatest personal success. I'm not talking about success in the way the world defines it. You may or may not get rich financially by listening to God. You may or may not acquire fame and fortune by listening to God. But you will be rich in ways the world neither understands nor offers. Listening to God will produce Christ-like character in you.

The person who listens to God is wise indeed. So how can you improve your reception with God? How can you improve your ability to hear God speaking to you?

The **FIRST** thing you can do is **CULTIVATE AN OPEN MIND**. The number one barrier to hearing God speak is resistance. If you think you don't need to hear from God, or that God isn't able to speak to you personally, you've already closed your mind to the possibility. I'm constantly amazed at how many people think they are open-minded when they really aren't, especially when it comes to God. They've closed their minds to the possibility that God is talking to them. They're blocking the signal by their resistance. This is what Jesus is talking about when he describes the first kind of soil - the footpath. Jesus says, *"Some seed fell on the path and it was trampled on and the birds of the air ate it up."* (Luke 8:5) He explains, *"Those along the footpath are the ones who hear. And then the devil comes along and takes away the word from their heart so that they cannot believe and be saved."* (Luke 8:12)

There are two characteristics of a footpath: its hardness and its narrowness. Do you know any hardhearted, narrow-minded people? I do. And I bet you do too. They're closed to the possibility of God in their life. They're closed minded.

What causes a closed mind toward God? There are three things. **The first thing is PRIDE.** We think, "I can handle my own problems. I don't need any help." "I don't need anyone telling me how to live my life." Pride causes us to close our minds to God. **The second thing is FEAR.** A lot of people are closed minded toward God because they're afraid of what God might say to them. They're running through life - keeping so busy out of fear that in the stillness of any given moment, they just may hear God speaking to them. What if God confronts them about something they aren't ready to give up? What if God calls them to do something they don't want to do? Out of fear they close their minds to God.

The third thing that closes a closed mind toward God is BITTERNESS. Bitterness and resentment harden a person. The truth of the matter is—you're going to get hurt in life. Sometimes other people hurt you intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. Either way, it's going to hurt. What you do with that hurt makes all the difference. If you hold on to it and refuse to let it go, it will harden you toward God and you'll lose your receptivity, you'll lose your ability to hear God speaking to you.

Some of you have been hurt very badly. Some of you have been betrayed and deceived. Some of you have been abused and rejected. Some of you have been abandoned. Some of you have suffered great loss and sorrow. Please hear this: God isn't happy when you hurt. He grieves with you. I know sometimes when people open up to me and tell me what they've been through, it breaks my heart. I have to fight back the tears. Believe me—it grieves God even more for His heart is far greater than mine. His capacity to love and feel your pain is far greater than mine. **Don't let your hurt turn you away from God - let it turn you to God.**

Hanging on to your pain will only cause bitterness and that will harden your heart toward God. Don't allow your hurt to keep you from God. Let go of your bitterness and resentment so that you can hear God speak words of comfort and encouragement to you. The tragedy of a bitter person is the hard heartedness it produces. Nothing can grow there. Nothing can take root. God's voice will not be heard where there is bitterness and resentment.

The Bible says, *"Get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your soul."* (James 1:21) We've got to cultivate an open mind by getting rid of the bitterness and resentment, and by humbling ourselves before the Lord.

The **SECOND** thing to do is **TAKE TIME TO LISTEN FOR GOD.** That means you've got to slow down. You've got to take time to be still before God, and that won't happen unless you build it into your daily schedule. **The number one barrier to hearing God speak is**

resistance. The number two barrier to hearing God speak is **hurry**. When I think of how people rush from one thing to another today, it blows me away. It takes effort to resist the hurried life. When we get too busy, God gets crowded out. A good way to tell how much you value your relationship with God is to look at how much time you give to talking with God each day and to reading His Word. God commands us, *"Be still, and know that I am God."*—Psalm 46:10. You won't hear God speaking to you if you're never still. You can't say, OK, God, I'm giving you five minutes. Speak to me. Hurry, I've got to go. It doesn't work that way. We have to slow down and wait on the Lord. *"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength"*—Isaiah 40:31, because they will hear God speaking.

The second kind of soil Jesus talks about is the **shallow soil**. He says, *"Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. This seed began to grow but it soon withered and died for lack of moisture."*—Luke 8:6. Jesus explains, *"The rocky soil represents those who hear the message with joy but like young plants in such soil their roots don't go very deep. They believe for a while but they wilt when the hot winds of testing blow."*—Luke 8:13. What is Jesus saying? He's describing the person with a **superficial mind**. This kind of person hears God speaking but doesn't allow what he hears to change how he lives. He's too shallow to enable God's word to take root in his life. This person may get excited about what he hears on Sunday, but by the time Monday rolls around he's already forgotten what was said. We all are guilty of forgetting what we hear. That's why we need each other. The Bible says, *"Don't give up the habit of meeting together. Instead, let us encourage one another."* (Hebrews 10:25) Hearing God's word read and explained once a week isn't enough. We need to read God's word daily and listen for God to speak to us. We need to be still and listen for God.

The **THIRD** thing to improve your reception is **GET RID OF THE DISTRACTIONS** in your life. You can't hear God speaking when your mind is preoccupied. If you've got a lot of noise in your life, you're not going to hear God speaking. This brings us to the third kind of soil. Jesus says, *"Other seed fell in the weeds and the weeds grew with it and strangled it."* (Luke 8:7). Then Jesus explains, *"The seed that fell among the weeds stands for those who hear but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries and riches and pleasures and they don't mature"* (Luke 8:14). The important phrase here is *"as they go on their way."* These people often start off in the faith with enthusiasm and zeal but as they go through life they lose some of that initial passion for God. They let worries distract them. They let acquiring wealth distract them. They let worldly pleasures distract them. These are the three **most common weeds** that choke God out of our lives - **worry, wealth and pleasures**.

Let me ask you, how much effort does it take to grow weeds? None at all, right? Weeds are a sign of neglect. It takes no effort at all to grow weeds. When our lives are filled with worries, riches and pleasures, we're not making the effort it takes to cultivate the soil of our hearts so we can be receptive to God. **The weed-ridden soil is the preoccupied mind** where

the seeds of faith are choked out by worries, riches and pleasures. The voice of God is drowned out.

In the Old Testament there was a guy named Elijah. He wanted to hear God speak so he went up on a mountain to talk to God. God sent a great wind. It roared past Elijah, but God was not in the wind. God sent an earthquake. The mountain started to crumble, but God was not in the earthquake. God sends a raging fire that burned down the side of the mountain, but God was not in the fire. Then it says, *"God spoke to Elijah in a whisper, in the gentle sound of a whisper, a still small voice."* The problem with a whisper is must be quiet in order to hear it. This may shock you, but God has been trying to speak to you. He's been whispering to you, but you can't hear Him because you're never quiet, you're never still. Get rid of the distractions if you want to improve your reception with God.

The **FOURTH** thing you need to do to improve your reception with God is decide to **COOPERATE WITH WHAT HE SAYS**. This is very important. If you don't want to obey God then you're not going to hear Him speaking to you. If you want to hear God speaking to you then you have got to decide a head of time that you're going to obey what He tells you. Jesus explains, *"The seeds that fell in the good soil stand for those who hear the message and retain it in a good and obedient heart and they persist until they bear fruit"* (Luke 8:15). The fourth kind of soil represents those with a **WILLING HEART**. Notice the characteristics of these folks. **First**, they listen for God to speak and recognize His voice. **Second**, they cling to the words God speaks and they embrace them as truth. **Third**, they obey God's word and it bears fruit in their lives. That fruit in turn spreads seeds of faith to others. That's how it's supposed to work. Did you know that? Did you know that you're supposed to mature in your faith so that you can in turn spread seeds of faith to others and lead them to believe in Jesus Christ? Did you know that? What you learn from God is to be passed on to others. Did you know that? The good soil is a willing heart, willing to listen and obey and pass what they have heard on to others in word and deed.

May God grant us the grace to have willing hearts where He can plant His Word.