

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

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Years ago, we learned a worship chorus that drew its lyrics from Psalm 29. One of the catchy things about that psalm is its repetition of one thematic phrase: “the voice of the LORD.”

See if you can catch the emphatic emotion of these verses:

Psalm 29:3-9

³ *The voice of the LORD echoes above the sea.*

The God of glory thunders.

The LORD thunders over the mighty sea.

⁴ *The voice of the LORD is powerful;*

the voice of the LORD is majestic.

⁵ *The voice of the LORD splits the mighty cedars;*

the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

⁷ *The voice of the LORD strikes*

with bolts of lightning.

⁸ *The voice of the LORD makes the barren wilderness quake;*

the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ *The voice of the LORD twists mighty oaks*

and strips the forests bare.

In his Temple everyone shouts, “Glory!”

To know the voice of the LORD is a wondrous and exciting thing! Here are just a few lessons from the Scriptures—from some who knew Him, and some who didn’t:

Egyptian Ignorance

Exodus 5:1 Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness.”

² “Is that so?” retorted Pharaoh. “And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? **I don’t know the Lord**, and I will not let Israel go.”

Jericho Savvy

Joshua 2:8 Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them.

⁹ **“I know the Lord** has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you

through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. ¹¹ No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.”

Micah’s Foolishness

Judges 17:7 One day a young Levite, who had been living in Bethlehem in Judah, arrived in that area. ⁸ He had left Bethlehem in search of another place to live, and as he traveled, he came to the hill country of Ephraim. He happened to stop at Micah’s house as he was traveling through. ⁹ “Where are you from?” Micah asked him.

He replied, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am looking for a place to live.”

¹⁰ “Stay here with me,” Micah said, “and you can be a father and priest to me. I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, plus a change of clothes and your food.” ¹¹ The Levite agreed to this, and the young man became like one of Micah’s sons.

¹² So Micah installed the Levite as his personal priest, and he lived in Micah’s house. ¹³ “**I know the Lord** will bless me now,” Micah said, “because I have a Levite serving as my priest.”

Samuel’s Discovery

1 Samuel 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet **know the LORD**; the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

Samuel had heard the LORD call his name twice, but he did not know it was the LORD.

As we look at Samuel’s story, we will find that there’s a significant difference between hearing and knowing...

Relationship with another person is not established based on the facts you may know about that person. Nor upon the number of people you know who know that person. Nor even if you have seen the person face-to-face at a speech, or a concert, or in passing.

In particular, relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is not predicated on praying a certain prayer. Or memorizing Scripture verses. Or reading many books about Him. Or hanging out with people who know Him. Or engaging in acts of kindness. Or being religious.

It boils down to this: Do you recognize His voice when He speaks to you?

The question is not “Does God speak to you?” For He speaks or has spoken to everyone.

Psalms 19:1 NLT The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. ² Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. ³ They speak without a

sound or word; their voice is never heard. ⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.

And most people have heard His voice more directly—in dreams, visions, hunches, coincidences, unexpected encounters, or premonitions—though they may not have understood their origin or meaning.

The question is: “Do you *recognize* God when He speaks to you?”

The secondary question is this: “When you recognize His voice, what do you do about it?”

One common response is to make promises—rash promises, which have not been thoroughly thought through or diligently planned—and hasty prayers, advising God about what is needed.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. It is evil to make mindless offerings to God. ² Don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few.

Another common response is to disobey His words. You may do so knowingly and openly—refusing to do what He asks of you. Or, you may do so secretly—simply ignoring His words, or procrastinating until they are forgotten or the window of opportunity has passed.

Ecclesiastes 5:4 NLT When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to Him.

Haggai 1:2 MSG “The people procrastinate. They say this isn't the right time to rebuild my Temple, the Temple of God.”

What does God speak about?

He speaks to guide you.

To forewarn you.

To direct you.

To comfort you.

To empower you.

To give you understanding.

To give you compassion.

To question your presuppositions.

To motivate you.

In summary, He speaks to encourage you.

How can one receive such encouragement from God? It's not magic. It must be cultivated. By giving God your attention. Frequently.

When Eli realized it was the LORD calling young Samuel, he told him, "Go back and lie down. When He calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'"

"Go back and lie down." Listen. Wait and listen. Then, respond, and listen some more.

Pray. Without guidelines. Without a theme. Sit in silence. Or read a psalm. Or just listen to your own thoughts, as you might when going to bed at night. If a feeling arises—anxiety, worry, fear, anger, or joy—bring it to the LORD and ask Him (not "Why?" but) what to do with it. Then, follow His lead.

*¹ Samuel 3:9 Samuel returned to his bed. ¹⁰ Then God came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen." ¹¹⁻
¹⁴ God said to Samuel, "Listen carefully. I'm getting ready to do something in Israel."*

Do you hear God speaking? Are you listening carefully? Are you ready to respond?