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## Joshua Nations

# Lesson 3. Hearing God's Voice

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

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## I. HEARING GOD'S VOICE: A KEY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICE

- A. God desires a personal relationship with each believer, and communication is at the heart of any relationship. God speaks to us in various ways, but we must learn how to listen.
- B. **Biblical Foundation:** Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). This promise gives every believer confidence that God wants to speak to them.

## II. WAYS GOD COMMUNICATES

- A. **Through the Written Word:** The most reliable and foundational way that God communicates is through Scripture. The Bible is God's revealed word, serving as the ultimate authority and guide for all prophetic impressions. The Word should always be the lens through which we interpret any other form of revelation or impression we receive.
- B. **In Your Thoughts (Still Small Voice - 1 Kings 19:11-13):** God often speaks in a quiet, subtle way—a "still small voice" in our thoughts. Just as He spoke to Elijah, not through the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper, God communicates directly to our minds. These thoughts can sometimes be so gentle or ordinary that we might overlook them. It takes faith and sensitivity to discern these impressions, especially when they contrast with louder, more obvious distractions. For example, you may sense God speaking through a thought like, "Pray for this person," or "Go help them."
- C. **Mental Pictures (Acts 10:11 - Peter's Vision of the Sheet):** God can also communicate through mental pictures or visions—recurring images that come into our minds. These are not just random thoughts but may carry specific meaning or revelation. Just as Peter saw a sheet descending from heaven in his vision in Acts 10, God can give us pictures that unfold His will, purpose, or a prophetic message for ourselves or others. Recognizing and interpreting these images requires both prayer and understanding of the context.
- D. **Emotional Stirrings (Luke 24:32 - "Did not our hearts burn within us"):** Emotional stirrings are another way God communicates. We might feel joy, sadness, compassion, or even a deep burden for something or someone. In Luke

24:32, the disciples felt their hearts burning within them as Jesus spoke to them after His resurrection, signifying the presence and revelation of God. Emotional impressions like this can point to God's heart or His desire to move in a situation. These feelings require discernment, especially in separating personal emotions from those the Spirit may be impressing upon us.

- E. **Sympathetic Pains (Luke 8:46 - Jesus Feeling Power Leave Him):** At times, God may allow us to feel sympathetic pains—unusual physical sensations that mirror what someone else is going through. In Luke 8:46, Jesus felt power leave Him when the woman with the issue of blood touched His garment. Similarly, we might feel a sudden pain or sensation in our bodies that correlates with a healing need or situation God is highlighting. This type of impression may point to a specific area in someone else's life that requires prayer or ministry.
- F. **Physical Sensations (Acts 2:2, Acts 4:31 - Flames, Wind, Shaking):** The Holy Spirit can manifest physically, whether through sensations like heat, wind, or shaking, as seen in Acts 2 and 4. These physical manifestations of God's presence often accompany powerful moves of the Spirit. For example, the flames of fire that rested on the disciples at Pentecost symbolized the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In ministering, we may experience similar sensations that indicate the Holy Spirit's presence or a divine activity occurring around us.

### III. PRACTICAL STEPS TO DEVELOP HEARING GOD'S VOICE

- A. **Be Still and Quiet:** It's important to learn to quiet ourselves from distractions and create space to hear God (Psalm 46:10).  
**Exercise:** Set aside 15-20 minutes each day for quiet meditation on Scripture, followed by listening prayer.
- B. **Practice Journaling:** Write down thoughts, impressions, and what you believe God may be saying. Over time, journaling helps you discern God's voice more clearly.
- C. **Act in Faith:** When you sense God speaking, step out in obedience. Acting on small nudges helps you recognize His voice more confidently over time.

### IV. TESTING PROPHETIC WORDS (JOHN 4:1-3)

- A. **Alignment with Scripture:** The first and most important test is to measure the prophetic word against the written Word of God. Scripture is the final authority, and no prophecy will contradict it. If the word aligns with biblical principles, teachings, and God's character, it is a positive indicator. However, if the word

deviates or contradicts Scripture, it should be rejected. Prophetic words must be seen as subject to the authority of the Bible.

- B. **Discernment from Others:** We are called to be part of a community of believers, and discernment is often sharpened through the wisdom of others. Submit the prophetic word to trusted spiritual leaders, such as pastors, elders, or mature Christian friends, and ask for their discernment. Proverbs 11:14 reminds us that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Seeking counsel ensures that we’re not relying solely on our interpretation but allowing others to weigh in and provide guidance.
- C. **Inner Witness:** Ask yourself, does my own spirit witness that this word is from the Holy Spirit? True words from the Lord have a kind of ‘weight’ attached to them that we can learn to recognize with practice. Although we should definitely check strong prophetic words with others, we must also let God develop our own discerning ability. John 10:4-5 says that we can know the Shepherd’s voice.
- D. **Ask for Confirmation:** God often confirms His words through multiple sources or signs. Once you receive a prophetic word, you can ask the Lord to confirm it. This confirmation may not always be immediate but can come over time as you wait and observe how God continues to speak or move in your life. Additionally, many prophetic words act as confirmations of something God has already been communicating to you, serving as further affirmation of His plans and purposes.

## V. PRACTICAL EXERCISES FOR HEARING GOD’S VOICE

- A. **Group Practice:** Pair up with a partner, spend time in prayer, and write down any impressions or words you receive for them. Pray over these impressions together and discuss.
- B. **Scripture Reflection:** Spend time reading a Scripture passage, then ask God, “What are you saying to me through this?” Write down your thoughts and share them with the group.

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*This lesson was provided by Joshua Nations ([JoshuaNations.org](http://JoshuaNations.org)).*