

11/4/07

Theme Statement: This month we will be learning and experiencing more deeply what our Rejoice! Prayer Value encompasses. We believe in ceaseless, listening and interceding prayer in all that we do. Today we will open God's Word, the Bible, and discover that one of His messages and desires for us is that we take time to pray and while doing so, to simply be quiet and listen for/to His voice.

Testimony from Gene Reeves

“Listening Prayer”

John 10:27 “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.”

Jeremiah 33:3 “Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

What/Who are you listening to?

Recently, I was stopped at a railroad crossing with its lights flashing and bells dingding. At the same time the engine operator of the train was making sure the train's horn blared through town in ear-piercing fashion, also my CB was echoing some distorted/mumbled communications between bus drivers, and couple kid's cell phones were ringing off some funky 70's disco tunes, and I could hear faintly other student's MP3 players filling their ear drums and other kids were trying to converse with me. All this noise, from 6 different, yet identifiable, entities – absolutely no silence and absolutely no way to listen to even myself think, let alone God speak! To listen means to keep one's ears open. Yet, truth be stated, during most of the moments of each day our ear's airwaves are so full of competing attention getters – airwaves are so jammed that we miss out on really hearing anyone, let alone from God. Listening has everything to do with keeping one's ears open and being attentive or giving attention to someone – tuning into what another has to say. Listening to others and God is often like what happens to us when we are in the Drive Thru Line at a local fast-food place – it all becomes muddled. Like taking/trying to place 5 orders from competing voices in your auto and then trying to listen to the franchise employee parrot what you have to say. Invariably, the employee gets it wrong or even if they got it right people in your auto are still changing their minds as to what to really order, or the speakers are cracked, or the volume of the speakers is too low or the frequency they are using is filled with feedback/gremlins....It's just difficult to hear and listen – seemingly, especially from God.

What need one do in order to listen to God speak?

-“Garbage in, Garbage Out”

-Maybe our hearts are hard/not open? Maybe we have ran away from His calling(s)

-Maybe just like a little kid in that we are just “Not Listening!”

-Be Quiet: Find a space/place. It does require discipline to find a quiet place and to allow time just for listening. Time, Stillness, Expectation. Make it a priority

-Set aside time (write down stray thoughts)

- Read some Scripture (Concordance). Ask God to speak to you through Scripture in a way you may understand.
- Write down questions for prayer (Pause, Wait, Listen)
- Hardest part is just calming and clearing your mind – riddance of all the noise of life that is constantly cascading through one’s mind. .
- No formulas
- Confess Sin
- Be intentional: In Scripture, the people who conversed w/ God were those who were intentional and earnest in their pursuit of a relationship with Him. Need to make a decision to pursue Him like that. (Starting Point is to Consider the Cross & Jesus – the You Tube example)
 Example: Like when you fell in love. (Wanted to listen to the other person all day, so called each other, wrote letters, text message, emailed, spend time with one another....) But what about God & listening to Him?
 Even the Devil & his ontarague of Demons know that God is screaming out to get your attention – to get you to listen to Him. The whole of creation is a symphony of his melodious melody to you and I. Even the trees and rivers and leaves. Will we STOP (stop sign) and listen? So often, if we would admit it, we are Walking & Listening to the beat of a different drummer!
 Example: I was busy a couple weekends ago pruning back all the bushes up against the fence in our back yard and I tried to listen to God and I felt God was talking to about all these metaphors I was coming in contact with. He was talking to me about pruning my life (Scripture). As I listen He was talking to me about the last time we pruned those bushes and my dad helped me and & about the leaves and how unless I die to self nothing good within me can be birthed - the seeds of the sugar maple (Scripture)....
 Ask God to be intentional in confirming anything you have heard Him say.
 -May want to keep a journal (to look back on in order to see the journey)\

How does one listen to God speak? (See above section for “helps”)

God interacts with people in a variety of ways. God is endlessly creative in how He chooses to communicate. Examples would be Visions and Daniel; Donkeys and Baalam; Roster & Peter; Scrub & Moses.

Example: Josh Groban track “The Prayer”

- God can speak in a plethora of ways:
- Ask Jesus: Jesus what are you interceding for on behalf of me right now? (Scripture)
 Jesus, what is on your heart for me right now?
- Do you strain to hear God speak (Example of a Strainer from the Hospital or Kitchen...)
- It’s not difficult/complicated. It’s easy!
- Was it a clear word or just an impression?
 John 10:27 “Hey, because you know Me, you recognize My voice, even above life’s noise.”
- God’s voice is distinctive! He promises that we His sheep will hear it!

- Test your listening out with Scripture – does Scripture confirm/affirm it?
- Does it exalt/glorify God?
- the more you pause and listen for His voice, the more you will hear it, the more your ears will tune into it and you will become familiar with it. It simply requires listening.
- Great example from Christian Century Magazine & Gordon Atkinson!

A LISTENING EXERCISE:

1. Sitting down on the inside. Listening to self
 - What am I happy about/grateful for right now?
 - What do I regret or feel guilty about?
 - What am I worried about?
 - What am I excited about in the near future?

Take some time to place all of these thoughts and circumstances, you past, present, future, into God's hands. Actually look at your hands, fill them with your concerns, and then lift them up to God and let them go.

2. Listen.
 - Write down what comes to mind as it comes to you. Do not edit it as you go.
 - Listen for God's voice: Ask, "God, is there anything you would like to say to me?"
 - Listen for Jesus' prayer: Ask, "Jesus, how are you praying for me right now?"

What will be gained as one pursues listening to God speak?

- In the pursuit to listen to God we become aware that He is pursuing us.
- Our confidence: God loves us and is eager to be in relationship with us and to speak to us!
- We will gain: clarity = Psalm 73:17
 Direction = Isaiah 30:21
 A Call to Repentance = Heb 4:7
 A deeper relationship w/ God = Psalm 32:8-9
 Assurance, Faith-building promises = Luke 1:45 & 2:19
 Empowerment/Guidance for ministry = Jer. 42: 1-7
- Goal: to enjoy time with God.
 To learn to hear His voice