

Southport Presbyterian Church
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Can You Hear Me Now?
Youth Sunday

You know the Verizon commercials? They're the ones where the guy walks all across the world asking someone on the other end of the line, "Can you hear me now?"

This is a lot like how God talks to us. He is everywhere we are and He is constantly asking us if we can hear Him.

Can we? Can we hear God now? Are we listening to what God wants to reveal to us? Because, if we are, our lives will be rich and meaningful. If we are listening to what God has to say, He will guide us. He will comfort us. He will protect us. He will reveal his purposes for our lives. And He will satisfy us.

Throughout the Bible, God speaks to His children. They were listening and He revealed a part of His plan for their lives.

Hebrews 11:7 [NASB] By faith, Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Being warned by God about things not yet seen.

God spoke to Noah. There was no other way Noah could have learned about the coming flood. There was no evidence that a world-consuming flood was on its way. Noah listened to God, and acted upon only what he heard from God. Even though those around him told him otherwise, he listened to God.

Abraham was told by God to leave his land and go to a new place. But he had no reason to go. He had a great life where he was. But God spoke to him and told Abraham to move. Listening to God took a great deal of sacrifice for Abraham because listening to God means obeying God. In order for Abraham to listen to God, he had to be willing to adjust his life to whatever it was that God told him to do.

In this case, God wanted Abraham to make a major change in his life. So it wasn't easy for Abraham to listen to God. And it was definitely not convenient. But it was worth it. His listening to God made a huge impact on his life, the life of his family, and the lives of generations to come

But Abraham would never have left his comfortable home on his own. How, other than through God, could Abraham have foreseen the results of leaving his land and going somewhere unknown? Could he have known that by packing up and moving away, he could have such an impact? No.

Had Noah not listened to God, how could he have known that a flood was coming? He couldn't have. God was warning him about "things not yet seen."

Think of a time the last week when God spoke to you. Maybe He told you to start up a conversation with someone you hardly ever talk to. Maybe God told you to be kind to someone you don't even know. On your own, would you have thought "I should talk to that person? I'm

sure that God is working in their life and right now is when I need to talk to them?" The answer is no. That thought would never have crossed your mind. If we don't listen to God we won't see where He wants us to be and what He wants us to do.

This past week, God told me to talk to someone in one of my classes. I'll just refer to her as "Sarah." I'd only talked to Sarah maybe twice before, so we didn't know each other very well at all. I asked her if she was going to be at Campus Life, which is a club at our school, the following day. In our short conversation, she told me that her mom had just had a heart attack and was in the hospital recovering. I had no idea that my shallow and simple yes/no question would show me an area in her life that she needs prayer for. Had I not been listening to God, I wouldn't have talked to her, and I wouldn't have seen how God is working in her life and how I can take part in that. It's little things like that that make me wonder, "What else am I missing?" Is God trying to reveal other parts of his plan to me and am I missing it? If asking someone such a simple question can lead to something so significant, how much more could God be planning to do through my life? God could be setting me up to share my faith or to comfort someone who's feeling alone. And I could completely miss it because I'm not listening to God. I know that if I want to be a part of God's plan and see where He's working around me, I have to be listening. The impact my faith has on others relies on me listening to God.

So how do I adjust my life so that I don't miss anything God tells me? What can I do to make sure that I am listening to every word he says to me? What does it take to listen to God?

Well, listening has two parts. First, you have to listen for someone to speak to you, and then you have to listen to what they say.

So first of all, you have to be listening for God. This means putting yourself in situations that will lead to God speaking to you. We need to be around God if we want to hear Him. We need to spend time in the word, learning about God's character and how He has spoken to people in the past. As obvious as this sounds, it's often overlooked. It's much easier to know when God is speaking to you as well as how to listen for and to God if you are familiar with how He has talked to His children in the past. By reading the story of Abraham, you learn that God sometimes gives instructions but does not reveal enough of His plan for us to see the end result. The more stories I know of God speaking to people, the more places and ways I know to look for God speaking to me. And the less of His words I miss.

We also need to look around us to see where God is working. The more aware we are of those around us, the easier it is to see when and where God is working in their lives. Now that I know about Sarah's mom, I can listen for God to tell me how He wants me to work in Sarah's life. Had I not been looking for places around me where God is at work, I might have shrugged the conversation off and missed opportunities to show her the love of Jesus.

Listening for God takes more than just reading your Bible and looking for how God's working around you. It takes spending time in prayer, seeking guidance from God.

Listening for God is not some simple formula where you plug in some prayer, Bible reading, and looking around you and then God speaks to you. God will speak to you according to His perfect timing and this takes patience on your part. In the stillness is where God spoke to Elijah and that is often where God chooses to talk to us. This requires that we be still and patient as we wait for God to speak to us.

After listening for God we can hear Him speak to us. This is when we need to listen to God. His words are more than a recommendation. They are words of truth and they give perfect guidance. We don't often know the reason we have to do something for God, but from what we know about God, we know that He does great works this way. God didn't tell Abraham why he

had to leave his land or where he was going. But think of the impact that Abraham had. We should want to listen to God. We, like Samuel, don't want to let any of God's words fall to the ground. We need to listen carefully to what God says to us, and we need to act upon His words when God speaks to me, He is not asking me if I want to do something for Him. He is telling me what He wants me to do.

I want people to see my life and say, "He's not letting any of God's words fall to the ground." I want my life to be characterized by the patience and diligence in listening for God and my careful and obedient listening to God. I know that wherever God leads, is where I want to be.

Samuel was a great example of someone who modeled their life after listening to God. When God spoke to Samuel, Samuel replied, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." He realized that God was speaking to him and he chose to listen to God. In I Samuel 3:19, it says, "The lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. " Samuel listened to God's words and treated them like they were just that, Words of God. He listened to God's words and didn't take that for granted. When God spoke to Samuel, Samuel responded immediately and obeyed God. He didn't shrug off anything God said to him, but he took it as the divine words of God. Samuel didn't miss any of God's words. Not a single one.

Imagine what your life would be like if you did this: if you carefully listen to God, and focus your life on His words. Imagine how much purpose you'd have, how much your life would be focused on God's will. It's amazing to think how much better our lives could be, and how much closer we'd be to God, if we lived our lives the way Samuel did. Listening for God and not letting a single word fall to the ground.