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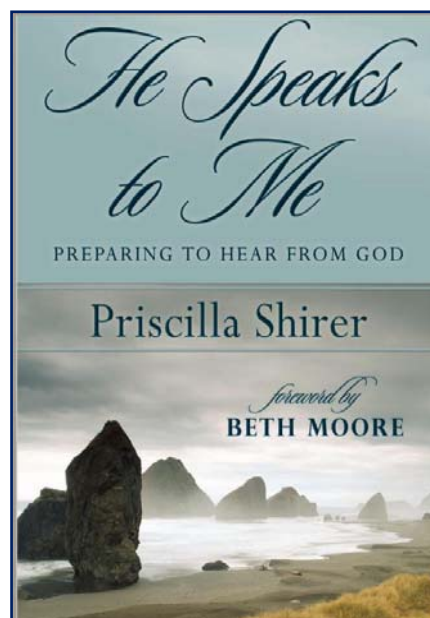
"STOP TALKING START LISTENING"

[A SIMPLE RELATIONSHIP – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JULY 27, 2008

LESSON #1 FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



“STOP TALKING START LISTENING”

[A SIMPLE RELATIONSHIP – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]



When was the last time you heard the voice of God *personally* in your life? Are you answering that? Alright, let's pretend that you and I were sitting down afterward with a cup of coffee—or you choose, whatever you want to be sitting down with—and I was just face to face with you and I said to you, “When was the last time you heard the voice of God in your life *personally*? What would you say? Something like, “*Uh, I don't hear voices, man! I'm not psychotic.*”

So, how good a listener are you? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “*stone deaf*” and 10 being “*all ears*” how would you rate yourself as a listener? Or, How often does your spouse ask, “*Have you heard anything that I've said?*”

([Show photo of Reggie White](#)) Does anyone here this morning know who this is? Most of you have at least heard of Reggie White, right? As we begin this new study by Priscilla Shirer from her book, *He Speaks To Me* – about preparing yourself to hear from God – there is one interview with pro football player Reggie White that stands out in my mind as we think of listening to God. White told a sports reporter why he chose to go to a certain city to play ball. He was honest enough to say that God spoke to him and he responded back. “In other words I talk to God.”

The late Reggie White, who at the time of the interview about hearing from God had just completed the terms of his contract with the Philadelphia Eagles. He had made the All-star team almost every year since he became a professional. After his contract with Philadelphia had been fulfilled, White, who is also an ordained minister—hence his nickname, “The Minister of Defense”—had been free to sign with any team he wished. And he had several offers that would have made him a very rich man. But when decision time came, White shocked most football observers and many of his friends by signing with the team which

was located in the smallest city of all the National Football League franchises—the Green Bay Packers. The reporter who was conducting the interview asked White how he had reached his decision to play for the Packers. Reggie White said, "I spent a lot of time praying about this. And one day as I prayed, **I heard God say**, 'Reggie, go to Green Bay.' So that's what I did."

White saw something in the way the interviewer looked at him at that point because White said this: "You know, when you tell people you've been talking to God, they don't have a problem with that. That's praying. If you believe in that sort of thing, it's okay. But when you say that God talked to YOU, then they think you're crazy or something! Isn't prayer supposed to be a conversation with God? And in a conversation, don't BOTH parties talk?"

Now, maybe what Reggie White told the reporter has you wondering if God **really** told him to go to Green Bay? Does God do that? Maybe you're wondering, "*Why is it that God never seems to speak to me like that?*" Maybe you feel like that. But, we know God speaks, don't we? Think of this, I mean, He spoke to nothing—and world's became. Frogs and lizards and things—and sunsets and trees and warm breezes and rain and – whoa! That's power. He spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden, called them out of the bushes. They heard Him speak. He talked to Moses out of the burning bush. He spoke to Jonah—which Jonah immediately dismissed, so God had to speak to a huge fish—and the fish obeyed. Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves—what authority is this that He would speak to the wind and the waves and hearing His voice, they ceased and became calm. Jesus spoke to the masses on the hill—they heard Him teach. And Jesus spoke intimately to His disciples.

So, we don't have any trouble believing that there is a voice of God that speaks, do we? (SAY AMEN!! WE BELIEVE THAT, RIGHT?) But, what's the deal that He never really speaks to **me**. How come I never hear His voice? That's what we'll be talking about for the next six weeks. There could be two reasons—one, you may not

know that as a believer in Jesus Christ you have been given equipment whereby you can HEAR HIS VOICE PERSONALLY! If you belong to Him—you've got the equipment. Did you know there's TV and radio waves running all through the air in here right now? All you need is a television or radio or maybe a cell phone—you need the right equipment. And as believers, each of us has what it takes to hear God's voice. Secondly, and perhaps more probably, there may be a lot of us here who simply aren't listening to His voice.

Does that ever happen to you? You're talking to your spouse or someone else and all of a sudden you notice the other person just sort of tunes you out—blam! Or is not paying attention to what you're saying. A former pastor of Beverly and I knew exactly what I'm saying because of how he responded to being greeted. If you saw him out and asked, "*Hey, how are you doing?*" Instead of saying, "*Fine,*" like most of us—"*And how are you?*" He'd say, "*Worse, and you?*" You wouldn't believe how many people went right on with their thought process and missed his "*Worse, and you?*" phrase. They'd say, "*Good*" or "*I'm so glad,*" and carry on.

Is there a difference between hearing and listening? **Hearing** is passive and occurs even while we sleep. **Listening** is active and involves hearing, paying attention, and understanding. Most of us talk to God regularly through prayer—especially when we need something. But, I think most of us spend so much time *talking* to God, we don't take the time to listen! Wonder why that is? **How much time to you spend listening to God in comparison to talking to Him?**

Priscilla Shirer's 6-week Bible study from **1 Samuel 3** will help us work through our problems in hearing God so that when He speaks to us, we will be listening and actually hear what He is saying to us personally. As we wrap up the first week of this new study, I want you to remember the first step in HEARING God speak is that we must have A SIMPLE RELATIONSHIP—like the child we're studying in this series, Samuel.

Open your Bible to **1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10 (NASB)** and please follow along as I read our primary Scripture for this entire series: ***1Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. 2It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), 3and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, 4that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." 5Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." 7Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. 8So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. 9And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."***

I want you to notice the **first** thing Scripture wants to make sure we understand about Samuel. It's seen in the first **three** words of the first verse—"***Now the boy...***" Samuel was still a child. But what does that tell us? [A CHILD HAS AN OPENNESS AND WILLINGNESS THAT GOD WANTS ALL OF US TO HAVE.] A child is naturally curious and delights in discovering new truths. The Lord wants us to recapture these traits from childhood, for they point to reverence for God, humility and total trust.

Did you notice anything off this week in your study of this first phrase—about Samuel being a child? I wondered why God didn't just speak to Eli—the high priest? The nation was full of grown-ups God could have spoken to and the most likely to hear from Him was right in the next room. I find it amazing that God

bypassed all the adults in Israel to SPEAK to a BOY! Did you wonder what it was about Samuel that made God choose him? Look at **1 SAMUEL 3:7 (NLT)** again for just a moment for a clue: *⁷Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before.* It was Samuel's childlike simplicity. Although he had knowledge about God, he did not have the wisdom that comes from knowing God experientially.

Turn to **MATTHEW 11:25 (NIV)** and someone read that verse: *²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Wonder why God wants us to have a childlike simplicity?* So, if God spoke to Samuel instead of all the adults because of his childlike simplicity, what can we do in 2008 to put ourselves in a similar position to HEAR GOD SPEAK?

Let's see how well this group listens or if we just hear. I've got a little brain teaser to ask, but if you have heard this before, don't blurt out the answer, just keep your thoughts to yourself. I'll read the question and once you have gotten the answer, please don't ruin it for everyone else and blurt out how you got to your answer. All I want to hear is your answer to the problem when I call on you and then I will let you know if you are right or not. So, here is the question: *You are driving a bus. You go east 12 miles, and turn south and go 2 miles and take on 9 passengers, and then you turn west and go 3 miles and let off 4 passengers. How old is the bus driver?*

The main problem many people have when trying to answer this brain teaser is listening. A lot of times, we latch onto certain information that we think is important in a question and then somehow, miss the most important part. When I first heard this question, like many of you, I latched onto the directions (east, south, west), the distance and the number of passengers on the bus. Those are things that that are important right?

When I got to the end and it asked how old the bus driver is, I just was puzzled. "Wait a minute," I thought, "how are we going to find the age of the bus driver from the information given?" I took a minute and looked at the numbers and wondered if there was some secret message in the numbers and maybe, if you added them together or something, it would work. It wasn't for a few moments that I finally realized that the clue to this teaser was a simple, three letter word that starts the whole question off. "YOU are the bus driver."

How often is it though that we have this same problem with listening? God is trying to speak and we're not listening—just maybe hearing.

The first thing we learned this week in our study about preparing ourselves to hear God's voice and receive wisdom from Him is to have **A SIMPLE OBEDIENCE**—like a child. Turn to **MATTHEW 18:1-4 (NIV)** and let's look at an example of this: *¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²He called a little child and had him stand among them. ³And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

In these verses, Jesus uses a child's willingness to obey to illustrate the beauty of simple obedience. Jesus called and the child came! We've known Jesus a long time—most of us—yet we act like a spoiled brat and struggle against God's desire that we simply spend time with Him and obey what He tells us. So simple—yet so hard for us adults.

Next, we're to have **A SIMPLE HUMILITY**. Look back at the first few verses of MATTHEW 18 that we just read. Notice that just before Jesus called to the child, a conflict arose among the disciples. What was it? *¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* Immediately after this comment, Jesus tells his disciples that they

should humble themselves like a child. What does verse 4 say?
"...whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Pride ruins relationships in homes, jobs, schools, and churches. It causes husbands to abuse their authority, wives to refuse to submit, and children to rebel against their parents. Jesus had called the disciples to follow Him and told them from day one He had plans for them. They had left behind their vocations for a special calling. Now, in order to fulfill that calling, Jesus was asking them to leave behind their plans for greatness and strive for childlike humility. HOW ABOUT YOU? Is that a description of you?

Recall with me the parable that Jesus told the disciples in **LUKE 18: 9-14 (NLT)** about being proud. It's the story of the tax collector and a Pharisee who both go to the temple to pray:
*⁹Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰"Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! ¹²I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.' ¹³"But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' ¹⁴I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. **For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.***

Notice the last sentence of that last verse. People who humble themselves do not think more of themselves than they ought or try to show others how great they are. Truly humble people use the gifts God has given them without bragging about them as if they are the result of their own doing. Two great reminders of the God's view of pride are seen in two verses. First, **JAMES**

4:6(NIV), which says, *“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* And, secondly, in **1 PETER 5:5 (NIV)**: *“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

Don't forget that *pride* is the first on the list of things that God hates most (Proverbs 6:17). It's the sin that got Lucifer thrown out of heaven and it can keep people out of heaven too if they refuse the Savior.

Next, to position ourselves to HEAR GOD, we need to develop **A SIMPLE TRUST**. As a grandfather of three, I can see a great difference in my four year-old grandson, Jaxson, and my three-month old grandson, Banks. **What do you think it is?** By now, we know for sure that Jesus welcomes children. As pointed out in our study this week, the Greek word used for children in these passages means an *“infant.”* I can assure you that I see a difference between the infant Banks and the toddler Jaxson—trust me, there's a difference.

As we become more physically mature, the more self-sufficient we become. But spiritual maturity should have the opposite effect. The more spiritually mature we become, the more we should rely on God. Christ wants us to have a childlike trust in Him. Childlike people trust God for everything. **How do we know we trust God?** By doing what He says. Recall with me a former memory verse, **PROVERBS 3:5-6**: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways and He shall direct your paths.”*

Also, the writer of HEBREWS in **11:6** tells us what about faith? *“Without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”* This passage assures us that God rewards the confidence we place in Him.

And, finally, in order to place ourselves in a position to hear from God, we have to have **A SIMPLE DEPENDENCE**. Turn to **PSALM 131:1-2 (NCV)** and let's read what David said about this: *¹Lord, my heart is not proud; don't look down on others. I don't do great things, and I can't do miracles. ²But I am calm and quiet, like a baby with its mother. I am at peace, like a baby with its mother.*

Notice how David began his conversation with God—by confessing his own inadequacy. Here is a powerful man who would soon be the king—and yet he didn't take credit for the blessing in his life. He formed a deeper dependence on God, trusting Him as a child trusts a loving parent. The way my youngest grandson, Banks, trust his mother and father—totally.

Beverly and I talked this week about the substance of Day Five and how we are to arrive at that simple dependence on God. Notice on Pages 110-111 that Priscilla Shirer talks about The Calmed Soul, The Quieted Soul and then The Rested Soul. David had to take control—no matter what was happening in his life. Notice the phrase in verse 2 of Psalm 131—*I am calm and quiet, like a baby with its mother.*

Next, David quieted his soul by remembering what God had done. The more you trust your concerns to the Lord and see Him working in your life, the more willing you will be to depend on Him in the future. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."* And, also, don't forget that we are to, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength."*

And finally, with a quiet and calm soul, David pointed out the final step of the process—REST! We are to not only lean on Him but rest in Him. We will be nourished and refreshed when our souls reorient themselves and look only to God for refreshment.

So, what about you? Have you tuned in to God? Can you tell when He's speaking to you? A Native American and his friend

were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square in Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening.

Suddenly, the Native American said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!" "No, I'm sure of it," the Native American said. "I heard a cricket." "That's crazy," said the friend. The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed. "That's incredible," said his friend. "You must have super-human ears!"

"No," said the Native American. "My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for." "But that can't be!" said the friend. "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." "Yes, it's true," came the reply. "It depends on what you're listening for. Here, let me show you." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within twenty feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?" asked the Native American. "It all depends on what you're listening for."

If you've tuned in to God, it doesn't matter what's going on around you, you can hear Him speak, but it takes A SIMPLE CHILDLIKE RELATIONSHIP—like with Samuel.

Let's pray!



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