

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church  
Bible Study  
Monday, January 12, 2009

Listening to God  
1 Samuel 3:4-10

If we are going to grow then it is imperative that we learn how to listen to God. In our Bible Study last week we spoke about how God speaks to us, how God gets our attention. Tonight we want to look at how we listen to God. There are a number of ways.

Expectantly

If we are going to listen to God, we must come to Him expectantly. We must anticipate His speaking to us. "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:3) Throughout scripture we have the promise that God will speak to us, but if we come to Him doubting His ability to speak, we will have a difficult time listening. Expectancy is based on reliability. When Elijah confronted the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah he did so with a boldness that seemed to border on downright arrogance. After mocking the false prophets who were unable to call down fire from heaven he had them several times pour more water on the wood, the oxen and the altar until it was drenched. (1 Kings 18:35) He did so because he was depending on God to answer him.

Quietly

If we are going to listen to God, we must be quiet and let Him do the talking. The Psalmist wrote, "be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) Many of us when we pray give to God a list of request, then get up and walk off. Instead of listening to God all we do is give Him our request. Quietness is essential to listening. It takes time and quietness to prepare to listen to God. Many people through the centuries have sought seclusion in the deserts, mountains or monasteries. The place isn't important but quietness is.

Patiently

God will not tell us some things instantaneously. We will hear some special revelations only after having waited a season of time. One of the reasons is simply that we're not always ready. Because of that, God will sometimes withhold information until we are prepared to listen. We must be willing to listen to Him patiently because these times may draw out and stretch our faith, but He is not compelled to tell us everything we want to know the moment we desire the information. God changes and prepares us to hear His message, which we may not have received had He spoken instantaneously.

Actively

To hear God we must actively wait and meditate upon His Word. Colossians 3:16 declares, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." If we only know the Word selectively and dwell on one

particular favorite subject, we fail to seek the whole counsel of God. The way we become wealthy and overflowing with the truth of the Word is to meditate upon Scripture, search it out, digest it, and apply it to our hearts. God is precise in His instructions and promises given through His Word.

#### Confidently

We must be confident that when we listen to God, we will hear what we need to hear. It may not always be what we wish to hear, but God communicates to us what is essential in our walk with Him. Would we withhold information from our children that they would need to have in order to be obedient to our instructions? Would we tell them, “Here’s what I want you to do” and then not provide them with information? Certainly not. Jesus said, “if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him.” (Matthew 7:11)

#### Dependently

As we come to God, we must come in recognition that we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to teach us the truth. If we come to Him with a prideful attitude, it will be difficult for the Holy Spirit to instruct us. (1 Corinthians 2:7-11) There is no way for us to hear from God without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. To receive God’s directions we must have a right relationship with Him. That relationship means we must be filled with the Holy Spirit, and we must learn to walk in His Spirit. (Ephesians 4:30)

#### Openly

We must come to God openly. To listen openly means to be willing to hear God correct us as well as comfort us, to hear God convict us as well as assure us. If we come to Him only for comfort and prosperity, only for what is soothing to the ear, then we will not always hear what God has to say.

#### Carefully

Everything we hear is to be sifted through the Word. Before we accept anything into our lives, we should filter it through Scripture and eliminate anything that contradicts Scripture. If it is contrary to the Word of God, it should be purged. That is why we must listen carefully to God. The Word of God reveals the innermost intentions and motivations of our lives. The light of the Word illuminates everything enabling us to discern the truth from error. (Hebrews 4:12)

#### Gratefully

When we come to the Father, we should have a grateful attitude. Out of the billions of people who make up the universe God is interested in you. We should draw near with a thankful heart because we do not come into contact with a heavenly Father who only speaks to the masses, but who also speaks to individuals. (Philippians 4:6-7) This should invoke unlimited gratitude.

#### Reverently

A reverent heart should be the foundation of hearing God. We should be in awe that we can speak to the God who hung the sun and world on nothing, the God who created all the intricacies of human life. We should be humble that this same omnipotent God is quietly willing to listen to us, giving us direction and blessings.