

**Tuning in: The habit of tuning in**  
**John 10:1-5,14-16**

**Today, we're starting our Lenten sermon series, "Tuning-in."** In this series, we'll look at how we can better Tune-In to hearing God better. This is important because when it comes to Christians, we have a relationship with God. So hearing God isn't so much about what we do... but **who we are – a child of God.**

**What is the best way to build a relationship with somebody? We want to spend time with them! Today's scripture from John 10 is all about the sheep hearing the voice of the Shepherd. They know the shepherds voice and they listen to him. The shepherd calls his sheep by name and they listen.**

We're going to talk about spending time with God, and hearing God throughout the whole day. Most of us want to hear God, **but how much do we want to hear God.**  
**If we really want to hear God, we need to value the voice of God.**

For me, learning to hear and value God's voice was a process. It didn't happen overnight. Like any relationship, it takes time to understand and know a person.

- You know what I mean, learning a person's tone, inflections, body language, habits and use of words.
- And getting to know what a person can do... it changes a conversation.
- The more you know a person and understand them, it changes how much you value their voice and what they have to say... because you trust them.

A good example of learning about a person, understanding them and valuing their voice was in Mark 6. Jesus did one miracle and the disciples saw it... He fed the 5000 using only five loaves of bread and two fish.

- But right after that, in Mark 6:45-56, Jesus miraculously walking on the water, stepped into the disciples boat, and calmed a storm for them!

But notice their response; "***Wow you can do that too?***" In Mark 6:51,52, it said the disciples were amazed... because they didn't understand about the loaves.

- The same happens to us when we're seeking direction or help from God. We learn to value God's voice over time, and by experiencing God's presence, Gods power, Gods love, God's faithfulness and grace. We need to hear God speak to us, and experience God move in our lives again and again – that's how we learn to value God's voice.

- We also learn to value God speaking to us, as we learn and understand that God has a plan and purpose for us. Think of Jeremiah 29:11 "*For I Know The Plans I Have For You' Declares the Lord, 'Plans to Prosper You and Not to Harm You, Plans to Give You Hope and a Future.'*"

**This is God's will... God has plan and purpose for you.** When we have a job change or we're buying a new home. When we have an important decision to make about a relationship or our family, our future or our health. **We need God's direction, and God will give us direction too.**

- But... my concern, sometimes we try to get direction for something from God without first developing a habit of hearing about God's plan and purpose for our everyday life! That's an important part of learning to value God's voice.

If we only check in with God every six months or so or whenever a big decision comes up; **then we will miss out...** not only knowing God's purpose and plan for us. But we will also miss out on a close everyday friendship with God.

We need to learn to value God's voice. **If we are not in the habit of meeting with God and hearing from God on a regular basis, it will be much more difficult to hear from God in the tough and big decisions of life.**

**Today we are going to talk about some practical ways to hear God.**

### **1) Plan time with God**

Let me be blunt, how much time in your daily schedule do you put aside to hear God's voice? To hear God talk to you?

**Many of us feel we're too busy to make prayer a priority.** But if you really want to hear from God, then we have to set time with God, to make an appointment with God... everyday. Schedule God into your life.

**That may sound weird to you... to schedule a person into your life.**

But the truth is... we often plan our world, even if you think you don't... you do. You arrange your schedule around what is important. If something is important, you make it a priority.

You schedule your most important meetings, you schedule phone calls, you plan and schedule a vacation, your time with your doctor, dentist, attorney or CPA.

**By the way, scheduling God into your life doesn't minimize God, it shows God how important he is to you.**

When you look through the Bible, when people encountered God and experience God's manifest presence... often times, there was some preparation before hand. In Exodus 19, you hear about people setting an appointment with God, "*Then the Lord said to Moses go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Zion in the sight of all the people.*" **You see God was setting an appointment to meet with the Israelites.**

God wants the people to be ready, to be prepared, to be in a prepared environment. God didn't just say to Moses "***Hey, get everybody together anytime they're ready.***" In Exodus 19:19, "*As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.*"

- What would happen if you came to church and no one greeted you, then the lights weren't on, the worship team hadn't rehearsed... no one picked any songs to sing, no one was running the soundboard or the live stream. What if I didn't prepare a message, but just stood up and said, "Oh well, I guess I should say something... so here I go."

Of course... the Holy Spirit can work anytime and in any place, and of course we want to allow the Holy Spirit to move anyway the Holy Spirit wants to move during our Sunday services. **But the Holy Spirit is never disorganized, in fact the Holy Spirit often works best when we are prepared... through prepared soil.**

That's why the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people."

God advocates preparation and order; not chaos and disorder.

**The same is true if we want to hear God talk to us!** If we don't set an appointment to meet with God, then we will likely miss our time with God.

- I think **the time that you pick** depends upon the person. You pick your best time.. It's far more important that we meet with God, when that time is set.
- The specific time we meet with God is not as important as actually spending time to talk with God. So if you're a morning person set it for the morning... if you're a night person set it for night.
- It's also good to find a consistent place to meet with the Lord. This can be a specific room, a specific seat, a coffee shop, whatever - if you have more than one place that's fine too.
- So set a time and meet with God. Now... what setting a time to meet with God - leads us to the second point.

## 2) Be still and worship God

Our time with God starts when we're still before him. Then we can worship him.

**Being still is hard for many of us**, and yet God tells us in Psalm 46:10, "**Be still** and know that I am God." I like how the new American standard Bible puts it, "**Cease striving** and know that I am God."

- Psalm 46 is about a posture of quietness before God,
- Other scriptures like 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:2 they're about having an attitude of listening and faithful expectation, plus casting our cares and anxieties to God – because God cares.

**2 Chronicles 20 is a great scripture connecting being still and worship.** Three armies surrounded Judah and Jerusalem. The people were terrified with enemies all around them, so they came before God, wondering what to do. Then the spirit of God came on a man named Jahaziel, a Levite, and he stood in front of everyone and said, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; Stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you." 2 Chronicles 20:15,17 In verses 20 through 24, God told the Israelites what to do. God told them to send out the musicians and the worship team first, and they are to led everybody in singing and worshipping God and then God will take care of the rest.

- A similar situation happened in Acts 13:2, "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, '*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul*'"

*for the work to which I have called them.” Notice what happened, worshipping came first, and then Holy Spirit spoke!*

**Everyone of us fights a battle**, the battle might be your health, or your family, or in your job, or in a relationship, or for your future. But the process is this,

- First, be still before God
- Second, the Holy Spirit will show you what to do.

**So I need to set time to meet with God, then intentionally quiet my heart, then worship the Lord. Then this next point.**

### **3) Pray and read scripture**

I love how Psalm 119:147 explains it, *“I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help, I hope in your word.”*

- So what do we pray for, what do we cry out for help for? **We pray whatever is on our hearts.**

All we need to do is just talk to God and then read the Bible.

- So where do we read in the Bible? **The best answer is: What's inside!**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God<sup>[a]</sup> may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

The very first word that scripture says – all.

- **I constantly have people asking me where is the best place to read in the Bible. 2 Timothy 3 says, everything in the Bible is useful – Everything!**

Read from the gospels, read from the book of Acts, or read from the Old Testament prophets. Read the promises of God, maybe start in Psalms and read a chapter of Proverbs everyday. All of it is useful!

So I set in the time with God, And then become still and worship the Lord, then I read scripture and pray, and then #4.....

#### **4) I listen For God to speak and then I write down what God says.**

Listening to God is one of the hardest things for us to do. But if we learn to listen, then we will hear God's voice.

**When I talk to people, I encourage them to write in a Journal.** I know for myself:

- When I listen and write down what I hear,
- Then write down my thoughts and prayers come to mind.
- Then I write down whichever scriptures speak to me.

**It's one of the best ways to recognize the voice of God.**

The Prophet Habakkuk describes the need to write down a word for the Lord in Habakkuk 2:2, "Then the LORD replied: 'Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald<sup>[a]</sup> may run with it.'"

Now this week in the Lenten Experience Journal, this week's challenge is also a great tool in prayer. that leads us to our final point.

#### **5) Fasting**

I don't want to repeat what is in the Lent Experience Journal... and I encourage you to pick up a journal if you haven't gotten one yet.

When you look in the Bible, when they talked about fasting, that meant to abstain from something: Like food, participating in some kind of activity, to abstain from sleep, fasting means to abstain from most anything that you like or is good for you.

- When we say no to something that is good... like food when we are hungry... we are also learning how to say no a temptation to sin.
- Then, instead of doing that activity... we spend time with God. That is fasting
- The result of fasting, it is like putting on spiritual hearing aids, you hear God better. It is like putting on spiritual glasses, you see God clearer.
- Fasting empowers prayer, because you are eliminating the things that distract you from God.