

Tune-in to Grow  
(Forgiveness) Romans 8:12-17

Today we are continuing our series, Tuning-in. A series to better hear God speak to us. Today we are talking about “Tuning-in to Grow.” We have a fairly new member of our Community Church Family who is on the adventure of growing with the Lord. Recently she had a life event that was both scary and at the same time exciting. Because she heard God speak and experienced the presence of God in an amazing way! Let’s watch Alicia Senft’s testimony.

## VIDEO

Pretty amazing! Alicia never experienced anything like that before! God spoke to Alicia in several obvious and several very subtle ways. The Bible is filled with God talking to people. It starts with Adam and Eve talking with God in the Garden and it ends with God talking to John on the Island of Patmos.

**God is talking throughout the Bible.** I find that difficult to believe, that God wants to have a personal relationship with you, but wouldn’t talk to you about the specifics of life.

Like God gave us a manual for life, the Bible but wouldn’t help us with life’s situations. Think of it this way, ever buy something for your kids and have to put it together on Christmas Eve? It’s nice having an instruction manual... it’s good to follow it... but it’s better to have someone help you! Jesus said, *“I’m not going to leave you as orphans, I’m going to send someone to help you, and He is going to talk to you.”*

Like with Alicia, God wants to talk to you, God speaks to you because He has a relationship with you! **Let me share some things about a relationship with God:**

### **1. Our relationship with God must be our highest priority!**

If you want to hear God, you need to develop and grow your relationship with God! **Think of Adam in the Genesis 3:8-10,** *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”*

We are talking about hearing God, and Adam is saying, *“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”* No one was afraid of God until sin came into the world – we should never be afraid. God created us to walk and talk with Him.

We are talking about hearing God, God didn't write a book and then create humans and then say, “Here's a book, now go and figure it out.”

God created humans to walk and talk with Him. And one day God was going through the Garden and the people are hiding. Now God knew where Adam and Eve were, but God called out, “Adam, where are you?” And Adam told God, I heard your voice and I was afraid. **When humans started sinning, putting their way before God's, we started being fearful of God's voice.**

**That was what was lost! The ability to have the open communication with God!** Have you ever heard the Old Hymn, “In the Garden.” And he walks with me and He talk with me. This is about Mary being in the Garden with the resurrected Jesus. Like the boy asking his mom who Andy was? - Andy walks with me and talks with me.

- **We lost the ability to walk and talk with God because of sin, so God sent His Son so we can walk and talk with God again!** That is why Jesus came! He restores to us the ability to walk and talk with God, to hear His voice!

I can teach you methods, and theology about hearing God's voice, but I cannot develop a personal relationship - for you - with God. **Only you can do that!**

**That brings us to our scripture today – Romans 8:12-17. Listen as Paul the Apostle explain, if you receive Christ, you are adopted into the family of God!**

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

I like to call the office, and say, “Hey, it’s me.” Never once has our staff say, “Me who?” How do they recognize my voice? I spend time and talk with them.

- I believe we can come to the place where I recognize God’s voice say, “Hey Bill and I’ll say, ‘Hey Lord’” and know God’s voice because I spend time with Him! **That relationship is our highest priority.** To spend time with God, and walk and talk with Him. **That is what we were created to do!**

## **2. Our relationship with God must be our highest pursuit!**

**Priority** refers to what we believe as being the highest importance.

**Pursuit** means what we follow closely. If we pursue something, we run after it.

We strive for it with all our might!

**What do we pursuit in life?** Back in the Garden of Eden, there were 2 trees that God kept in the middle of the garden. But only one was forbidden.

**Do you know what the two trees were?**

- **The 1<sup>st</sup> was “The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”** And God said that Adam and Eve were not to eat its fruit in Genesis 2:16-17. The fruit from this tree was the only one that was forbidden in all the garden.
- **The 2<sup>nd</sup> was “The Tree of Life”** in Genesis 2:9. It was very close to the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, and in the middle of the garden. If a person ate from the Tree of Life, in Genesis 3:22, the Bible explains that the person would life forever.

**Think about this a minute! God never intended us to live by choosing between Good and Evil – never. God designed us to live by hearing His voice!**

**God told Adam and Eve to live by the Tree of Life! It was God’s voice! He TOLD them that.** God created us to live by hearing His voice! God never wanted us to know Good and Evil. **God never intended us to need to live by our conscience** and continually try to figure out what was good or bad. **In Matthew 4:4, God explained that He wanted us to live by His voice.**

- **Do you realize how often we do that?** Ask - is this good or is this bad? But is that the right question? No... what we need to ask, **is this good or is this God!** Do you know, something can be good and still not be Godly!

**So God gave us something for when we sin... it's called our conscience.**  
Our conscience tells us what's good and evil, and it **bring us to Christ.**

People have asked, *How do you know what is good or evil for your life? Is it your conscience?* **NO – it is to be the voice of God.**

The best thing your Conscience can ever do is tell you what is good and bad and help bring us to the place where we are convicted of our sin – because we need Jesus as our savior. Then Jesus enters our lives, and our conscience is cleansed by the Blood of Jesus.

- **That brings us to this week's challenge through the Lent Experience!**  
The challenge is forgiveness! Forgiveness needs more than a brief explanation in a sermon. I have preached whole series on it. But forgiveness brings you life and healing, forgiveness gives you the ability to hear God!

**Forgiveness cuts to the heart of every unresolved issue in our lives.  
Either you need forgiveness and you need to forgive!**

- When it comes to God forgiving us, there are countless ways we ignore, offend, rebel against, speak bad about, mistrust and disobey the Lord.
- And our sin has offended and hurt others too. Even our attitudes and anger, our resentment and negative words, they hurt others.

So Holy Spirit uses our conscience to convict us. But the Lord never intended you and me to live by our conscience. **As a matter of fact, if your conscience is not cleansed by the forgiveness of Jesus... as long as you have a guilty conscience, you will try to do things to get God's favor instead of going to God in prayer and receiving God's grace, and God's free forgiveness, freedom and power.**

I'm not saying God does not want us to have a pure conscience, the Bible says it's important to live with a good conscience. 1 Timothy 1:19 actually says we are to live with faith... and a good conscience!

**And where does faith come from?** Romans 10:17, **"Faith comes from hearing."**  
Here is what it is saying – live by hearing the voice of God, and then you will have a clean conscience!

I'm not saying that we shouldn't do wrong or bad things... I am saying we should start living according to the Tree of Life and not live by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**God created us to live by His voice! That is a key principle of this series!** And Adam and Eve lived by God's voice until sin came into the world. Jesus came to restore that relationship so we could once more live by the voice of God.

**Does that make sense?**

**We need to remember, Our relationship with God is to be our highest pursuit!**

### **3. Our relationship with God must be our highest passion!**

Our relationship with God must be our highest priority, our highest pursuit and our highest passion!

- **Priority** means we consider something as our highest importance.
- **Pursuit** means what we follow most closely. Run after it and strive for it with all our might.
- **Passion** means that it stirs our greatest feelings of love and devotion. We pursue something because we are passionate about it. Our motivation springs from our passion!

Like the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. It describes how Jesus came to the village called Bethany, the two sisters Mary and Martha welcomed Him into their home.

- Martha took care of all the preparations. She cleaned, she cooked, she did the dishes and set the table.
- But Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His voice... or as Luke 10:39 explained, she "listened to what Jesus said."

Martha got upset with Mary and complained to Jesus about it. Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. **But one thing is needed**... and Mary chose what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

**The key phrase in what Jesus said is – "one thing is needed."**

- Let me ask you this: are you like Martha? Worried and troubled about many things? If you are, then those things will stop you from sitting at Jesus feet and listening to His word.

- **You know what I'm going to say:** you go to open your Bible, but your mind goes other places.
- Maybe you don't open your Bible! Reading it is the last thing on your to-do list for the day and the item you never get to.
- Maybe meeting with Jesus isn't on your schedule at all. You're a Christian, but just like multitudes of others over the centuries... you want your parents or your pastor or your best friend or your spouse to have the relationship with Jesus for you.

Our relationship with the Lord must be our own, highest and personal passion! We must prioritize our relationship with Him in order for it to be this way.

- We chose to put God first
- We chose to place Him first in our minds, hearts, and thoughts and give Him the priority in our lives.

The dishes can wait, making dinner can wait, what best not wait is what Mary chose... sitting at Jesus feet and listening to His voice!

- The Key to hearing God regularly is to grow in our relationship with Him.
- God wants us to recognize His voice through the closeness of the relationship He has with us.
- Like a close friend or spouse, we learn to recognize God's voice by being with Him and talking with Him often.