

## **Tuning in: Why Tune In**

**Today, we continue our Lenten sermon series, “Tuning-in.”** In this series, we’re looking 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.**

**The big question through this sermon series is, “How can we hear from God?” Another question that goes with it, it reveals God’s heart – it is this “Why would God want to talk to us? The answer? FRIENDSHIP.**

While you and I cannot fully relate to the limitless God of the universe... the friendship God invites is into, is never where we are buddies in a casual sort of way. God is always God, and we are always human.

We need to always remember who God is! As Psalm 97:9 explains, *“For you Lord, are most high above all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.”*

- And yet God calls us into a special relationship. John 15:15, *“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

***This is an amazing truth for us. The great God of the Universe – calls us friend!***  
**3 truths about the friendship and conversation the Lords wants with us:**

### **1) God wants to have a real conversation**

God wants a personal connection with us – this transformed prayer for me!

How do we communicate to technology and machines and how do they communicate with us?

- Think of a car, we want it to go faster, we press the accelerator.
- If we want to go slower, we press on the brake.
- If we want to turn right and head into a donut shop we turn the steering wheel. We give a car a direction and it obeys.

**Some of us have cars that talk back to us. But it isn’t a real conversation.**

Think of a GPS. Mine is the voice of a woman. Kind of a cold voice, in fact, she sounds like she’s kinda annoyed at me, constantly telling me I’m doing something wrong. Last week, I’m almost positive I heard her sigh with disgust and say, “Recalculating you dummy!”

- Now I know my GPS isn't really talking to me... Someone programmed my GPS to say those words. It isn't capable of emotion at all, the truth is, I can't even annoy it, no matter how hard I try.

When we communicate with technology, we speak, press keys or click a mouse, and it does what we tell it to do. God did not create us to have a relationship with Him like our relationship with a car or GPS. **God created us to be His children!**

God talks, communicates with His children in a personal way.  
**God invites us to come to Him anytime.**

One of the greatest ways a human is seen to have a friendship with God, is in the example of Abraham. James 2:23 explains, "*Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend.*"

In Genesis 18, **Abraham had a real conversation with God.** Abraham was talking to 3 visitors and talked about the son God promised Abraham in his old age.

They enjoyed a meal together along with a nice, pleasant conversation and the discussion changed. They started to talk about Sodom and Gomorrah, 2 ancient cities known for their perversity and rebellion, and the Lord decided to destroy the cities because of the people's wickedness.

In Genesis 18:22-23 we're told, "<sup>22</sup>The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. <sup>23</sup>Then Abraham approached him..." **What happened was a pattern of communication.**

- Abraham stopped what he was doing, and then approached the Lord.

Once Abraham came close to God, an amazing conversation unfolded.

- First, Abraham asked God a question. "<sup>23</sup>... "*Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup>What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? <sup>25</sup>**Far be it from you to do such a thing** - to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. **Far be it from you!** Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

Abraham knew God would never do anything wrong. Of course, God by nature of His holy and righteous character, would never do anything wrong. But Abraham still thought he needed to remind God of it... it's almost like Abraham needed to remind himself of God's holy character.

- Ever do that, your talking to someone and you state the obvious, not because they need to be reminded of something, it was more for you.
- So God said in verse 26, ***“If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”*** Now Abraham was trying to negotiate with God, and he knew audacity of what he was doing, he said in verse 27, *“Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes.”*

God is almighty and holy, but God is also near. Abraham was reverent in how he talked to God, but he was also familiar with God.

God lowered the requirements to 45

Then Abraham asked for 40. And God said, “Ok, 40.”

Then Abraham asked for 30. And God said, “Ok, 30.”

Then Abraham asked for 20. And God said, “Ok, 20.”

Then in verse 32, Abe asked for 10. And God said, *“Ok, for the sake of 10 righteous people in Sodom, I will not destroy the city.”*

Here’s what I believed happened, if you go back to Genesis 14:16, you see that Abraham rescued the people of Sodom in a battle because it was the city where his nephew Lot lived. Abraham cared about the people of Sodom. He was praying for and interceding for them. Abraham knew the city was rotten.

He knew Lot should live somewhere else. But Abraham wasn’t trying to change God’s mind... as much as he was trying to sort out the justice of God’s plan.

**Really Lord, that’s really what You want to do? That’s what Your justice looks like? Let me try and get my mind around this...**

- But that is the kind of conversation that God is inviting us to have with Him! Not the kind of prayer you have with a computer. We don’t just take orders from God. We’re talking to God about His actions and character and promises. **Prayer is trying to understand God and then interceding for ourselves and others.**

God isn’t changing His mind because of our prayers; God is inviting us into the process with Him. God is inviting us into a conversation with Him. One where we hear God talk to us, and God helps us understand in our hearts and minds. **This is when we have a true friendship with God.**

## 2) God wants to talk to us

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Truth shows what a friendship with God is like, God wants to talk to us!

I know this is obvious, but think about this a minute with me. **God talks to people!**

God talked to people in the Bible and God still talks to people today!  
When we look at scripture, God talked to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day.  
God talked to Noah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Deborah, **Peter, Paul and Mary**. In Acts 10, God even talked to Cornelius the Roman centurion... and he wasn't even a believer yet!  
That is what's called Prevenient Grace!

God reaching out to us even before we know or care about God! That's how much God cares for people, constantly talking to us, inviting us to come closer to Him.

This brings us to today's scripture, **John 16:7-15**:

*But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

*"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*

God speaks to us today because of God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, living inside of us. Jesus is talking to his disciples and says, I still have much more to say, but you can't handle it now – *But - the Spirit of truth (The Holy Spirit), He is going to come and guide you into all the truth. He'll talk to you, and tell you what is yet to come.*

- God finished his formal revelation after He gave us the Bible 2000 years ago. But God did not finish talking to us.
- **How does God talk to us?** Sometimes we have this idea that God spoke to people in the Bible through a big booming voice – there was no way they could miss it! It was impossible NOT to know God was talking.

And if God would only talk to us in that same, Big, Booming voice, then it would all be OK. Right?

**I'm not convinced that was how God talked to everyone in the Bible!**

Certainly God was crystal clear when He inspired men to write scripture – 2 Peter 1:20-21. But how did God talk to people in the Bible when He wanted to have a conversation with them?

- **When Elijah was in the wilderness, God spoke in a still small voice, some translations say it was “a gentle whisper.” 1 Kings 19**

I wonder if that was the same as what we call today “an impression on our hearts?” God impressed what He wanted to say on Elijah’s heart. We don’t know for sure how God talked to Elijah, **but maybe a still, small voice is the same as a prompting of the Holy Spirit?**

- You can also look to Gideon in Judges 6. God talked to Gideon, but Gideon wasn’t sure about the message. So 2 times he wanted to confirm the message by putting out a fleece. In Judges 6:17, Gideon said to God, “*Give me a sign that it is really You talking to me.*”

Why did Gideon doubt God’s voice? If God spoke in a big, booming voice, then why was Gideon so unsure about the voice? ANSWER – I don’t think God talked to Gideon in the Big, Booming voice! I think God was talking to Gideon in the still, small voice. The same kind of voice He used when he talked to Elijah in the wilderness.

WHY? Hebrews chapter 11. Person after person was listed, all of the big names in the Old Testament and all friends of God. All heard from God and they all lived BY FAITH. If God spoke in a big, unmistakable, booming voice... why would they have to live by faith? It would be obvious, not faith.

Some of these people had scripture too. Some of the Prophets had the writings of earlier prophets. New Testament believers had the Law, the Psalms, and the writings of the Prophets... they constantly said, It was written, it was written. **But God also spoke to them in addition to the scriptures they had. And yet they lived by faith!**

So when God speaks to you today, chances are God won’t speak in a big, booming voice. Rather, God will talk to you through the Holy Spirit, like in John 16, in the still, small voice... and what you do after God speaks to you... will require faith!

### **3) God wants to talk with us as friends.**

How do we know that God wants to talk with us **as friends?** Two foundational verses:

- Exodus 33:11, “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.”
- And James 2:23, “And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend.”

We need to grasp this amazing truth... God wants, desires, to be our friend, just as God was a friend to Moses and Abraham!

- Proverbs 18:24 explains, “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother!”
- As Jesus promised in John 15:15, “I no longer call you servants, instead I call you friend!”

**Friendship with God is an awesome privilege! It's also an awesome responsibility! One we should never take lightly.**

- If you have a close, best friend, what do you love to do? Hang out with them. Talk with them.
- How does it feel when you are trying to visit with a friend and you keep getting interrupted? Or you are trying to visit with someone and there is a lot of loud noise in the background. Frustrating isn't it!
- Just like those times when you want and need to have time away from the distractions so you can have time... just to be with our friends. Jesus took time to be away with His Heavenly Father. IF you look in the Gospels, you will see in Matthew 4:1, 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42, Jesus took time just to be with the Father!

If we are disciples of Jesus, then we are friends of Jesus. Friendship with God is at the core of the Gospel message! And as we want to have time with our friends, we need time to be with Jesus... with God!

- **That is the silence and solitude that is described in the Lent Experience challenge is this week.** Solitude is the only way to hear the voice of God and experience the Manifest Presence of God!
- It is in that time with your friend, closer than a brother, that you can have that quality time like you need time with your best friend!
- It's that time with Jesus where you find the restoration, the refreshing, the strength and focus you need in life.

Closing prayer:

**Blessing:**

May the Lord bless you and keep you;

May the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

May the Lord fill you with his peace and desire to hear God speak to you!