



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

NOVEMBER 25, 2018

Discussion Guide

HEARING GOD

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- DO YOU BELIEVE REGULARLY COMMUNICATING IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF A FRIENDSHIP? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- DISCUSS THE IDEA OF CESSATIONISM AND HOW SCRIPTURE TEACHES THAT GOD STILL SPEAKS TO PEOPLE IN OUR MODERN WORLD.
- READ JOHN 15.9-17 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.
- ACCORDING TO JESUS, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY ANSWERS AS POSSIBLE IN THE TEXT.

- IN LIGHT OF THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, WHAT MIGHT WE EXPECT IN TERMS OF COMMUNICATION WITH HIM? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- PRACTICALLY, WHAT MIGHT THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS COMMUNICATION ENTAIL?
- DO YOU BELIEVE MOST PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THIS KIND OF COMMUNICATION WITH JESUS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- READ JOHN 16.12-15.
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DO THESE VERSES HAVE TO ADD TO THE ISSUE OF COMMUNICATING WITH JESUS?
- IN LIGHT OF JESUS' WORDS, WOULD YOU IDENTIFY THE ISSUES WE EXPERIENCE WITH OUR COMMUNICATION WITH JESUS AS THEOLOGICAL OR PRACTICAL? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- HOW MIGHT ONE GO ABOUT ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE? WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO LEAN INTO THIS ISSUE TOGETHER AS A GROUP?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY PRAYING (COMMUNICATING!) WITH JESUS, ASKING HIM TO LEAD AND GUIDE YOU SO THAT YOU MIGHT NOT JUST SPEAK TO HIM BUT ALSO HEAR FROM HIM.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

CESSATIONISM

CESSATIONISM IS THE BELIEF THAT WITH THE CLOSING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON (AROUND 90 A.D.), THE PRESENCE AND USE OF THE MIRACULOUS SPIRITUAL GIFTS CEASED. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THESE GIFTS DIFFERS BETWEEN CESSATIONISTS, BUT THE PRIMARY THREE ARE PROPHECY, SPEAKING IN TONGUES, AND THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES. CESSATIONISM IS AN OUTWORKING OF DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY, A RECENT FORM OF THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION, PRIMARILY POPULARIZED IN AMERICA BY JOHN NELSON DARBY AND THE SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE.

DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY POSITS GOD WORKS IN DIFFERENT WAYS DURING DIFFERENT PERIODS OF TIME IN SALVATION HISTORY OR DISPENSATIONS. WHILE A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO THE THEOLOGICAL SCENE—IT WAS ONLY INTRODUCED IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY—AND REJECTED BY MOST SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIANS, DISPENSATIONAL THOUGHT TOOK ROOT AND THRIVED IN EVANGELICAL CIRCLES WITH BAPTISTIC LEANINGS THROUGHOUT THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE UPON PASTORS WHO HAD LITTLE IF ANY OTHER THEOLOGICAL TRAINING. ONE MIGHT SAY, FOR MANY OF THESE PASTORS, THE COMMENTARY FOUND IN THIS BIBLE WAS ELEVATED TO A STATUS OF “NEARLY-INSPIRED” OR WORDS WHICH STOOD NEXT TO SCRIPTURE IN THEIR AUTHORITY.

AS AN OUTWORKING OF DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY, CESSATIONISM ARGUES THE MIRACULOUS SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF PROPHECY, TONGUES, AND THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES WERE FOR THE DISPENSATION REFERRED TO AS THE APOSTOLIC AGE, TO BE USED AS SIGNS AUTHENTICATING THE PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES. THE PRIMARY TEXT USED TO SUPPORT THIS POSITION IS 1 CORINTHIANS 13.8-13. IN THIS PASSAGE, PAUL NOTES A DAY WILL COME WHEN ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS EXCEPT FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE WOULD CEASE. CESSATIONISTS ARGUE THIS DAY TRANSPIRED WITH THE PASSING OF THE LAST LIVING APOSTLE, JOHN, SOMETIME AROUND 90 A.D. THIS ARGUMENT IS IMPORTANT WITH RESPECT TO THE ISSUE OF HEARING GOD SPEAK BECAUSE IT EXPLICITLY LEADS TO THE UNDERSTANDING THAT GOD NO LONGER SPEAKS, VERBALLY, TO PEOPLE. RATHER, THE LAST WORDS GOD VERBALLY SPOKE WERE HEARD FROM THE MOUTH AND PEN OF JOHN. THE ARGUMENT FOLLOWS THAT THE WORDS WHICH WERE GOD’S SPOKEN WORDS WHICH WERE TO BE REMEMBERED WERE WRITTEN DOWN AND ARE WHAT WE HAVE AS OUR OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. THEREFORE, ONE MIGHT READ SCRIPTURE IF HE WISHES TO HEAR GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT MIGHT ILLUMINE THESE WORDS FOR HIM SO THAT HE MIGHT KNOW HOW TO APPLY THEM TO HIS LIFE, BUT IN THIS NO NEW WORDS ARE SPOKEN.

SEVERAL ISSUES ARISE WITH THE CESSATIONIST VIEW, TWO OF WHICH ARE PERTINENT WITH RESPECT TO WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO HEAR GOD TODAY AND NOT JUST RECEIVE ILLUMINATION CONCERNING WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY SAID. FIRST, THE CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13.8-13 CLEARLY REFERS TO THE RETURN OF CHRIST, NOT THE DEATH OF JOHN (1 CORINTHIANS 13.12). WHILE PAUL DOES SPEAK OF A CESSATION OF GIFTS, HE NOTES THIS DAY IS LINKED TO THE RETURN OF JESUS, NOT THE DEATH OF THE LAST LIVING APOSTLE. THEREFORE, PAUL IS NOT ARGUING THAT IN THE PRESENT DAY, IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE FOR GOD TO

CONTINUE SPEAKING IN A VERBAL MANNER.

SECOND, THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS PASSAGE LINKING IT TO THE DEATH OF JOHN IS REALLY ABOUT A DESIRE TO PROTECT THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON AS CLOSED WITH THIS AND OTHER SCRIPTURES BEING USED TOWARD THAT END. THE ISSUE OF WHETHER THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE IS OPEN OR CLOSED (NOTHING FURTHER CAN BE ADDED) IS A MATTER OF DEBATE. DISPENSATIONALISTS INTERPRET THE WARNING AGAINST ADDING TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION (REVELATION 22.18-19) AS APPLYING TO ALL OF SCRIPTURE, ALTHOUGH DOING SO TAKES THE VERSE OUT OF CONTEXT. IF THE CANON IS CLOSED THEN THE CONTINUATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS LIKE PROPHECY POSE A PROBLEM, BECAUSE, AS A WORD FROM GOD, PROPHECY STANDS AS SOMETHING WHICH IS OF SCRIPTURE-QUALITY. THEREFORE, IF PROPHECY CONTINUES, THEN, THE REASONING GOES, IT SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN AND ADDED TO THE CANON, BUT THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE CANON IS CLOSED. THEREFORE, PROPHECY CANNOT EXIST. THE ARGUMENT IS SOMEWHAT CIRCULAR, BUT ONE CAN SEE THE SERIOUS ISSUE THE CONTINUATION OF THE ABILITY TO HEAR FROM GOD POSES TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE CANON IS CLOSED. HOWEVER, THIS ARGUMENT IS SOMEWHAT OVERBLOWN, BECAUSE FEW WHO BELIEVE IN THE CONTINUATION OF PROPHECY AND TONGUES ARGUE THESE ARE OF SCRIPTURE-QUALITY. MOST ARGUE THESE ARE MODERN WORDS FROM GOD, BUT THEY DO NOT ADD TO OR CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE. THEREFORE, THE CESSATIONIST ARGUMENT ABOUT ADDING TO SCRIPTURE IS MORE ABOUT WHAT THEY ASSUME OTHERS TO BELIEVE RATHER THAN WHAT THEY TRULY BELIEVE ABOUT THE OPENNESS OF THE CANON. THEORETICALLY, THE CANON DOES REMAIN OPEN, BECAUSE SCRIPTURE DOES NOT CONTAIN AN ADMONITION AGAINST RECORDING ADDITIONAL INSPIRED WORDS OF GOD. HOWEVER, THE PROCESS OF ADDING TO THE CANON WOULD PROVE HERCULEAN IN OUR MODERN CONTEXT. ON THE ANCIENT CHURCH, THREE REQUIREMENTS HAD TO BE MET FOR SOMETHING TO BE CONSIDERED SCRIPTURE: PASSING TESTS OF ORTHODOXY, HAVING BENEFICIAL QUALITIES TO MANY, AND THE ACCEPTANCE AS SCRIPTURE BY THE CHURCH AT LARGE. THE ANCIENT CHURCH HAD MANY WRITINGS WHICH MET ONE OR TWO OF THESE CRITERIA, BUT ONLY THE 27 BOOKS OF OUR NEW TESTAMENT MET ALL THREE! TODAY, ONE WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO IMAGINE A SCENARIO WHERE ALL THREE MIGHT BE MET TODAY. IN OTHER WORDS, THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IS THEORETICALLY OPEN BUT PRACTICALLY CLOSED.

IT IS BETTER AND IN KEEPING WITH THE CONTEXTUAL ARGUMENT OF SCRIPTURE TO POSIT ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL THE RETURN OF CHRIST. AT THIS POINT, MANY OF THESE GIFTS WILL NO LONGER BE NEEDED FOR THE GIFTS ARE ABOUT MAKING CHRIST KNOWN IN AN EXPERIENTIAL MANNER, AND, WITH HIS RETURN, HE WILL BE FULLY KNOWN AND EXPERIENCED. FOR THE ISSUE OF

HEARING GOD IN A VERBAL MANNER, THIS IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE, BECAUSE IT MEANS THAT GOD CAN SPEAK AT VARIOUS TIMES AND IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, INCLUDING THROUGH THE PROPHETS BECAUSE OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (HEBREWS 1.1; JOHN 16.13-15).

THE TEXT

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

THE CONSISTENT TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE REVEALS GOD DESIRES AND DOES SPEAK TO PEOPLE. THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS BEST SUMS UP HOW GOD HAS SPOKEN WHEN HE STATES GOD HAS SPOKEN TO PEOPLE BOTH THROUGH PROPHETS AND IN VARIOUS OTHER WAYS (HEBREWS 1.1). SOME OF THESE WAYS INCLUDE ORACLES AND STORIES (HOSEA 12.10), AUDIBLE VOICE (EXODUS 33.11; 1 KINGS 19.11-12), VISIONS AND DREAMS (GENESIS 46.2), THEOPHANIES (EXODUS 19.17-25), AND EVEN A DONKEY (NUMBERS 22.21-35)! HOWEVER, THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS ALSO NOTES GOD HAS SPOKEN MOST CLEARLY WITH JESUS (HEBREWS 1.2); THAT IS, IN JESUS' LIFE, HIS MINISTRY, AND WORDS THE VOICE OF GOD IS HEARD. THIS IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE JESUS IS THE WORD OF GOD ENFLESHED (JOHN 1.14).

CLEARLY, GOD IS ONE WHO DESIRES TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE. THAT GOD HAS SPOKEN IS A MATTER OF LITTLE DEBATE. WHAT IS AT ISSUE IS WHETHER GOD CONTINUES TO SPEAK TODAY. DOES GOD STILL SPEAK, VERBALLY? DOES HE REVEAL NEW WORDS AND MESSAGES, NEW GUIDANCE IN A WAY WHICH IS PERSONAL AND INTIMATE BOTH TO PERSONS AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH? THE ANSWER SEEMS OBVIOUS, DEPENDING ON WHICH SIDE OF THE CESSATION DEBATE ONE FALLS. HOWEVER, BEYOND THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE LIES THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF HEARING GOD. EVEN THOSE WHO ARGUE IT IS THEOLOGICALLY POSSIBLE FOR GOD TO STILL SPEAK, STRUGGLE PRACTICALLY TO PROVIDE DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE OF HEARING GOD'S VOICE.

THAT GOD DESIRES TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE IS ROOTED IN HIS CREATIVE INTENTIONS. WHEN GOD CREATED PEOPLE, HE MADE THEM IN HIS IMAGE (GENESIS 1.26-28). AS THOSE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, PEOPLE WERE INTENDED TO REFLECT GOD TO CREATION. HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO REFLECT GOD TO CREATION, A PERSON MUST FUNCTION LIKE AN ANGLED MIRROR, WITH THEIR FACE TURNED BOTH TO GOD AND CREATION. TO HAVE ONE'S FACE TURNED TO GOD IMPLIES GOD INTENDS RELATIONSHIP TO EXIST BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THOSE WHO REFLECT HIM TO HIS CREATION. THIS INTENTION OF RELATIONSHIP BECOMES EXPLICIT WHEN IN GENESIS 3, GOD WALKS THROUGH THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO BE PHYSICALLY WITH ADAM AND EVE (GENESIS 3.8). WHILE THE DESIRE OF GOD IS CLEARLY FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE, THE REST OF SCRIPTURE REVEALS THE NATURE OF THIS

RELATIONSHIP TO BE THAT OF FRIENDSHIP. SCRIPTURE STATES THOSE WITH WHOM GOD WAS CLOSEST WERE COUNTED AS FRIENDS OF GOD (ISAIAH 41.8; EXODUS 33.11), AND AS ONE CAN EXPECT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP, WORDS ARE SPOKEN (EXODUS 29.42-43; 33.11). WITH THE COMING OF JESUS, GOD'S SPOKEN WORD MADE FLESH, IT IS SEEN GOD DESIRES THIS EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP TO BE WITH ALL PEOPLE AND NOT JUST A CHOSEN FEW (JOHN 15.14-15). AS WITH GENESIS, THIS RELATIONSHIP OF FRIENDSHIP INVOLVES A TURNING OF ONE'S FACE TO GOD AND TO THE WORLD, LISTENING TO GOD AND THEN ENGAGING THE WORLD (JOHN 15.9-17).

WHILE ONE MIGHT ASSUME THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD EXISTED INsofar AS JESUS WAS PHYSICALLY PRESENT, JESUS EXPLICITLY STATES THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP IS MEANT TO CONTINUE THROUGH THE ONGOING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (JOHN 14.15-18), AND AS ONE CAN EXPECT WITH ANY FRIENDSHIP, WORDS WILL BE SPOKEN AS NEEDED (JOHN 16.12-15). CLEARLY, GOD IS ONE WHO HAS DESIRED AND CONTINUES TO DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF FRIENDSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE. HOWEVER, THE PRACTICAL DILEMMA OF HEARING GOD REMAINS. THIS DILEMMA IS EXACERBATED IF ONE BELIEVES GOD HAS A GOOD WILL FOR HIS PEOPLE WHICH CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD INsofar AS GOD COMMUNICATES IT (JEREMIAH 29.11). THUS, THE REAL ISSUE CONCERNING HEARING GOD INVOLVES NOT THE THEORETICAL ISSUE OF WHETHER GOD SPEAKS BUT THE PRACTICAL ISSUE OF KNOWING HOW GOD SPEAKS AND HOW ONE MIGHT RECOGNIZE WHEN GOD IS SPEAKING.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

HOW DO YOU HEAR GOD? THIS MATTERS NOT JUST TO THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE GOD SPEAKS—I DEEPLY BELIEVE GOD IS ONE WHO SPEAKS—BUT, IT IS AN ISSUE FOR THOSE OF WHO BELIEVE GOD HAS A WILL FOR HIS PEOPLE, A WILL WHICH CAN BE KNOWN INsofar AS GOD COMMUNICATES IT. GOD HAS A WILL, A GOOD PATH HE DESIRES I TRAVEL (EPHESIANS 2.10). HE HAS A WILL, A GOOD PATH FOR YOU TO TRAVEL. AND. . .HE HAS A WILL, A GOOD PATH HE DESIRES WE TRAVEL TOGETHER! BUT, IF WE CAN KNOW THIS WILL INsofar AS GOD COMMUNICATES IT REQUIRES GOD TO DO JUST THAT. HE MUST COMMUNICATE HIS WILL. GOD MUST SPEAK.

THAT GOD SPEAKS IS NOT THE REAL PROBLEM. FOR ME, THE REAL PROBLEM LIES IN HOW I GO ABOUT HEARING HIM. HOW DO I KNOW WHEN GOD IS SPEAKING? HOW DO I KNOW WHAT HE IS SAYING? HOW DO I KNOW WHEN HE HAS STOPPED SPEAKING? THESE ARE SIMPLE QUESTIONS WITH VAST IMPLICATIONS. FOR INSTANCE, LET'S SAY I HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE, ONE TO WHICH THE BIBLE DOES NOT CLEARLY SPEAK. HOW DO I KNOW WHETHER I HAVE FREEDOM IN THIS MATTER OR WHETHER GOD HAS SOMETHING SPECIFIC IN

MIND FOR ME? I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY ABOUT THE MATTER. SO, I LISTEN. WHEN I LISTEN, I HEAR A LOT OF THINGS. I FEEL A LOT OF THINGS. WHICH, IF ANY OF WHAT I HEAR AND FEEL IS OF GOD? WHAT IF WHAT I HEAR IS JUST SELF-TALK? WHAT IF WHAT I HEAR IS THE EXTRA HELPING OF CHICKEN TENDERS I HAD LAST NIGHT? WHAT IF WHAT I HEAR IS MY FRIEND? WHERE IS GOD IN THE MATTER, BECAUSE IF GOD HAS A WILL IT MATTERS. NOW, ELEVATE THIS DISCUSSION TO A COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND YOU SEE HOW HIGH THE STAKES CAN RISE.

I REMEMBER AS A BOY LYING IN BED TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHETHER GOD WAS SPEAKING TO ME. IT SEEMS SILLY TO ME NOW, BUT I REMEMBER SAYING TO GOD, "GOD WHEN YOU WANT TO SAY SOMETHING TO ME, LET THERE BE A RINGING IN MY EAR, THEN I WILL KNOW WHAT FOLLOWS IS YOU." SO SIMPLE. SO CHILD-LIKE AND HEART- FELT. I WANTED TO KNOW WHEN GOD WAS SPEAKING. THERE IS JUST ONE PROBLEM. I NOW LIVE WITH A MILD EXPERIENCE OF TINNITUS, A CONSTANT RINGING SOUND IN BOTH EARS. IN MY CHILD-LIKE FAITH, THIS WOULD MEAN EVERYTHING I NOW HEAR IS GOD SPEAKING. THAT WOULD MEAN GOD IS SAYING SOME PRETTY CRAZY STUFF! GOOD THING HE DIDN'T TAKE ME UP ON MY REQUEST TO LITERALLY GIVE ME A RING. BUT, MY ISSUE STILL REMAINS. HOW DO I KNOW WHEN GOD IS SPEAKING?

I AM COMING TO UNDERSTAND THAT ANSWERING THIS QUESTION BEGINS WITH REAFFIRMING MY BELIEF IN THE MODERN PRESENCE AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S VOICE. I KNOW. I THOUGHT WE ALREADY BELIEVED GOD SPOKE, AND I DO. HOWEVER, WHEN I CAN'T SEEM TO FIGURE OUT WHEN GOD IS SPEAKING, I AM TEMPTED TO BELIEVE IN THE THEOLOGICAL POSSIBILITY OF GOD SPEAKING TO ME BUT LIVE BY THE PRACTICAL BELIEF THAT GOD DOESN'T SPEAK TO ME. SO, I AM LEARNING TO AFFIRM, AND NOT JUST ONCE, GOD STILL SPEAKS, AND HE STILL SPEAKS TO PEOPLE LIKE ME.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT HEARING GOD? THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ANSWER IF WE BELIEVE GOD HAS A WILL FOR US AS INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH, AND THIS WILL CAN BE KNOWN INsofar AS GOD COMMUNICATES IT. THEOLOGICALLY, MANY OF US BELIEVE GOD CAN AND DOES STILL SPEAK. IT REALLY IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE A MODERN DAY "WORD OF THE LORD." HOWEVER, MANY OF US LIVE BY THE BELIEF THAT GOD DOESN'T SPEAK TO US BECAUSE WE HAVE LITTLE TO NO PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN KNOWING HOW TO DISCERN HIS VOICE. BECAUSE THE ISSUE WITH HEARING GOD IS ESSENTIALLY PRACTICAL IN NATURE, IT IS TEMPTING TO ADDRESS WHAT IS THE REAL PROBLEM. WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO HEAR GOD. SO, HERE ARE 5 WAYS, 3 STEPS, 2 PRINCIPLES FOR HEARING GOD. BUT THIS WILL NEVER WORK FOR US. IT WILL NEVER WORK BECAUSE OUR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE HAS CREATED IN US A

THEOLOGICAL ISSUE. BECAUSE WE DO NOT KNOW HOW TO HEAR GOD, MANY OF US HAVE CEASED TO BELIEVE GOD CAN SPEAK. THIS IS NOT THAT WE BELIEVE GOD CAN'T SPEAK AT ALL. WE SIMPLY BELIEVE GOD CANNOT SPEAK TO SOMEONE LIKE US. THE REASONS WE GIVE TO SUPPORT THIS BELIEF ARE NUMEROUS, BUT THEIR CAUSE IS SINGULAR. OUR PRACTICAL DILEMMA HAS CREATED FOR US A THEOLOGICAL QUANDARY. SO, BEFORE WE GET TO THE PRACTICAL ISSUES OF HEARING GOD, WE MUST BEGIN WITH THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH: GOD SPEAKS TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU. YOU ARE CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, A RELATIONSHIP OF FRIENDSHIP, AND THROUGH CHRIST YOU NOW EXPERIENCE THIS RELATIONSHIP. YOU NOW ARE A FRIEND OF GOD, AND AS WITH ANY FRIENDSHIP, WE CAN EXPECT BOTH PARTIES TO COMMUNICATE AS NECESSARY. APART FROM THIS FOUNDATION, NO NUMBER OF PRACTICAL HELPS WILL PROVE EFFECTIVE IN HEARING GOD BECAUSE WE WILL NOT HAVE THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH ANY USE OF THEM CAN REST. SO, HOW DO WE COME TO BELIEVE? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS ONE MIGHT PROVIDE, BUT THE EASIEST IS ONE TO HOLD ON TO IS WORSHIP. WORSHIP IS MORE THAN SINGING. WORSHIP INVOLVES THE REHEARSAL OF TRUTH, THE REHEARSAL OF GOD'S STORY. WHEN WE WORSHIP, WE STATE IN VARIOUS WAYS, WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE SO THAT WE MIGHT ALIGN OUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY. WE WORSHIP OVER AND OVER AGAIN BECAUSE WE MUST BE REMINDED OVER AND OVER AGAIN OF WHO GOD IS. WE REHEARSE THE SAME STORIES, THE SAME TRUTHS AGAIN AND AGAIN BECAUSE WITH EACH REHEARSAL WE COME CLOSER TO BELIEVING THEM TO BE TRUE; THAT IS, WITH EACH REHEARSAL WE COME CLOSER TO ALIGNING OUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY.

THIS WEEK, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONSIDER REHEARSING JOHN 15.9-17. REHEARSING THIS STORY IS AS SIMPLE AS READING IT ALOUD AND ALLOWING GOD TO PUT YOU IN THE STORY, NOT JUST ONCE BUT OVER AND OVER AGAIN. ALLOW YOURSELF TO HEAR JESUS TELL YOU THAT HE CONSIDERS YOU HIS FRIEND. BEGIN EACH DAY THIS WEEK WITH JESUS CALLING YOU HIS FRIEND. END EACH DAY THIS WEEK HEARING JESUS CALL YOU HIS FRIEND, THROUGHOUT THE DAY, PAUSE AND LISTEN TO JESUS CALL YOU HIS FRIEND. AS YOU WORSHIP IN THIS WAY, YOU HEAR THE STORY OF GOD OVER AND OVER AGAIN, AND WITH EACH TELLING YOU COME ONE STEP CLOSER TO BELIEVING IT, TO BELIEVING YOU ARE GOD'S FRIEND. AND AS FRIENDSHIPS GO, FRIENDS TALK.



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