

Hearing God (2)

In America and Western Europe Christianity is experiencing a decline while at the same time it is gaining influence in Africa, Asia, and South America.

In America the church has lost its desire to hear the voice of the God and see the power of God. George Barna's research says that less than 2% of the churches in America will hear a message on the Holy Spirit this year.

I said last week, "We serve a speaking God" and very few want to hear His voice."

The racial powder keg is ready to explode on our city streets, while the threat of terrorism seems to increase almost daily.

Where are the Prophets?
Where is the Power of God?
When will the voice of God be heard in our land?

In order for the church to become relevant again in this great land, a bold and obedient church will need to emerge: a Hearing Church who knows the voice of a Speaking God.

Last week I read an article in Charisma magazine written by John Burton that I find to be truly prophetic. It is titled, "The Ancient and Emerging: 5 Major Changes Coming to the Church."

5 Major Changes Coming to the Church

1) Services will become more like prayer meetings.

One of the greatest indictments on the church today is that prayer is not the driving force in our church world.

Today, people tend to choose churches based on the appeal of the teaching and the worship instead of the fervency of prayer. If the church was a merely a house of teaching or a house of worship that would make sense, but it's not.

When Jesus drove out the money changers He said, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.'" (Mark 11:17)

The article says a day is coming when every person in the church will function as a burning intercessor and the services will be marked by a unified groan of fiery prayer.

2) Personal need will give way to personal mission.

Today, people tend to use the church as a way to meet their personal needs instead of serving it as a minister of God. This is going to change. Instead of the church functioning as a hospital, it will once again function as a mission-driven military. The mission will take precedence over personal needs.

The saints will be equipped for service, not for personal survival.

3) Teaching will be minimized while instruction is emphasized.

Teaching is mostly for personal edification while instruction is mostly for corporate assignments. While there will still be important Bible teaching, apostolic instruction will emerge as a necessary new ministry.

Teaching is personal growth-based while instruction is a call to corporate action for the sake of mission fulfillment.

An example of apostolic instruction is this: the apostolic leader gives a corporate assignment for everybody in the church to fast for a week and then show up together to prayer walk through the city streets.

4) We will gather together most days of the week.

Like in the book of Acts, the 24/7 church will again emerge as the church drives culture instead of reacting to culture. Cares of life will lose their power as we simplify our lives and put corporate prayer and mission ahead of most everything else.

Acts 2:46,47 (NIV) "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people..."

5) Worship will be supernaturally driven.

There is a new sound coming to worship, and it's not simply a new style. There is a supernatural, intercessory worship and warfare praise that will explode out of the entire body as a new breed worship leaders lead the way.

We will no longer simply sit in a pew or stand with a raised hand while a familiar worship song is sung. We engage with heaven and hear the voice of God.

Everything changes when God opens His mouth. It is impossible to hear God's voice and remain the same.

Do you want to be a person that knows how to Hear God?

A Hearing Person

1) A Hearing Person Must Pay a Listening Price.

Ever been around someone who has a listening problem? They just can't seem to focus and on what is being said. Or they have a selective hearing disorder?

The Price of a Relationship

a) A hearing person must focus on knowing God, rather than knowing about God.

- i) Many people jump into a saving relationship with Jesus but not a knowing relationship with Him.

Hearing God depends mostly on you going deeper than your saving knowledge of God into an intimate knowing relationship where you experience Him in the realm of faith and knowledge.

- ii) You were created for relationship.

Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

We were created to be like God via our relationship with Him.

b) A hearing person must be willing to obey the right voice regardless of the consequences and sacrifices.

Genesis 2:15-17 “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

- i) You know the story: the serpent showed up and they severely damaged the relationship by listening and obeying the wrong voice.

And there are many voices:

Satan speaks, self speaks, and God speaks—and sometimes it can be hard to distinguish among the three.

I don’t want to be misled by my imagination, and I certainly do not want to be fooled by Satan’s temptations, accusations, or deceptions.

- ii) Whenever I sense what may be a word from God, I refuse to accept it until I carefully consider whether I am hearing from God, myself, or Satan.

The overriding principle is simple: I don’t do anything until I am certain who is speaking.

The Price of the Consequences

c) I have often wondered why there are so few true prophets who know how to hear God’s voice. Then I realized, it’s because of the price!

- i) Hosea: God told him to marry a prostitute.

- ii) Jeremiah: God sent him to warn a people who refused to listen.
- iii) Isaiah: God told him to take off his clothes for 3 years.

God may never ask you to do something so radical as these, but God does speak clearly to those who have not only given him their ear, they have also given Him their will!

2) The Hearing Person Must Pay the Purity Price

When I think of purity, I often think of this verse: Ephesians 4:30 “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

But this verse is set in the middle of a context of scripture that is all about New Testament people living pure lives. Lets read it.

Ephesians 4:17-32 “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **19** They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

20 But that is not the way you learned Christ! **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him... **22** to put off your old self... **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness (“image”) of God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

The Pure In Heart See and Hear Things (Mathew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”)

- a) Be Pure in the way you talk (v.25 “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor...” v.29 “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”) God speaks to “grace talkers” because He can trust them.
- b) Be Pure in the way you process your anger (v.26,27 “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger; **27** and give no opportunity to the devil; **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”) God speaks to people who have self-control because they have

passed the test.

- c) Be Pure in the way you do your business (v. **28** “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”) God speaks to people who have integrity for they will guard His words in their heart.
- d) Be Pure in the way you represent Jesus in this world (v. **32** “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”) God speaks to people who are *kind*, *tenderhearted* and *forgiving*, because they can be trusted to not shame the name of Jesus.