**Whose voice are we hearing?**

Last week I spoke of stepping out in faith. In that, I said we need to pray, we need to listen, and we need to act on what we hear God say.

But the question is: who am I hearing? Is it just me, is it God, is it the devil?

The great evangelist Smith Wigglesworth wrote: “*If God definitely tells you to do anything, do it, but be sure it is God who is telling you*.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

We need some measure that can help us determine who we are hearing.

Today I want to lay before you some practical ways of checking out the source of our hearing and leading so that we can go forward in certainty that we have heard God.

First of all, it is not only God who speaks to us.

There are 3 sources of what we hear. God speaks. Satan can also speak to us and we can mislead ourselves by our own thoughts as well. Three sources: God – Satan – us.

Firstly, our subconscious speaks to us. Jeremiah 23:16 speaks about false prophets but that verse can relate to our internal voice as well.

*… they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.*

But let’s focus on the other two big voices.

How do we differentiate between Satan’s words and God’s words?

We know that the demonic spiritual realm can mimic the word of God.

Satan is described in 2 Corinthians 11:14 as masquerading as an angel of light and that Satan has a counterfeit for everything of God that is possible for him to copy.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Remember Simon the magician doing signs and wonders in Acts 8:9-11.

*9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.* 1*2 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.*

The source of his power was not from God.

Remember in *Exodus 7:22* the exhibition of God’s power through Moses and Aaron in the court of the Pharaoh. Each of the miracles was copied by the Pharaoh’s magicians

*20 Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. 21 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.22 But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh’s heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.*

Their power was not from God.

Satan knows Scripture as well and can quote it (as he did to Jesus in the wilderness). Satan can trap us by pushing us overboard on some spiritual tangent. Satan can quote Scripture, talking about spiritual things, impressing upon us great religious fervour.[[3]](#footnote-3)

But the better we know God's voice; the more obvious Satan's counterfeit words will be.[[4]](#footnote-4)

So today I want to give you some tools on discerning who you are hearing from. Choose some or all of them, up to you.

There are 6 major differences between words from God and words from the enemy:

First, while Satan lies, Christ does not.

Secondly, Satan suggests shortcuts.

Thirdly, whilst God calls for repentance, Satan will try to justify sin.

Fourthly, while God unites, Satan always strives to divide.

Fifth, Satan fosters pride but God brings humility.

Finally, Satan will always try to excuse questionable means by highlighting the good.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In a study on the Vineyard Church another researcher found 4 tests that that church uses:

The first test was whether what you had heard or imagined was the kind of thing you would say or imagine anyway: if it was, you had no need to wonder about an external being’s presence in your mind.

The second test was whether it was the kind of thing that God would say or imply.

The third test was whether the revelation could be confirmed through circumstances or through other people’s prayers.

The final test was the feeling of peace.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Yet another set of questions we could ask ourselves:

Firstly, will my decision honour God?

Secondly, are we are looking for an excuse to quit.

Thirdly, what does the Bible says about the situation.

Fourth, do I have peace about this decision?[[7]](#footnote-7)

It is often said that one way we can tell the difference between the voice of God and a counterfeit is the sense of peace. The voice that speaks peace is of God; the voice that speaks urgency is either of Satan or comes from your own human nature. God leads, Satan pushes.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Philippians 4:6-7 6 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The spirit of God’s voice has been described as being a spirit of exalted peacefulness and confidence, or joy, of sweet reasonableness, and of will for the good.[[9]](#footnote-9)

There is often a sense of excitement, conviction, faith, vibrant life, awe or peace that accompanies receiving God's word.[[10]](#footnote-10)

But this is not necessarily the case. God can bring uneasiness rather than peace:

When the Holy Spirit speaks he may speak in positive guidance, or he may use negative guidance. And negative guidance, which often shows itself by the disruption of inner peace, may be a preventative guidance to keep us away from harm which we will never know about (unless we fail to heed the guidance)[[11]](#footnote-11)

So a sense of peace cannot alone be the determinant of the source.

Another way of checking who you are hearing is to think about the nature of the voice speaking to you.

The voice of our subconscious argues with you, tries to convince you; but the inner voice of God does not argue, does not try to convince you. It just speaks, and it is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it.[[12]](#footnote-12)

When God speaks, he does not use fear to motivate. If fear overcomes you, it is the enemy speaking, not God.[[13]](#footnote-13)

We know this because 2 Tim 1:7 says: *for God did not give us a spirit of fear but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.*

Also, any voice which promises total exemption from suffering and failure is most certainly not God’s word.[[14]](#footnote-14)

I spoke of a book last week by a New Zealander Paul Hawker, called Soul Survivor, where Paul spent 40 days alone on the top of the Tararua Ranges in the lower North Island listening to God and at the end of that time he identified how he discerned the difference between the voices he heard.

It is often suggested that we need to check the Bible against what we heard for confirmation.

The content of a word that is truly from God will always conform to and be consistent with the truths about God’s nature and kingdom that are made clear in the Bible.[[15]](#footnote-15)

But there are times when there is no specific bible passage that relates to our situation: choice of marriage partner, change of job, shifting cities, which car to buy, and so on.

In those circumstances, we can still use the Bible as a guide.

But it is so easy to proof text the Bible: of finding a verse that says what we want it to. We are warned in Jeremiah 17:9 that our heart is deceitful and untrustworthy. We can bend scripture to the way we want it to say. So, I urge you to think of the principles and overall focus of the Bible in confirming a word from God, not just a particular verse.

We must be alert to any voice that is in contrast with the weight, spirit and content of God’s voice, for that may signify that we are under subtle attack.[[16]](#footnote-16)

God does not contradict himself. Nor does he make things up as he goes. Whatever God is doing today will be based on what he did yesterday. History is important. This will help you determine if the word you receive today matches or contradicts God's activity to this point.[[17]](#footnote-17)

So, it is important for our discernment process to know what the Bible actually says, and to ask for confirmation from others who have some knowledge of what the Bible says.

Despite all this advice, discernment of God’s voice is not a clear science, because sometimes the Lord speaks with a loud thunder, other times he speaks in a still small voice[[18]](#footnote-18)

What is clear is that this discernment is the product of experience. Learning to discern the voice of God is a skill, and it can be learned, but there are no two circumstances alike.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The only way to develop the ability to discriminate between the voice of God and other voices is by experience, by use.[[20]](#footnote-20)

You will learn to recognise God’s voice as different from your ordinary thoughts. You will feel different when you hear God.[[21]](#footnote-21)

John 10:27 AMP Jesus said *the sheep that are my own hear my voice and listen to me; I know them, and they follow Me.*

Does a mother know the cry of her own child in a crowded daycare? Does a wife know the voice of her husband in a crowded airport? If we know those, then a close relationship with God will mean we will recognise his voice above the noise and clutter in our minds.

Practice hearing God’s voice and it becomes easier. It’s like picking up the phone and recognising the voice of your best friend – you know his voice because you have heard it so much. Relationship is the most important reason for hearing the voice of God.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Could I suggest offer one final piece of advice:

The voices have a divine origin only if they result in changes of behaviour, which are morally significant; those who hear voices but whose behaviour does not then immediately change in any way are unlikely to have really heard God’s voice. In those cases, he may judge the voices to be mistaken, physiological or satanic.[[23]](#footnote-23)

To close: In a book called *Hearing God*, the authors echo what Smith Wigglesworth said at the start of this sermon: Don't be hasty to move forward until you are satisfied you are responding to God. Spend time with God. Learn to recognize his voice. It will be the most important thing you do. [[24]](#footnote-24)

The more you listen to God, the better your hearing of him will be. Spend time with God without distraction and ask him to speak to you. You will then be able to go in confidence that you are walking where God wants you to go.

**Appendix**

From Paul Hawker “Soul Survivor”

From God

• Peaceful

• Consistent

• Loving

• Patient

• Uplifting

• Instructive

• Comforting

• Clear

• Kind

• Welcoming of scrutiny

• Seldom needing to be responded to in a hurry

From myself

• Were a logical processed outcome of things I’ve learned or deduced

• Appealed to my ego

• Varied all the time depending on the information I’d received

• Would eventually make me look good in front of others.

From the Devil

• An accusation

• Confusing

• Promoting fear and panic

• Rejected scrutiny

• Produced guilt

• Created anxiety and generally unsettled me

• Were pushy, urgent, wanting to be done in a hurry – a driving compulsion to “do it now”.

1. (Smith [Wigglesworth, *Greater Works: experiencing God's power.*1999](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_19#_ENREF_19))33. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (Loren [Cunningham, *Is That Really You, God?* 1984](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_6#_ENREF_6))202 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (B [Mumford](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_13#_ENREF_13) *Take another look at guidance*.)93 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ([Blackaby & Blackaby, *Hearing God's voice*. 2002](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_4#_ENREF_4)*)*190 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ([Blackaby & Blackaby, 2002](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_4#_ENREF_4))195 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ([Luhrmann, *How do you learn to know that it is God who speaks?* 2007](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_11#_ENREF_11))89-90 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ([Blackaby & Blackaby, 2002](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_4#_ENREF_4))195-198. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ([Mumford](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_13#_ENREF_13)) 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *(*Dallas [Willard, *In Search of Guidance.* 1983](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_20#_ENREF_20)*)*204 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. (M [Virkler, *Dialogue with God*. 1986](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_18#_ENREF_18))30 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *(*[Mumford](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_13#_ENREF_13)*)* 92*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. (Dallas [Willard, *Hearing God: developing a conversational relationship with God*. 1999](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_21#_ENREF_21))229 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. (E [Alves](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_1#_ENREF_1) *Becoming a Prayer Warrior*:)69-70 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ([Willard, 1983](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_20#_ENREF_20))207 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ([Willard, 1999](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_21#_ENREF_21))231. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ([Willard, 1999](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_21#_ENREF_21))236 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. ([Blackaby & Blackaby, 2002](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_4#_ENREF_4))217 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ([Alves](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_1#_ENREF_1))70. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ([Mumford](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_13#_ENREF_13))92 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ([Mumford](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_13#_ENREF_13)*)95* [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *(*[*Luhrmann, “The art of hearing God: absorption, dissociation, and contemporary American spirituality” in Spiritus, 5,2005*](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_10#_ENREF_10)*)141* [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ([Cunningham, 1984](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_6#_ENREF_6)) 203 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *(*[*Dein & Littlewood,* “*The voice of God” in Anthropology and medicine, 14(2) 2007*](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_7#_ENREF_7)*)* [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ([Blackaby & Blackaby, 2002](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChris%20Lee%5CDocuments%5CStudy%5CAssignment%208Hearing%20God.docx#_ENREF_4#_ENREF_4)) 215 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)