

The CORE TEACHINGS of JESUS

Cultivating a Sensitivity to the Voice of the Spirit

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study. And we want to always welcome our guests and the members that are online. And so I wonder if you would join me and let's give a very warm rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to the online guys on the count of 3. 1, 2, 3, hoorah! Welcome men. We're honored to have you with us.

We're in the series, **The Core Teachings of Jesus** and today we're going to be talking about **Cultivating a Sensitivity to the Voice of the Spirit**. We did a series here called the 'Four Voices'. The premise of that series was that we each have a running conversation with ourselves all day long. We call it self-talk. We're not the only voice in that conversation, however, there are other voices in that conversation. Those four voices are the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit.

They are constantly exerting themselves to influence what you think, say, and do. Your job is to figure out which voice is speaking and take control of the conversation. And then we put that into a book. The big idea, when we talked about the Holy Spirit was that the goal is to be so filled with the power and presence of the Spirit that there's no room for the other voices. When we were together last, when I spoke, and as you know, I've been on vacation for a couple of weeks, I talked to you about the 'Mystery of the Holy Spirit Revealed'. Pretty pretentious title. The big idea was that sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing characteristic of a biblical Christian. So today we want to take this, I want to take this to a final step in this series and talk to you about how we can cultivate that sensitivity.

A beautiful text for this is Galatians 5:13 and following. I'm going to sort of race through these verses because I want this message this morning to primarily be about application. You've heard enough about the Holy Spirit now. Now let's talk about, "Okay, well, how do we actually do that? How do we actually cultivate this sensitivity to His voice?" And so Galatians 5:13 "You're called to be free. So serve one another, the entire law summed up in the command to love one another." And then in verses 16 to 18, He says, "So walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." If you're led by the flesh, by the Spirit, you're not under the law.

And then in Galatians 5:19-21, we see the problem. The acts of the flesh are obvious and I've underlined the ones that would make this actually seem more relevant and pertinent to you, perhaps. Sexual immorality, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, ambition, dissension, factions, envy. No man wants to walk around feeling all the time angry, mean anxious, sad, out of control. But that is what happens when we are acting in the flesh. That's the problem. The promise that God gives us is that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, in the NIV it says forbearance, same thing as patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the fruits of the Spirit. So instead of walking around angry, we walk around filled with love and joy. And instead of being anxious, we have peace. And instead of being impatient, we're patient and so on and so forth.

The solution is in the following verses. How we gain these fruits of the Spirit and don't act out of the flesh. And that is in verse 25, says "We live by the Spirit. Let us keep in step with the Spirit." And so the question becomes, for application purposes, how do we keep in step with the Spirit? That's what I want us to talk about this morning. How do we keep in step with the Spirit? Because that's how we cultivate this sensitivity to the voice of the Spirit.

IT'S A RELATIONSHIP

We do this in three ways that we're going to talk about. First of all, it's a relationship. How, how do we cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit? Because you know that the better you know someone, the more sensitive you are to their expressions, to their tone of voice, to everything about them. Now, how do you, how, what makes a good relationship? Just spit it out. What are some of the things that make a good relationship?

Communication? Okay. What is it?

Listening? What else?

Openness. What else?

Honesty.

Trust. Listening, we said that. What else?

Respectful.

Being respectful. Yes, all of these things, all of these things make a good relationship. Some of the most fundamental things is time. Ask your wife. Time. If you want to have a good relationship, it takes time. It does take conversation, both speaking and listening. Those are elements of a good relationship, right?

One of the elements that is in the text of Romans 8:15-16 deals with our adoption, our relationship with the Holy Spirit. "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." And then 16 says "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit." He talks to our spirit that we are God's children. This whole idea that we're family. We are. I just heard this recently. I don't know how I got to be this old and never heard this before, but the adoptive parents told their son that you need to understand that you're special. We didn't just have you, we chose you. We chose you. You're even more special than a natural born child because we chose you. And God has chosen us and adopted us. This whole thing about the love of God in Jesus Christ. It's the Spirit who works in us to cry out "Abba Father".

When we brought our daughter home from the hospital, I laid her on my chest, laid on the bed and put her on my chest. And just hearing that little heart thump against my chest. It was the most incredible feeling ever. That's a relationship. It's a bond that cannot be broken. When we brought our son home, our daughter now is four years of age, we had all the parents there, all the grandparents there, everybody was there and we're all oohing and ahing over little John, right? So about halfway through the afternoon, Jen comes over and with total innocence said, "Daddy, now that we have John, does that mean that you don't love me anymore?"

And the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and gave me the right exact answer. And I said, "No, no, no, Jen." I said "In our family, we have lots and lots of love. We have lots and lots of love for John. And then we have lots and lots of love for Grandma and Grandpa Morley and lots and lots of love for Grandma and Grandpa Cole and lots and lots of love for mommy, lots of love for daddy, and lots and lots and lots of love for you, Jen. And then guess what?"

"What's that, daddy?"

"We have lots and lots of love leftover to give away to other people too."

She said "Oh, okay." And then she went on her business.

This whole idea of the Spirit working in us, testifying with our spirit, that we are God's children. He's talking to us. He's protecting us. Acts 20, "Compelled by the Spirit," Paul says, "I'm going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city, the Holy Spirit warns me. He's protecting me. He's warning me. Speaking to me that prison and hardships are facing me."

And so we get to the big idea. The Big Idea is very simple. **Why should we be shocked that God wants to talk to us?** He's our Father. He's adopted us. His Spirit's testifying with our spirit, that we're God's children. Why should we be shocked that God wants to talk to us?

IT'S A CONVERSATION

So it's a relationship. It's also a conversation. So how do we cultivate having a conversation with God? Ephesians 6:18 and Mark 14:35-36, say this, "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests." One way that we have a conversation is that we pray. And then the example of Jesus in His prayer. He fell to the ground in the garden and prayed. And he prayed Abba Father, just like we call out "Abba Father" by the Spirit, He called out "Abba Father." He said, "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will be done."

It's a conversation that we have with God, and God talks back as well. Sometimes it's through circumstances. Sometimes, occasionally, you will actually have the impression of a voice. I love telling the story when in the middle of the worst business crisis that I ever had, and I've had plenty, but the worst one I ever had. I was just getting acquainted with God in a general way. And it was a crisis of my own making. So there was that. But I was sitting down every morning and writing out a long, long prayer, like a Psalm. And one morning I sat down and I said, "God, I just don't know how I can go on one more day here. I just need, I need some help from you." I said "God, you know how hard I've been working to be a good Christian. You know, God, how I have been faithful to do Bible study and reading the Bible every day and praying to you and being very disciplined about that. You know, God, you know how I've been, trying to be a godly husband to my wife. You know how I've been a hands-on dad. I have not been that absent dad, that neglectful dad. You know I've been trying to be a good father, just like the Bible teaches. And God you know I've been a man of integrity, and you know how I've been faithful to be a good steward with the resources that you've entrusted me. God, you know how many little old ladies I've helped across the street? You know, all these things! Why won't you help me?"

And so what have I just done? I've just recited all the performance that I've done for God, right? And God spoke to me. We had a conversation. I have my half now here's his half. Here's what he said. He said, "Pat, nothing you do will ever make you good enough for me to love you. I love you because I made you."

And that moment, my entire understanding of God changed for the very first time. I don't know why I hadn't seen it before. Well, I know why I hadn't seen it before is because most of the really big ideas about Christianity, they take 15 or 20 years to sink in. I'm just telling you that's it. I mean, you hear the word, grace. You remember your understanding of grace at year one. It's probably not, if you've been at it for 20 years, it's probably not the same understanding that you have now. That was the first time I ever understood the grace of God. It's a conversation. It's a conversation.

Why should we be shocked that God wants to talk to us? He's adopted us, He chose you. So it's a relationship, it's a conversation, and it's, it's a process. It's a process.

IT'S A PROCESS

Paul writes this incredibly interesting, we won't go through the whole thing, but this is incredibly interesting account in Acts chapter 16 about how the Holy Spirit is guiding them. You see the process of how, part of the way the Holy Spirit works. So Paul and his companions, they traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word of the province of Asia. Okay. That's interesting. And then they came to the border of Mysia and tried to enter

Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. And then verse eight, "So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. And during the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him," and this is the Spirit, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And after Paul had seen the vision, he got ready and wants to leave for Macedonia, concluding that "God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

It's a process. It's a process. It's along the way. It's as you go. One of our former leaders, he now lives in Tallahassee, Florida, David Outlaw, was estranged from his father. His father was a hard-working guy, had a couple of jobs. Then their mother got sick and died and he remarried and then he remarried again. And then they basically became estranged.

When David moved back to Orlando, they started getting together for holidays, a 'two times a year' kind of relationship, David took over a Property and Casualty company located down in south Florida with the understanding that he would drive down on Monday mornings and be in the office down there by 8:00 AM. But then he would be home for his daughter's soccer game by 7:00 PM on Thursday evening. And then also he could continue to be a leader here at the Friday morning Bible study. They agreed to that. We do an annual Thanksgiving prayer breakfast. We've been doing that since 1977. It'll be coming up, not too far in the future. One morning when David was on his way down to Lake Worth, Florida, he would leave at 4:00 AM be in the office by 8:00 AM.

At 6:00 AM, he was driving down to his job as the CEO of this little company, and he was thinking about his father. The prayer breakfast was a couple of weeks off. And he said that for the only time that he could remember, he heard the audible voice of God, the Spirit. And the voice said, "call your dad." And he said, "but it's 6:00 AM. He's not going to be up." And so he put it on the back shelf.

40 minutes later, he heard another voice. "When are you going to call your dad?" Again, he said, "I don't get this a strange relationship. I'm not sure he would be interested in going to the prayer breakfast." And he put it on the shelf. His words, he put it back on the shelf.

7:15 AM. He heard a voice now for the third time, "When are you going to call your dad?" Third time he realized it really was the Spirit and that he better respond. And so he called his dad out of just sheer obedience, not really thinking his dad would be interested. He invited his dad to go to the prayer breakfast. His dad said "I'd love to go."

Went to the prayer breakfast, had a tremendous experience in the drive on the way over there. David asked his father to forgive him for all the ways that he had offended his father, and his father asked his son to forgive him for all the ways that he had failed him. And there was this incredible reconciliation that took place. David invited his father to come to the Friday morning Bible study. He said, "I think I might like to try that out." And two weeks later, David's father attended and sat at his table for eight years until he passed away. And David became a spiritual father to his biological father because of his sensitivity and his willingness to cultivate a sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Big Idea, why should we be surprised? Why should we be surprised? Why should be shocked? **Why would we be shocked that God would want to talk to us?**

Let's pray.

Our dearest Father in heaven, Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit, we pray that you would help each of us to cultivate a sensitivity to hear your voice. That we would recognize that it's a relationship and the same things that go into making a good human relationship, go into making a good relationship with you, our adoptive Father. Help us to understand that it's a conversation, two way, we pray and you answer us. And then also that it's a process that we take the steps that you put in front of us as they come our way in obedience, like David did with his dad. We ask that you would give us the understanding, but also the desire and the will and the power to act on these things. We ask this in your name, Jesus. Amen.