

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 11, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

LISTEN  **Up**

LEARNING TO LISTEN TO GOD

“The Problem with Listening – Part 3”

James 1:19, John 16:5-15, Exodus 3:1-22

*“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this:
Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”
– James 1:19 (NIV)*

Listening is a problem for many people. James seems to be speaking to this problem when he advises us in James 1:19 that “everyone should be quick to listen...” It’s good advice, but not often taken. We usually do just the opposite. We don’t listen, we speak before we think, and get easily upset, offended and angered. That is perhaps 99.9% of marital problems. We call it communication problems, but it’s really listening problems! What is the problem most parents have with their children? The won’t listen! And what is the most common problem Christian face in really living out their Christian life victoriously? Listening! So what is the problem with listening, anyway? If God is still speaking, and He is, why is it that so often we can’t hear Him?

*“The problems with listening is... well, **listening!**”*

Through the ages many sincere Christians have attempted to listen to God. Usually, after several painfully silent sessions, they cease their efforts, claiming that either that God doesn’t have anything to say to them or they just don’t know how to hear Him. We know we have a concerned Father who is more than willing to communicate, and we certainly want to hear Him. So what’s the problem? I believe the problem lies on our side, in that we have often accumulated (sometimes unknowingly) spiritual hindrances that prevent us from clearly hearing the Lord.

THE PROBLEM WITH LISTENING IS... HINDRANCES TO HEARING (John 16:5-15)

Just for review... we looked at John 16:5-15 last week in the first part of this study on “The Problem with Listening.” In John 16 Jesus is continuing to prepare His disciples (and followers) for what lies ahead for Him (and for them). They have come to know Jesus by this time... really know Him. They have known Him to be the way, the truth and the life (see John 14:6). They have seen Him live out before them a sinless and perfect life, and they have seen the truth in His words. They have seen him turn water into wine and multiply a little boys lunch to feed

thousands. They have seen Him heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cast out demons, and raise the dead, walk on water and calm a storm by his words. Not only that, they have eaten with him, slept with him, watched his every step and heard his every word. They know Him, yet they don't seem to "know" him. Listen to John 16:5-15,

⁵ 'But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'
⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.' ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.' – John 16:5-15 (NKJV)

This passage of Scripture is all about the work of the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Holy Spirit and Jesus preparing His disciples for such, yet in the middle of this discussion is a very clear understanding of some of Jesus' closest followers... His disciples not really listening to what He was telling them, not hearing Him, not being able to really grasp it even though they knew Him. Verse 12 of the particular passage of Scripture has not only intrigued me for many years, it also raises some questions in my mind and personal walk. In verse 12 Jesus says to His disciples, ¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.' – John 16:12 (NKJV) What is Jesus saying? It probably has both positive and negative implications in some ways. A part of what He is telling his disciples in context is that He has a lot more to show them regarding the Holy Spirit, but that will come later, right now He is telling them just what they need to know. And this is certainly true in our lives. God is not going to reveal to us or show us more than we are capable or ready to handle at any given time (i.e. my own call experience in relation to this verse this verse). On the more negative side He may have been saying to them you are ready to hear anymore at this time, you aren't at a place in your walk and relationship with me to really hear more. In other words, they didn't know Him to the depth needed to hear Him any further.

What are the implications and truths that we may glean from this passage? Let me give you a few here. We may call these 5 Interferences to Hearing God that emerge from John 16.

5 Interferences to Hearing God Based on John 16:5-15:

1. **We allow circumstances to cloud our hearing** - The circumstances, even those we may have no control over, always have the potential of clouding everything in our lives... our thinking processes, our ability to reason and make good decisions, and especially our ability to accurately hear. Think about it, when we are down and discouraged, grief-stricken, or even sick we are not at our best and things can really look skewed. When we are in the throes of deep struggles and heartaches, going through a particularly difficult trial that has us emotionally pent up, grieving so deeply that we can't think or focus on anything else... this type of circumstance can cause us not to hear well even those who love us and are trying to

encourage us. That is essentially what is happening to the disciples in our passage in John 16. Jesus has been telling them... speaking to them about His purpose in coming and what He is about to go through. He has also been describing what many of them may potentially face. Listen to what He says to them in **verse 5**, ⁵ *‘But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’* ⁶ *But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.* Did you see it? Sorrow had filled their hearts and they were not hearing what He said. The same is true for us. The circumstances we find ourselves in can cloud our hearing of God’s voice in our life if we are not careful, and sometimes even when we are “careful” those circumstance can make the heavens seem as brass.

2. **We think we know best for our lives** – We often think we know best for our lives. No one knows me better than ME. I know my likes and dislikes. I know what make me tick. I know what will make me happy. I know my gifts and strengths and I know my weaknesses. Not only that, no one has a right to tell me how to live my life. This is often the attitude, or perhaps better called “excuse,” for many who don’t want to give their lives to Christ, or who reject God’s Words speaking to their life. “No one, not even God, has a right to tell me how to live my life.” The truth is, nothing could be farther from the truth. God has a right to tell you how to live your life, especially if you are His... a Christian. You belong to Him. He has every right to tell you how you should and shouldn’t life, what you should and shouldn’t do. But even beyond this fundamental truth, He knows what is best for you and wants what is best for you. This is key! When we think we know better than God what is best for our lives, we stop listening to Him and His voice, His Word, and start only listening to our own voice... our self, and that is always... always dangerous. In our passage in **verse 7** Jesus told his disciples ⁷ *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.* I like that phrase, “it is to your advantage.” In others words, Jesus was saying to them, although you don’t understand it and think you know best, I know best and even though this is all hard to hear (my death and departure from you) I know what is best (to your advantage). Always remember that God knows what is to your advantage so you should listen to Him.
3. **We don’t want to hear what he has to say (makes us too uncomfortable)** – Jesus told His disciples and followers in **verses 8-11**, ⁸ *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:* ⁹ *of sin, because they do not believe in Me;* ¹⁰ *of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;* ¹¹ *of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.* Do you get what Jesus was telling them? Sometimes the things God has to say to us, even though they may be for our good, are not easy to hear. When His words convict our hearts, cut to the quick, point our the error of our ways, or step on our toes it is not always pleasant. Often we find ourselves wincing at His Word to us, because it gets so personally convicting at times, and the truth is we often shut out His voice because we simply don’t want to hear what He is saying. It cuts too deeply and quite frankly we don’t want to give up the very thing that He may be speaking to. When this happens we just don’t... or won’t hear Him.
4. **We are not ready to hear what He has to say or who us** – There are times when we can’t hear God because we are not ready to hear God, or to put it more simply we are not a place in our life at that time when we will hear Him. That is perhaps the idea behind what Jesus said to His disciples in **verse 12** of our passage, ¹² *‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.* There may be many different reasons why we “cannot bear them

now”... that is the words that Jesus would say to us. It could be what we said earlier... we are do not want to hear what He has to say. It simply makes us too uncomfortable so we shut off His voice and tune Him out. Or it could be that we are not at a place spiritually where we are ready to hear all that He has to tell us (i.e. my personal call experience in relation to this verse). Have you ever thought that is maybe God grace that He doesn’t tell us everything?

5. **We don’t know Him well enough to hear Him yet** – Verses 13 through 15 are pretty clear. God speaks to us through His Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. He is God’s voice to us and we must learn to listen to the Spirit’s still small voice in our life. If that is not happening, it is not because God is not speaking or is silent... it is because we are not cultivating the kind of heart and life that knows Him intimately and walks closely with Him. Listen to **verse 13-15** of our passage, ¹³ *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.* ¹⁴ *He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.* ¹⁵ *All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

"The Problem with Listening - Part 2" (start here)

Dr. Charles Stanley, in his book “How to Listen to God,” gives us 10 contributing factors raise thick barriers to hearing the voice of God. As we understand what they are, I think it will heal us discern why, when we are honestly seeking to perceive what God is saying, we sometimes feel that we might as well be in a spiritually soundproof room, where only our voice reverberates.

10 Hindrances to Hearing God: (Dr. Charles Stanley)

1. **We don’t know God** (John 10:27) – Jesus said in **John 10:27**, ²⁷ *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.* (NKJV) The truth and premise of what Jesus is saying is right on target. If we belong to Him we should listen and follow Him, but is that always the case. And if it is not (always the case), why isn’t it? As Jesus said “I know them” (my sheep), but perhaps we don’t always know Him! Oh, we may have accepted Him as Lord and Savior of our lives and we are saved believers, but we have never grown past that beginning stage of our Christian experience, where we really “know” Him and can clearly distinguish His voice from the many competing voice that vie for our attention.

“We need to frankly face ourselves at this point. We are, perhaps orthodox evangelicals. We can state the gospel clearly, and can smell unsound doctrine a mile away. If anyone asks us how men may know God we can at once produce the right formula – that we come to know God through Jesus Christ the Lord. Yet the gaiety, goodness and unfetteredness of spirit which are the marks of those who have known God are rare among us – rarer, perhaps, than they are to some other Christian circles where, by comparison, evangelical truth is less clearly and fully known. Here, too, it would seem that the last may prove to be first, and the first last. A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him.” – J.I. Packer, “Knowing God”

1. *What do you think J.I. Packer is saying with in this statement?*

2. *Do you agree or disagree with his statement... particularly as it applies to “Christian circles” (orthodox evangelicals and those where “evangelical truth is less clearly and fully known”)?*
3. *Is there a difference between “head knowledge” and “heart knowledge”?*
4. *What, do you think, is the remedy for the problem J.I. Packer is describing? How?*

Many believers know Christ as Savior, but they have failed to press on to know His ways and character. If we know Him only as Savior, God cannot speak some things to us because we simply don't know the way He operates. The more we understand who God is, the more we will hear from Him. That is why it is so urgent that we study the Word of God daily. As we do, we give Him fertile field in which to work and speak to our hearts. Some Christians know so little about God that they could ascribed to Him things He never said at all. They have perhaps heard lots of conversations about God and maybe even been in on some of those conversations, they have maybe listened to lots of messages preached and maybe read lots of good Christian books about God, but they simply don't know God personally, therefore they can't hear his voice when he speaks... they don't really know His voice.

The question then becomes, how then may we really get to know God so that we may really begin to hear Him? It must be in cultivating a relationship with Him... a close and intimate personal relationship with Him. There are no shortcuts and quick fixes to developing this kind of “knowing” relationship with God. It doesn't happened overnight and it doesn't happened automatically... it must be developed, cultivated, and worked at.

5 Disciplines for Developing a “Knowing” Relationship With God: *These are 5 disciplines that must be worked at and developed in our Christian life if we are to have a growing, deepening, and knowing relationship with God.*

- (1) Quality time spent in the **study, meditation and memorization** of God's Word –
 - (2) Regular daily times of **intimate prayer** and communication with God –
 - (3) Faithful attendance and participation in a local New Testament **church**, the body of Christ –
 - (4) Attention and devotion to times of **deep worship** before God both corporately and privately –
 - (5) A developed discipline of learning to listen and watch for God's **working, leading, speaking** through varied means -
2. A **poor self-image** – How many times have we heard people say, “Why would God want to speak to me? I'm not a preacher or in full-time Christian service. Why in the world would He want to communicate with me? I've done too many things wrong! I'm not worthy of Him speaking to me! I'm no good! I'm not spiritual enough! I'm not a good enough Christian!” The truth is, we are saved, we are sanctified, we are saints, we are children of the living God. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, *“**For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you.**”* We are “loved” and “chosen” by God! And Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9, *“**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of***

darkness into his wonderful light.” Fathers just naturally want to speak to their children, fathers just naturally want their sons and their daughters to listen to them. Unfortunately, we often see ourselves as unworthy, and when we do, we wonder why a great, magnificent God would speak to us. God could scream in that case, and we could not hear him. Understand that God desires to speak to you. He loves you. He chose you. You are His desired and prized possession and He wants to speak to you and communicate with you.

3. **A false sense of guilt** – There are two kinds of guilt. One is true guilt, that is, it stems from sin against God... we are responsible for it and we have to deal with it. The second is false guilt, which Satan places on us... this occurs when the devil accuses us of not living up to God’s standards. Many people live countless years under such deceptive guilt. They never feel as if they can quite get God’s acceptance... they think they never quite measure up and never quite please God... they believe they will never be all that God wants them to be. These people have a difficult time hearing God, because Satan is always accusing them, saying, “You think God will speak to you? Look what you have done in the past. Do you think He is going to overlook that?” Everything they hear is sifted through a preprogrammed pattern of guilty thinking.

Why do we develop a false sense of guilt?

- (1) **Sin struggles that continue to plague us** – We have “besetting sin” and “sin that easily entangles us” that can plague our lives (Heb. 12:1). We confess it, repent of it, and vow to never do it again only to find ourselves repeat offenders and starting the whole process over again. This give the enemy an occasion to accuse us, “If you were really a Christian, you would not be struggling with this sin like this!”
- (2) **Inability to forgive ourselves** - God knows no degree of sin. Sin is sin, but to us there is some sin that “we” may consider greater, more “unforgivable” sins. Others may also consider some “sin” greater and more “unforgivable.” For example, adultery and unfaithfulness in a marriage where a marriage is broken up and a home destroyed; or embezzling and cheating/stealing large sums of money from your place of employment where you are caught and maybe even prosecuted; or cheating and stealing your other family members out of their inheritance where your whole family ends up at odds and a great family division occurs. These things are often viewed as “unforgiveable” especially by those who are hurt by them. If we were the perpetrators we may genuinely come to a point of great remorse and repentance before God and those wronged, confess our wrong and repent of our sin, and even set about making some form of restitution and setting of things right as much as possible, yet the scar left on our life from the indiscretion may be deep and lasting and may leave us feeling unworthy and guilt ridden, and an easy target for the enemies accusations and pointing finger.
- (3) **Personality and insecurity issues** – Some people have more passive and introverted personalities that naturally lend them to dealing with false guilt issues and makes them easy prey for the enemies accusations. Also, those who struggle with feeling of insecurity and low self-esteem can easily be convinced that they are to blame and made to feel guilty for things that are not their fault. This may contribute to a sense of unworthiness and misplaced feelings of guilt and make them feel that God wouldn’t want to speak to them at all.

- (4) **Things in our past that we can let go over** – Victims of abuse or neglect, those who have been mistreated or taken advantage of, who have gone through very difficult and sometimes brutalizing experiences may be so emotionally and mentally scarred that they carry an “victim mentality” and sometimes a false sense of guilt as if what happened was somehow their fault. Also, these traumatizing past experiences can sometimes leave one feeling so dirty, tarnished and shamed that they can’t imagine God wanting to speak to them.
- (5) **Improper teaching and understanding of Biblical truth** – Poor doctrinal understanding, and biblical understanding of such things as sin and the forgiveness of sin, salvation, God and His character, etc. can lead to one having a false and unbiblical understanding of guilt and therefore God’s speaking. This is why it is important that a believer be grounded in the Word of God, and be a good and solid New Testament church where God’s Word is correctly taught and preached.
4. **Business/busyness** – It is impossible to live in today’s world without being busy. We all have schedules to meet, problems to solve, people to relate to on a continuing and daily basis, not to mention when unusual circumstances are thrown into the mix. Perhaps that is why Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5:15-16, *“¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly (cautiously, wisely, vigilantly), not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* There are many competing things vying/fighting for our time... busy things... not necessarily bad things, but preoccupying things... things that keep us tied up, off balance, and out of focus. So, when I refer to business (or busyness), I am not talking about shirking responsibilities on the job or in the home. Yet it is easy in the midst of all the clamoring voices of our society to miss the still, small voice of God. We must be careful to remain sensitive to His presence.

The key to breaking through the obsessant business/busyness in our lives and hearing God is to develop a daily quite time with God.

Some Helps in Developing a Daily Quite Time:

- (1) **Pick a time** – Have a scheduled time for your daily quiet time and stick to it. Meet with God daily at this same time. Make sure it is a time that you can meet with God regularly and daily, and that there are no (or as few as possible) interruptions. Some choose a time in the early morning before their day really begins and some may choose a time at night before retiring for the night. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The early morning allows you to start your day with God and carry on the conversation with Him throughout the day. The disadvantage is that at time you may feel rushed particularly if you have a busy day ahead and need to get to it. The late night time allows to clear your head of the day’s busyness and activity, refocus your day, and rest in His presence through the night. The disadvantage is being tired and worn out from a busy day, you may not be at your best and it may be hard to focus because you are so exhausted. Pick a time that works best for you and stick to it. Realize that no matter how hard you try there will be times when things (life) interrupt.
- (2) **Pick a place** – The place you choose to meet daily with God is as important as the time. It is best to choose a place that you will come back to each time. Make it your special place you meet with God. Sometimes this is called your “prayer closet.” It is not usually

a literal closet (though for some it could be), rather it is a private place for you to meet with God. Some suggestions that may be helpful: The place you meet with God should be a place where lighting is adequate, where you are comfortable but not so comfortable that you are tempted to fall asleep, and a place that you have the furniture you need that serves you best in your quiet time... for example if you like to write or journal in your quiet time you may want a desk or table... if you like to have several Bibles and Bible helps open you may want a space to spread out a bit. Some places you should avoid: your bed in your bedroom (inviting sleep); near a telephone, television, or radio (inviting interruptions and distractions); high traffic areas (inviting distractions and interruptions). ***On a personal note: I personally like to keep the place I meet with God something of a secret place, just between me and God. I usually even pray about it and God to pick the place and show me. He usually does! Sometimes I have picked the place and He meets me there!***

- (3) **Have the proper tools** – The proper tools for a good quiet time with God are really pretty simple and basic, and should be personalized for you. **Some of these are essential and some more non-essential but helpful.**

| ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR A GOOD QUIET TIME <i>(must haves)</i> | NON-ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR A GOOD QUIET TIME <i>(but helpful and suggested)</i> |
|--|---|
| <p>1. A Bible – This is the most important tool and the only one you really need. It should be a Bible of your favored translation, preferably not a paraphrase, a good readable and understandable translation for you, one that has a comfortable font size for you (regular, large or extra-large print) and one that is readily acceptable (KJV, NKJV, NAS, ESV, NIV, NLT). It is also suggested that it be a good study Bible (I suggest the MacArthur Study Bible, but the Life Application Study Bible is good as well as others,, also my translation of choice is NKJV or NIV)</p> | <p>1. An alternative Bible translation - Maybe a paraphrase like the Living Bible or the Message.</p> <p>2. A journal and pen – I highly suggest that you journal in your quiet time. You may want to write out your prayers to God. You may want to write down what God is showing you or saying in your life. You may also want to write down the things you are praying for and when God answers the prayer.</p> <p>3. A good devotional – I suggest “My Utmost for His Highest” but there are many good devotionals out there. We give out two good devotionals at church that are free to you, “Open Windows” and “Daily Bread.” Both of these are very good.</p> |

- (4) **Use helps** – There are things that I find helpful in my quiet time... some extra tools or helps that I include that may or may not be helpful for you.

| QUIET TIME HELPS | HOW ITS USED: |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Quite Time Guide/Program – <i>The Tryst, Bruce Leafblad</i></p> | <p><i>I use a quiet time method/program call “the tryst”, but there are several good ones out there. The devotional guide, “Daily Bread” has a good quiet time guide in it.</i></p> |
| <p>2. Devotional Commentary – <i>With the Word, Warren Wiersbe</i></p> | <p><i>A devotional commentary is a little different than a full commentary set. It is a devotional commentary usually in one volume that give you a synopsis of each chapter of the Bible. It may also give you a little about each book.</i></p> |

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|---|--|
| 3. Music (head phones) – <i>Daddy’s Song, Dennis Jernigan</i> <i>Love Came Down, Brian Johnson</i> | <i>I have a worship track that I listen to with my IPod/IPhone and ear plugs. The ear plug head phones help me to block out outside noise that can distract, and I listen to the same music because it prepares my heart for worship and God speaks to me through it</i> |
| 4. Index cards – | <i>I keep a pack of index cards with me and I write down verses and quotes that I want to memorize and carry with me away from my quite time</i> |
| 5. Hymn Book - | <i>I keep a Hymn Book handy and sometimes I read hymns and sometimes I sing hymns as a part of my quiet time. It is surprising how God speaks to me through this.</i> |

- (5) **Be consistent** – I huge key to developing a good quite time with God is to be consistent, and that plays out in every area of your quiet time. Be consistent with the time you meet with the God, the place you meet with God, the way you meet with God. Use the same music if you choose to use music. The consistency with the music tells your heart and mind spiritually that you are meeting with God and sets the tone for that meeting. Try to use the same routine in your quiet time. The consistency with your quiet time makes this time some easy and natural that it provide an easy and relaxing format for God to speak. *A word of caution here:* *if your quiet time become too rote and routine and begins to fell like you are in a rut, change it up some... rearrange the order of how you do things, change the music you listen to, one week don’t listen to music... use the hymn book instead, try sitting on the floor, one week just spend the entire time in prayer, one week spend the entire time reading, be creative.*

"The Problem with Listening - Part 3" (start here)

5. **Unbelief** – Unbelief or lack of belief (faith) will have a very detrimental effect on our Christian walk in many ways, but perhaps none so much as our ability to hear God when He speaks. One of the saddest and most troubling verses in all of the Bible (at least to me) is in **Matthew 13:58**. Jesus has returned to his hometown and he has preached and ministered and verse 58 says, *“⁵⁸ And he (Jesus) did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”*

Why does unbelief so affect our ability to hear God when He speaks?

What Unbelief Does to our Ability to Hear God?: *(Based on the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-23)*

- (1) **Makes us vulnerable to the enemy’s distortion of what God is saying (v.19)** – A good example of this is what happened in the Garden of Eden and the deception of the enemy with the first man and woman in Genesis 3:1-4, *“¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.” ⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows*

that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- (2) **Reflects a lack of spiritual maturity and undeveloped shallowness to our faith that is easily discouraged and destroyed by the trials and struggles of this life (v.20) -**
- (3) **Causes one to be easily swayed by the world and the world's voice more than by God's voice (v.22) -**

Many people do not fully believe that God speaks today. If we think we get direction only through Scripture, then we will miss out on much of what God has to share, because He will speak so often through His Spirit, circumstances, and other people. We must make absolutely certain that we are fully convinced and persuaded that God does speak to us personally about our families, our businesses, our finances, our hurts, our frustrations, our fears.

- 6. **God-directed anger** – Can you really hear someone else when you are angry, bitter, resentful, and hostile toward them? I don't think so. During my years of ministry, I have occasionally met people who were just plain mad at God... sometimes they didn't even see it in themselves. Perhaps a spouse died, or a child was killed, or their finances collapsed. No matter the event, they don't understand why God allowed it; so they become angry toward Him and they even lash out at others in their anger. When they pray, they seem to continually recall those bitter moments and express their anger. They want to blame God for their problems. They pray and suddenly discover their hostility gushing forth out of their mouths toward God. He will not retaliate. He understands our anger, and even allows it, but we must recognize that that anger in us hardens our heart toward His voice and we don't hear Him.

Question: "Is it wrong to be angry with God?"

Answer: Being angry at God is something that many people, both believers and unbelievers, have wrestled with throughout time. When something tragic happens in our lives, we ask God the question, "Why?" because it is our natural response. What we are really asking Him, though, is not so much "Why, God?" as "Why *me*, God?" This response indicates two flaws in our thinking.

2 Reasons We Ask God Why?:

- 1. **We erroneously think that as believers life should be easy** - First, as believers we operate under the impression that life should be easy, and that God should prevent tragedy from happening to us. When He does not, we get angry with Him.
- 2. **We don't understand the sovereignty of God** - Second, when we do not understand the extent of God's sovereignty, we lose confidence in His ability to control circumstances, other people, and the way they affect us. Then we get angry with God because He seems to have lost control of the universe and especially control of our lives.

When we lose faith in God's sovereignty, it is because our frail human flesh is grappling with our own frustration and our lack of control over events. When good things happen, we all too often attribute it to our own achievements and success. When bad things happen, however,

we are quick to blame God, and we get angry with Him for not preventing it, which indicates the first flaw in our thinking—that we deserve to be immune to unpleasant circumstances.

Tragedies bring home the awful truth that we are not in charge. All of us think at one time or another that we can control the outcomes of situations, but in reality it is God who is in charge of all of His creation. Everything that happens is either caused by or allowed by God. Not a sparrow falls to the ground nor a hair from our head without God knowing about it ([Matthew 10:29-31](#)). We can complain, get angry, and blame God for what is happening. Yet if we will trust Him and yield our bitterness and pain to Him, acknowledging the prideful sin of trying to force our own will over His, He can and will grant us His peace and strength to get us through any difficult situation ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)). Many believers in Jesus Christ can testify to that very fact. We can be angry with God for many reasons, so we all have to accept at some point that there are things we cannot control or even understand with our finite minds.

Our understanding of the sovereignty of God in all circumstances must be accompanied by our understanding of His other attributes: love, mercy, kindness, goodness, righteousness, justice, and holiness. When we see our difficulties through the truth of God’s Word—which tells us that our loving and holy God works all things together for our good ([Romans 8:28](#)), and that He has a perfect plan and purpose for us which cannot be thwarted ([Isaiah 14:24, 46:9-10](#))—we begin to see our problems in a different light. We also know from Scripture that this life will never be one of continual joy and happiness. Rather, Job reminds us that “man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” ([Job 5:7](#)), and that life is short and “full of trouble” ([Job 14:1](#)). Just because we come to Christ for salvation from sin does not mean we are guaranteed a life free from problems. In fact, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble,” but that He has “overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#)), enabling us to have peace within, in spite of the storms that rage around us ([John 14:27](#)).

The effects of God-directed anger in our lives:

One thing is certain: inappropriate anger is sin. It is interesting that Paul lists “fits of rage or anger” with some pretty inappropriate and hard-hitting sins in [Galatians 5:19-21](#), ¹⁹*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;* ²⁰*idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions* ²¹*and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

- (1) **God-directed anger is self-defeating** – What do we mean by that... self-defeating? It means we are not hurting God by our anger that is directed toward him in error... we are only hurting ourselves. The results are absolutely debilitating to us. Paul says in [Colossians 3:8](#), ⁸*But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips”*
- (2) **God-directed anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives** – The Apostle Paul says in [Ephesians 4:26-27](#), ²⁶“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold.” Implied in Paul’s words is the truth that “anger”... even God-directed anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives. How do you think that is?

- (3) **God-directed anger can destroy our joy and peace if we hang on to it** – In Ephesians 4:31 Paul says, *“³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”* What is he telling us about “anger” here? Holding on to our anger will allow bitterness and resentment to spring up in our hearts. We must confess it to the Lord, and then in His forgiveness, we can release those feelings to Him. We must go before the Lord in prayer often in our grief, anger, and pain.

So, to answer the question directly, yes, it is wrong to be angry at God.

3 Results of Anger at God:

- (1) **Anger at God is a result of an inability or unwillingness to trust God even when we do not understand what He is doing.**
- (2) **Anger at God is a detriment to our willingness to hear God and let Him speak to our lives sometimes at the lives most difficult moments, when we need to hear Him most.**
- (3) **Anger at God is essentially telling God that He has done something wrong, which He never does**

Does God understand when we are angry, frustrated, or disappointed with Him? Yes, He knows our hearts and He knows how difficult and painful life in this world can be. Does that make it right to be angry with God? Absolutely not. Instead of being angry with God, we should pour out our hearts to God in prayer and then trust that He is in control and that His plan is perfect.

7. **Harboring sin** – Harboring sin is different from committing a sin. Harboring a sin means knowing sin is present, knowing God has put His finger on it, and still not settling it. Harboring sin is like static on the radio. We may faintly hear God voice, but we can’t make it out.

2 Important Verse to Remember in this Regard: *(concerning our ability to hear God with unconfessed sin in our lives)*

- (1) **Isaiah 59:2** - *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*
- (2) **Psalm 66:18** - *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*

8. **A rebellious spirit** – A rebellious person may want to pray, but he does not want to hear. God will speak to the rebellious heart to repent of a sin, but if no change occurs, God will not speak on other subjects. Rebellion blocks God’s penetrating voice. This is the problem with not responding to God invitation in a service. If God speaks and tells you to go forward, to recommit your life, or surrender your life, or join the church or whatever it may be... for us not to respond is rebellion and we are hindering the voice of God in our life. The next time you may not hear him. His voice may become less and less distinct in your life.
9. **Rejecting God’s messengers** – God speaks through other people in our lives and sometimes we don’t listen because we don’t like the messenger that God is using. Maybe we don’t like the way the preacher looks, or talks, or maybe he has annoying habits when he speaks, he

speaks too long, or has too much of a “Texas draw.” Maybe God want to speak to you through the music, but you don’t like the style. Maybe God wants to speak to you through a child or young person, but they are too young for you to learn anything from so you don’t listen. Maybe God want to speak to you through a friend, but you aren’t going to take that from your friend. Be careful you could be rejecting God’s messengers and God’s voice in your life.

- 10. Untrained to listen** – Listening to God isn’t something we come into this world automatically knowing how to do. WE have to train ourselves to listen. We are often hindered from hearing God because of our own inexperience. We must train ourselves and discipline ourselves to be good listeners for God’s voice.

THE PROBLEM WITH LISTENING IS... HOW TO HEAR (Exodus 3:1-22)

When God took Moses to the back side of desert, He was not only training him to be a leader and deliverer to His people, a part of God training was training Moses to listen to and hear God, and obey His voice. The same lessons are valuable for us in learning to listen. If the problem with listening is “listening,” then how do we train ourselves to listen. Exodus 3 and Moses experience may give us some good tips for training ourselves to hear God.

5 Tips for Training Yourself To Hear God (Exodus 3:1-22)

- 1. We should anticipate God’s speaking** – Moses actions before the burning bush suggest that he anticipated God speaking to him. He approached the bush, took off his shoes, bowed himself, and asked God to speak. The Scriptures promise that God will speak, and we should take Him at His word and be eager to hear Him. The Bible says, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8)*. That means that if God spoke in the past, He is and will still speak today.
- 2. We should respond to what we hear** – Moses did respond to what God spoke to him... at first not very positively, but remember Moses did everything that God told him to do. He responded in obedience to what God said. If we make no response to what God says, we will never learn to hear. Responding to God is obeying His voice. When we obey we just open greater communication between us and God. When we rebel against His voice and do not respond we stifle His voice in our lives.
- 3. We should ask questions** – As Moses stood before God all through Exodus 3 we find God speaking and Moses asking questions, and God responding to those questions. If we are going to listen, we have to learn to be inquisitive. By mentally proposing such question as, “God, what are you trying to say to me?” we give God the opportunity to reply and reveal His answer. God is not threatened by our questions, nor is He stumped. God always has the answer, but it us up to us sometimes to ask the right questions.
- 4. We should be alert to confirming events** – Were there confirming events for Moses? Yes, the burning bush was one, and chapter 4 of Exodus is full of the confirming events. We may not have a stick that turns into a snake or a leprous hand to pull from our coat, but time after time God confirms His message. He speaks, we obey, and confirmation will quite frequently follow.
- 5. We should ask God to speak to us** – Moses asked God to speak to Him. We know by the questions he asked of God. Never be afraid to ask God to speak to you! He will!