

## CCC HOW TO HEAR GOD SPEAK TO YOU Part 1

### Principles From the Parables - Part 1 of 3

Read Luke 8:4-15

We're beginning kind of a new series today I'm calling "Principles from the Parables." We're going to look at some stories from Jesus. Today I want us to look at "How to Hear God Speak To You."

Do you think "Great! I'm glad you're going to talk about how to hear God speak because He never speaks to me. Everybody else says, 'God told me this' or 'God told me that' but God never speaks to me and I read my Bible. I never get anything out of it. Are you sure God speaks?"

Yes, He does. The problem isn't that God's not speaking. In fact, He's speaking to you all the time. You're just not tuned in. Like a CB radio, a radio, or a television -- you've got to be tuned in. Reception is not automatic.

You've got to get your ears on. Jesus said in Luke 8:8

*"When Jesus said this, he called out, 'He who has ears let him hear!'"* You've got to have your ears on. You've got to be tuned in. The problem isn't that God isn't speaking. The problem is that you're not on His wavelength.

Jesus told a story one time to explain the four reasons we don't hear God and the four things it takes to hear God. He tells the story of a farmer who goes out to sow seed and He says it scatters over four different kinds of soil. Fortunately, after He tells the story, the disciples asked Him what it meant and He explains the story. He said, "In this story, God is the farmer and the seed is the Word of God (what God wants to say to you), the soil is your mind."

There are four different kinds of soil in this story and there are four different kinds of attitudes I can have toward God and four different kinds of attitudes I can have toward

His word. These aren't individual people. The fact is, all four responses are true of each of us. They vary from moment to moment. Sometimes I'm open to God, sometimes I'm closed to God, sometimes I'm in too much of a hurry for God. From moment to moment my receptivity and my response to God changes. Sometimes you're more open to God than at other times.

In this story Jesus tells us there are four kinds of soil and they represent the four things you must do in order to hear God speak to you.

1. Cultivate an open heart.
2. Allocate time to listen.
3. Eliminate the distractions.
4. Cooperate with what God says.

Last week we talked about David and the little runt of the litter he was and even his father thought the only value

David had was to watch the sheep. Little did he know that David had been developing a heart for God. This is what God said about David, *“After removing Saul God made David their king and He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David a man after My own heart.’”* Now this you need to understand this is available to us all, to develop a heart after God’s own heart. But it didn’t come naturally to David he had to be committed to becoming that man and as I said last week this separates the men from the boys, the girls from the women... Now last week we saw that David develop a heart for God because he learned to love God’s word, the bible. David delight in God word, the bible, Monday Night Men’s group we talked about this and we came to the understanding that we have to first begin to:

**I. CULTIVATE AN OPEN MIND** The first step, if I want to hear God speak, is I have to be open, I have to have

a desire. You need to say to Him, "God, I'm open. If You want to talk to me God, go ahead. I'm ready, I'm eager, willing to learn. I'm tuned in." Many people never hear God speak because they're closed to the possibility of it. They're not even open to the fact that God might want to talk to them. So they're not disappointed and from that disappointment they begin to harden their hearts.

v. 5 *"Some seed fell along the path and it was trampled and the birds ate it up."* The meaning -- v. 12 *"Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes along and takes away the word from their hearts, so they cannot believe and be saved."* The farmer, as he walks out to sow his seed, is walking on a path and the path has been hardened from many people walking on it. It becomes compacted like cement. As he sows the seed, some of it falls on this hardened path. It can't penetrate. It can't get

rooted. It doesn't sprout. The birds come along and they eat it and it's gone.

Jesus says the hardened path represented the closed mind. The closed mind says, I'm not open to anything; I'm not open to what God might want to say. As a result God's word never takes root in your own life, just like the seed never gets the chance. Many people are unwilling to listen. They reject the whole idea that God might want to talk to them. Their minds are closed.

What makes us defensive? What gives us a defensive heart? What closes our mind? Fear, pride and bitterness.

**1. Fear** -- afraid of what God might say. I may have to change my lifestyle if I listen to God. I might lose my fun, my freedom, my fulfillment. God might make me a fanatic Christian. I might become some Jesus nut if I

listen to God. A lot of people never tune into God because they're afraid.

**2. Pride** -- I don't need God. Everything's OK. I've done it all on my own. I'm working it all out. The fact is, if I listen to God I might have to face up to some of my faults and I don't want to do that. I don't need God's help and I don't need His advise. Pride is always a smoke screen for insecurity. Always. When I don't want to admit my faults, I deny them. I'm proud, but what I really am is insecure.

**3. Bitterness** -- Life is tough and we all go through pains. We all experience hurts. Those things can cause you to harden your life. I'm going to build a shell around my life and never again am I going to allow anything to hurt me. Bitterness makes you hard and you can't hear what God wants to say to you. You can be bitter at God ("God,

why did You allow this to happen and this to happen?" The number one reason people don't come to church is because they've been burned by another Christian. They've become burned and bitter. Listen carefully here you have hurt people, imperfect people sitting all around you today, including your pastor... Never, never let another person or event destroy your relationship to God. Don't let any event, no matter how much it hurt, or any person, no matter how much they hurt you, keep you from your relationship to God. Then they hurt you twice.

We must have an open heart to receive God's word. The tragedy of a hardened heart and a closed mind is that it is barren. There's no fruit in it. It's unproductive. You throw the seed on the ground, the birds come along and they eat it up. The hard-hearted life, the closed minded life is for the birds!

James 1:21 *"Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you."* Circle "planted". Jesus says, Let down your defenses. Realize that God loves you. He wants you to be happy and He realizes what will make you happy more than you do, more than you can possibly know will make you happy. Cultivate an open, receptive heart.

## **II. ALLOCATE TIME TO LISTEN**

Schedule it. You've got to make time to listen. We've got to be quiet and let God speak to us. Usually we don't hear God speak because we're in too much of a hurry. We have way too much going on in our minds. I said it last week. We have filled our minds with junk food from the world and we don't desire a good meal from His word or to even be able to hear Him speak to you. Listen to the scripture here: *"Other seed fell on shallow soil with rock beneath. This*

*seed began to grow but soon withered and died for lack of moisture."* Circle "shallow". v. 13 *"Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away."* Circle "no root".

Even in rocky soil there is a thin layer of top soil. The shallow soil is the superficial mind. Impulsive people react emotionally. They get excited but they never let it sink in. How is it that people can attend church week after week and never be changed? It's because they believe for a while, but they have no root. They jump in and get all motivated but they don't let the word of God penetrate the bedrock of their personality so they're not changed permanently. The relationship is shallow and superficial. . . It says, *"they believe for awhile"* but then they forget it. It never gets any depth in their life. A lot of people start off

great in the Christian life but there's no depth to their commitment. As a result, when problems come, when the heat is on, they become their old self... "They have no root". If you don't have any roots when the pressure's on, the heat's on, you're going to dry up.

How do you get roots? Not by coming to church but by reading the Bible every day. Get in contact with God every day. Have a quiet time where you set down and read a little, think about it, talk to God about it, let Him talk to you through the Word. That builds roots and that's what is going to help you when you're under pressure, up tight, when the world caves in. You've got the stability of daily feeding on God's Word. That seed is being planted in you every day and it's bearing fruit. You've got to cultivate an open mind. You've got to have a heart that you want to allocate a time to listen.

### **III. YOU ELIMINATE THE DISTRACTIONS**

If you're going to hear God speak you've got to get quiet.

So often we miss God's voice because our minds are filled with everything else. We fill it with cheetos, junk food.

v. 7 *"Other seed fell among thorns [weeds] which grew up with it and choked the plants."* Circle "choked the plants".

Weeds choke out the life of a plant.

v. 14 *"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures and they don't mature."*

God wants you to bear fruit. Galatians 5 *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, meekness and self control."* I'd like these things in my life. This is the character of Christ and God wants to build this kind of fruit in your life. But most people don't have this in their life because of weeds. Why do we have

God's Word come into our lives and then it's choked and we don't bear any fruit? Why don't we bear fruit? We're too busy. We're preoccupied. We're afraid to deal with the weeds in our life

This is the soil that represents much of the Anne Arundel County and the surrounding area. We are committed to trivial things, things that really don't matter – that's what we're committed to... How do I look? What's our image? Are we keeping up with the Jones'? As a result there is no time for God because there are too many other demands on my life. "Sorry God, I'll do it tomorrow.... I have other things to do today. Sorry, God, You give God your leftovers." I've got to get to work. I've got things on my mind. I've got places to go, people to see, things to do. And we get too busy. "Beware of the bareness of a busy life." You can be always on the go and you're just going in

circles. There is a difference between activity and productivity. Big difference. You may just be spinning your wheels and God can't get through to you because your mind is preoccupied.

What are the weeds? Three kinds: worries, riches, pleasures.

1. Life's worries -- the problems and pressures of daily life.
2. Life's riches -- you can be so busy making a living you don't make a life. You can be so consumed with making more money, you don't have time for God.
3. Life's pleasures -- recreation can take priority over worship and choke out God. I want to have my fun, my hobbies, my golf game, my cabin, my boat, my stock car races, my football team, -- God, You take a back seat! Even good things can keep you from hearing God. Even

things that God has given you can keep you from hearing Him.

What is a weed? A weed is anything that I let rob my time with God. It could be a good thing. Anything. How much effort does it take to grow weeds? They grow naturally in my yard. I have many varieties! I don't even have to cultivate them. Weeds are a sign of neglect. When I neglect time with God, when I neglect reading the Bible, the weeds grow up in my life and my spiritual life gets choked and my productivity goes down! I let all these other things choke out my relationship to God.

#### **IV. COOPERATE WITH WHAT HE SAYS TO YOU**

God speaks to the person who has decided in advance to do whatever He says. "God, I'm ready to hear You talk to me and whatever You tell me to do, I'm going to do it even before I know what it is."

v. 15 *"The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it and by persevering produce a crop."* The good soil is a willing mind. I'm willing to do whatever God wants and follow Him completely. I want to share something with you. I have in my time as a pastor seen very few Christians with this heart. And I have to say it is a real shame... because we have a great opportunity to make a major difference in peoples live eternally. But we choose not to that good soil... James 1:22 *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!"* Circle "Do".

Cooperate with what God says.

The results from this soil? You produce a crop. The result of spending time with God is increased productivity. I don't know how it works but God works it out. When I put God in my schedule on a daily basis somehow the time I've

given up to spend with Him, He somehow expands the other time to make me more productive in that time than if I'd spent the whole time on the project or job.

It's the way God works. It's the same with tithing. When I give ten percent of my money back to God somehow He makes the other 90% go further than if I had 100%.

Cooperate with what God says.

If God did a scan on your brain -- open brain surgery -- what kind of mind would it reveal? Would God find a closed mind? You're not even open to the possibility that God might talk to you. Why? Fear of what He might say. Pride -- I may have to face up to my faults. Bitterness -- I'm mad at God or somebody else. You've built a wall and hurt has hardened your heart. That's tragic. The hardened heart is a barren heart and nothing can grow there.

How does God soften hard soil? He sends the rain and sometimes He sends a storm. It could be the problems your going through right now, God is trying to use it to get your attention. He's trying to soften you up, soften the soil He uses the rain in your life -- the problems, the storms to soften your heart because He loves you.

Would God find a superficial mind? You're a believer but there's no depth. How deep is your commitment to the Word? How do I know if I'm a deep Christian or a shallow Christian? Simple! How do you respond to pressure, when the heat is on? If you've got roots, you blossom. If you don't have roots, you dry up, you wither. You can tell a person's depth by how they handle trials, hassles, stress. The Word of God can bring new depth to your life.

If God did a brain scan on your life would He find a preoccupied mind? I've been too busy for God. I'm a Christian but I've been giving God the leftovers. What are the weeds in your life that rob you of time with God? I suggest you pray a simple prayer: "Father, help me to cultivate an open mind. I want to be open to what You want to say. Help me to allocate time to listen. Help me to eliminate the distractions and help me to cooperate with what You have to say."

If you've never opened your life to Christ you need to do the first step. You need to say, "Jesus Christ, I want to open my mind, heart, life to You. I don't understand it all but I want to be Pen. If You're really real, Jesus Christ, and You can make a difference in my life, come on in." Many of you have already done this. You need to go on and take the second step -- second base. Learn the habits and skills

for spiritual maturity. How do I have a quiet time? How do I pray and get answers? How do I get fed from God's Word?

Prayer:

Would you say to Jesus Christ if you've never said it before, "God, I want to open my mind to You. Maybe I've been afraid, prideful, insecure. Maybe I've allowed hurt to make me hard but I don't want to ruin that relationship I could have with You. Help me to realize You love me. Jesus Christ, I open my life and heart to You. Come in. Help me to understand it more." Many of you have already done this.

Father, thank You for Your Word. As it's been spread this morning, we pray that it will fall on good soil and bear fruit. In Jesus' name. Amen.