

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Hearing God's Voice on the Journey to Healing

Jim Schuster

Hi. My name is Jim Schuster, and it's great to be with you here on this Pray More Healing Retreat. I'm going to be speaking today on the topic of hearing God's voice more clearly in our lives. And before we start, I just want to begin with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are a good Father, that You know how to give good gifts that Your children. And so we invite You, Father, now to speak to us, to speak to our hearts, to open up our minds and our hearts to hear Your voice more clearly in our lives. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So this topic of hearing God's voice, it's so helpful to us to know how to hear God's voice more clearly in our lives as we go on this journey of healing. You know, the Holy Spirit is ever guiding us towards greater healing, and wholeness, and integration. And the more we can hear His voice, the more we can identify the ways He's speaking to us, guiding us, leading us, the more we can collaborate and cooperate with what He wants to do in our lives, and the ways He wants to bring about healing.

And so some examples: The Holy Spirit might guide us to a particular scripture, He might know that there's something that we need in the book of John, or there might be a verse that comes to mind where God can speak to us in that. He might inspire us to talk to somebody. It could be just a good friend that we need to talk things out with, and they're just going to be a listening ear and a healing presence for us. Or even, you know, God could steer us towards professional counselling, and guide us towards healing in that arena.

You know, one of the things that God will do for me sometimes is He'll guide me towards a particular movie. A movie will come to mind, and I just can't get it out of my head. And I'll go and watch it and I'll just, as I'm watching, I'm just asking God "What is it You have to say to me here? What is You want me to get out of this? How do You want to speak to me?" Or maybe it's a song. I hear a song on the radio and something just moves in my heart, and I say "Oh, Holy Spirit, what is that? You know, what do You have for me there?" And I'll go and listen to and I'll pay attention to those lyrics extra carefully, and just let God minister to me through that song.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

You know, and sometimes God will bring us into an area of pain. He'll highlight this area of pain that we've been carrying around for a while. And maybe we've kind of set it aside for a certain amount of time, or just kind of allowed ourselves to go numb to it, and He'll kind of resurface that. And as uncomfortable as that might be sometimes, the good news is that God wouldn't ask us to go there if He didn't have healing for us there. And so we can follow the Holy Spirit's lead to go into those places without fear, without hesitation, knowing that He has healing for us through that.

You know, so the Holy Spirit will guide us towards healing, you know, and we can hear His voice, hear the way He's leading and guiding us. But another way that this tool of hearing God's voice will come in helpful in the journey of healing is that God's voice itself is healing. There's healing power in the voice of God. You know, I think of those words that we say every Mass, right before we receive communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. But only say the word, and my soul shall be healed."

And of course this is taken from Matthew 8, when the centurion approaches Jesus and he's asking for healing for his servant. And, you know, Jesus praises the centurion's faith. And, among the reasons for that, we can see that the centurion just had faith that just one word from Jesus was powerful enough to heal his servant, even though that servant was far, far away. And, sure enough, that's what Jesus does. He says "I do will it." You know. "Have your healing." And Matthew records that it was at that very hour, that very moment that Jesus spoke that the servant was healing. There's healing power in the voice of Jesus. And we see that time and time again throughout the scriptures, right. We see Jesus speaking a healing word, and people receive that healing. He even speaks over a storm and says "Peace, be still." And again, just with a word He brings peace, He brings calm.

I think of Hebrews 4:12. It says ***The Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern the reflections and thoughts of the heart.*** I just love almost the surgical imagery here. You know, it penetrates between joints and marrow. It's like God's going in with a scalpel. He can go in there just like a surgeon, He's our Divine Physician, right. And it's like God knows how to bypass all of the confusion and get right down to that specific place in our hearts that needs healing, and speak that word that's medicine, that's bond, that's a salve and healing right into that place. So God's word itself, God's voice itself has healing power in it.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

So, now that we're excited about hearing God's voice, the next question is "Okay, what does it look like? What do we look for when we're looking for hearing God's voice?" And when we talk about this, it's normally an internal hearing that we're talking about. You know, obviously, God could speak to us through an audible voice, just like He did for Paul on the road to Damascus when He appeared to him in a blinding light, and the people around him even heard it. But, you know, this is more rare, right. Most of the time, God is speaking from within.

And this can come in a variety of forms and, you know, one of those forms could be hearing God, again, an internal hearing where God speaks to us in phrases and words. He might speak in the first person to us through dialog and a conversation, where He's saying "I love you." And He might say "I want to talk about this area of your life." He might say "Bring your concerns to Me," and have a dialog over that with you. So we can hear God internally.

Seeing is another way that God can speak to us. He can speak to us through images or mental pictures. So right now, I just want you to picture a red balloon. And now that you have that picture of a red balloon in your mind, that's that place where God can deposit images to speak to us through those. And, you know, there's that saying that says "A picture is worth a thousand words." So, you know, sometimes God uses words, but sometimes He can actually say more and do more in that healing process just by giving us images that speak to our hearts more directly.

A lot of times when I teach this, there's somebody who says "You know, whenever I go to pray or I go to Mass, I always get images, and it's happened my whole life. And I always thought it was a distraction, I always pushed them away because it's like 'No, I'm trying to pray,' you know." And they never considered that that could be a way that God speaks to them. So I just want to open up that possibility for you, that God can speak through images that we receive.

Another way that God can speak to us is through thinking, is through thought, giving us thoughts, planting ideas and inspirations that arise in our minds. This is one of the most common ways that I hear from God. It's making connections, it's concepts coming together, it's having a deeper understanding of the faith, or God's nature, or my relationship with Him. And it's exciting for me. It just draws me closer to God, and it makes me want to know Him more.

And so it can be insights, kind of like I was describing just now. But it could also be... it could just be a memory that comes to mind. It's just this thought, this memory that jumps to mind, and you say "Well, what is that God? Why? I haven't thought about that in years. Why are You calling that to my attention right now?" God could also just highlight a person to you. It could be a person that comes to mind, an old friend, and you say "Maybe God wants me to give him a call." And

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

I've heard so many of stories of people who've been just faithful to that, and it was either that friend who needed the phone call and needed something, just needed to be known, needed somebody to talk something out with, or even the person doing the calling who said "I don't know why I'm supposed to call you, but I just felt like I did." And the other person will have something for them, and they'll say "Well, this is going on in my life." So, again, just thoughts. God can speak to us just through thoughts that come to mind.

And finally, a final category is through feeling. It could be having a sense of God's presence, or just having that heart connection to God, heart to heart connection. It could be God stirring up an emotion inside of you. I've had friends who have told me they, for a certain stretch of time, every time they got in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament they would just start crying. And they didn't know why. And they didn't ever really find out why, but it was because God was just doing a work inside of them. He was doing something inside of them. And, you know, I've heard it said one time that sometimes the gift of tears is sort of like God melting the ice around our hearts. That's just a beautiful image there.

So God can work through just emotions on that level, and sometimes it's just allowing God to do it. We don't even have to do anything but receive in that moment. And God could speak to us even through physical sensations. You know, it could be like the sensation of having a hand on your back, or of Jesus holding your hand, something like that. So all of these are valid ways that God can speak to us. And sometimes we don't know exactly what to look for, but these are some broad categories that we can think about in terms of hearing God's voice. And it's not an exhaustive list, but I find it to be some of the more common ways that God speaks.

Now, not everything that comes to us when we're in prayer, or trying to hear God's voice, is necessarily from God, right. It could be from God, it could be just our own thoughts, or our own stuff coming into this. But it's also important to acknowledge that we have an enemy who wants to interfere with our conversation with God, who wants to inject his own doubts, his own concerns, fears, and worries in there. And so sometimes, or always, there's a need to do some discerning about what we receive and what we're hearing in prayer.

And as we think about how do we distinguish God's voice from the other possible voices that we might be hearing, I think there's these just two basic standards that we can appeal to: Truth and love. God always speaks in truth. So what we hear in prayer has to align with God's revealed truth. God never contradicts Himself. And so if what we have received, if it's clearly at odds with what God has spoken

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

through scripture and through the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church, then we know that it's not God. We can dismiss it, set it aside, and listen again.

And then the other criteria is that God speaks to us through love. You know, John says God is love, so God will always speak to us in the voice of love. So what does love look like? I love this almost poetic section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians in chapter 13, I'm sure you're familiar with it. "Love is patient, love is kind," etc. etc. Well, if God is love, then we can replace the word "love" in this passage from Paul with "God," and we can see that God is patient, God is kind, He is not jealous, He is not pompous, He's not inflated, He's not rude, He does not seek His own interest.

You know, that's so amazing. God doesn't need anything from us. All of His interactions with us are for our sakes. So He's, whenever God's interacting with us, He's not even seeking His own interests; He's seeing our best interest out of love for us. It goes on. God is not quick-tempered, He does not brood over injury, He doesn't rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. So God speaks to us with the voice of love always, always, always. Love and truth go together.

So again, as we unpack this, what does God's voice sound like, let's go a little further and how do we distinguish God's voice from Satan's voice? What does that look like? There's a... something you might have seen that goes around on social media sometimes - and if it's on social media you know it's got to be true, right? Well, obviously that's not the case. But, jokes aside, this is what I believe is just a really beautiful way of contrasting the voice of God with the voice of Satan. So it goes down in two columns, and it says "God's voice calms. Satan's voice obsesses. God wants to bring calm and peace into our life. Satan's voice wants to get us wrapped up into our issues and problems. But God's voice calms us."

Going on, "God's voice comforts, Satan's voice worries." You know, St. Paul wrote and he says ***Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. And then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*** What is Paul saying here? Paul's saying God does not want us to be steeped in worry and anxiety. That's not His heart for us. And when that worry and anxiety comes up, we're to bring it to Him with all of our petitions and lay them before the feet of God. And in exchange, receive the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. That even when the circumstances haven't worked out, that we have peace from God in all circumstances.

So God's voice comforts, Satan's voice worries. God's voice convicts, Satan's voice condemns. This is so important. Obviously, when God speaks to us in love, there are times when He is going to address areas of sin in our life, He's going to

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

confront us on some things. But there's a big difference between the way that God highlights our sin and the way that Satan highlights our sin. You know, the book of Revelation calls Satan the accuser of the brethren, who stands night and day accusing them before God. And so, with that accusation, he's going to take anything that he can level against us and try to dig in and try to tell us that, because of these things, we're not worthy of the love of God. That God could never love us because of these areas of sin in our life.

So he condemns. What does condemnation look like? Condemnation diminishes us. It pushes us into shame and into hiding, just like Adam and Eve in the garden. They were ashamed of their sin, and they hid from God. But when God talks to us about sin, it's completely different. He talks to us, He brings conviction to our hearts about sin in our lives. What is conviction? When you think about people who live with conviction, these are people who are passionate, who are moved to action, who live by a higher standard. They have conviction in their lives. And so when God convicts us, He's calling us higher, and He spurs to action, He gives us hope. The conviction of God always comes with hope that we can rise to that new level of living that He's calling us to.

So I think of the story of Zacchaeus, when he encountered Jesus and Jesus says "Hey Zacchaeus, I'm going to come and dine with you tonight." And what is Zacchaeus' response? Of course he's a tax collector. He's made his riches off of extorting the Jewish people, collecting taxes for the Romans. And so Zacchaeus' response, he says "Everything that I've stolen, I'm going to pay back double." And he has this joy, right. He's making amends for the wrongs that he's done in his life, but he's doing it with joy and excitement and enthusiasm, because it's the conviction of God that's been working in his life, not the condemnation that diminishes us, that pushes us into hiding.

So God's voice convicts, Satan's voice condemns. God's voice encourages, Satan's voice discourages. And, as Jesus said, with God all things are possible. Satan wants us to believe you can't do that, you'll never make it, you'll never be enough, right, he discourages us. But God's voice is always coming from this place of encouragement. God's voice enlightens, Satan's voice confuses. God brings clarity to situations, but Satan wants to get in there and muddle things up and bring confusion. God's voice leads, Satan's voice pushes. God leads by invitation, right. He honors our freedom, He goes ahead of us and He says "Will you follow Me? Will you come with Me?" And He gives us the opportunity to respond in freedom.

Satan, on the other hand, pushes us, right. He wants to be controlling in our lives. He tries to make us feel powerless and push us like there's nothing we can do, like there's not even a choice that we have. So God's voice leads, Satan's voice pushes.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

God's voice reassures, Satan's voice frightens. You know, there's no fear in love, scripture says. And how many times does, in the bible, do we see this phrase, God saying "Be not afraid." So God doesn't speak to us through fear, He speaks to us through reassurance, in the reassurance of His love, and that He's for us, not against us.

And finally on this list, God's voice stills, Satan's voice rushes. This is something that I have just been learning more and more. It's a lesson that's been... God's driving home for me, that when I start to feel this sense of rush and of panic, and I start to act out of that place, that things go wrong. That it's not... that's not God leading me. He leads me from a place of stillness and rest in His heart, of confidence in His leading. And, you know, sometimes God does ask me to move quickly on something. But even as I'm moving quickly, I don't feel rushed; I just feel that place of stillness in my heart as God leads me. So God's voice stills, Satan's voice rushes.

So, I hope this helps you to unpack and to get greater clarity on what it looks like for God to speak to us, and how we can discern His voice in our lives. You know, God desires to speak to us, as a father desires to speak to his beloved sons and daughters. And He's trustworthy. We can trust that what He has to say to us, we're going to want to hear. He's a good Father. And there's healing in His heart, you know. God is always leading us into greater measures of healing, wholeness, and integration.

And so I want to end just by calling to mind this scripture passage from Zephaniah 3:17. It says ***The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty savior; He will rejoice over you with gladness and renew you in His love; He will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.*** I love this picture, and I believe it just captures the heart of God for us. That He rejoices over us, that He sings over us with gladness. That's His heart for us.

And so I want to end by just entering into a simple listening exercise, where we open up our hearts to God and we say "Father, would you reveal to me what it looks like when You rejoice over me?" So go ahead and do that now, and ask Him in your heart "Father, what does it look like when You rejoice over me? What does it look like when You sing over me with gladness?" Maybe you see His face, maybe you see the look on His face, maybe you hear Him saying some particular words to you, maybe there's just this thought that comes to mind, or a memory of a tender time, a precious time with a relative, a parent, that God is saying "That's what it's like when I rejoice over you as well." And maybe it's just the sense of God's presence, and He's just touching your heart in a particular way. Yeah.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Thank You Father. Yeah. Now, if there's anything that you're receiving that doesn't look like love, that doesn't feel like love, you get to just reject that and place that aside and say "God, I know that's not Your heart for me." And so you can just set that aside, and go in and listen again in confidence in who God is, and that He's going to speak to you in a voice of love. So, I want to pray for you now. Maybe you didn't hear anything right now, but we're going to wrap up this video here. And maybe you just need a few minutes alone with God to continue listening to hear His heart for you.

So I pray that God blesses you, and that He opens up the eyes of your heart and the ears of your heart to hear Him, to see Him, to know Him more deeply and intimately. Yeah. I bless you to hear God's voice more clearly in your life, so that He may lead you to greater measures of healing and intimacy in Christ, our Lord. Amen.