

How to Hear the Voice of God for Yourself

Have you ever been confronted by someone who said something like, “God told me to tell you”? Such statements often are followed by a “word of knowledge” such as, “If you only had more faith, you would be healed.” Or, perhaps, “If you were living right, you would not have lost your job.”

Someone, with compassion clothing his or her words, might even say, “God has told me that He doesn’t mean for you to be unhappy. He would never want you to stay in this miserable marriage; He wants you to be happy.” Or, “God has told me He wants you to be healthy (or wealthy or prosperous or problem-free).”

Such words spoken by sincere people within our circle of Christian friends can put us into a tailspin of emotional devastation and spiritual doubt. It is especially traumatic and confusing when those words are uttered by someone in a position of religious leadership.

How can you and I know which voice speaks the truth, which voice is authentic? Learning to recognize the voice of God is critical, not only for our own peace of mind but also for developing a personal relationship with Him and for living a life pleasing to Him. Yet how can we be sure the voice we hear is His? Jesus answers that question using the illustration of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.

Read John 10:1-10.

The Authentic Voice Is Biblical

What does God say about the importance of determining which voice is authentic among the cacophony of voices clamoring for our attention? See Deuteronomy 18:18-20 and Galatians 1:6-9.

What event in John 9 revealed that the shepherds, the religious leaders of Israel, spoke with false voices as Jesus describes?

In John 10:1-5, what are some of the criteria that Jesus gave for determining a false shepherd? A true shepherd? Give a practical application for each criterion.

The Authentic Voice Is Personal

According to John 10:3-4, what is the basis of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep?

In the parable Jesus gave, who is the Shepherd? Who are the sheep? What is the Shepherd's voice today? How do we, the sheep, hear His voice? Give an example of a time when you have heard the Shepherd's voice.

According to John 10:5, why do the sheep run from the false shepherd? Give an example from your own life.

What is absolutely necessary if you and I are to discern between the voices of the true and the false shepherds?

How does the reaction of the religious leaders in verse 6 reveal their identity as false shepherds?

The Authentic Voice Is Powerful

What is the Good Shepherd able to do that the false shepherd cannot? See John 10:7-10.

How does Jesus' claim disqualify the pluralism of our day? See John 10:7.

Give phrases from the following verses that confirm the uniqueness of Jesus' claim: John 1:1-3, 9, 14, 18; John 3:2, 15-18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12.

What practical steps will you take to make sure that the voice you are listening to is that of the Good Shepherd?

©2003 Anne Graham Lotz. This article originally appeared on .