

Video 3—How to Follow the Right Voice

Walking into my favorite grocery store when I was tired was not a good idea. I hadn't eaten that day and it was close to five. That morning I had solidified my decision and announced to my mentor that I would stop eating sugar and gluten. I would start cooking healthy. First I had to buy ingredients, which would qualify. I needed to fix supper.

I had not thought about the looming obstacle I would encounter. I knew it was there. It's always there right as I head down the main aisle. That day it seemed to be larger and more intimidating than ever—the bakery case.

My downfall, the large cinnamon rolls, called to me. The voice in my head was urgent and loud. "You haven't eaten today. You need to eat something. You need energy. You might drop dead if you don't eat."

I listened to the voice and added my own rationalities. "I do have a long evening ahead, and I haven't eaten. I do need energy. I could grab these now and start the healthy eating thing tomorrow." I was telling myself this as I took a plastic bag, grabbed the tongs and had my two choice cinnamon rolls, the largest available, inside.

As I was tying the bag, I heard another voice in my head. This one was soft and quiet. It simply said, "What are you doing?" The still, small voice arrested me. I had been on autopilot listening to the voice of the tempter who sided with my fleshly desires. All of sudden, I knew what I was preparing to do was everything I had vowed I would not do.

I put the bag back in the bakery case and went to choose my skinned and deboned chicken breasts, salad ingredients, broccoli and fruit. That was the last time I willingly listened to that overt voice.

The Tempter's Voice

The voice of the tempter always has an element of truth to it. What he tells me is half-truth, half-lie. In the past, he hadn't needed to be too subtle. He just put the bait out there and, like a hungry, naïve fish, I'd bite and gobble it up plus more. He would sit back with a smug smile while I swallowed the hook. His mission was accomplished.

Part of the reason I always listened to him was it sounded so logical. My rational mind agreed with him because my flesh wanted something sweet or starchy. What the tempter didn't know was this time I was serious. I had made a firm decision. I was going to listen to the voice of God. I had invited Him to tell me when I was making a wrong decision.

My Voice

I have learned my inner voice will mimic what is most important to me. In the past, I allowed my mind, my thoughts reasoning through things in my mind, to lead me. I thought this was the way my life was supposed to be run. My soul includes my mind, will and emotions, and I allowed my soul, of which my mind is a major part, to lead me.

I was a Christian. I considered myself to be spirit-led. However, my spirit was something nebulous to me. My spirit was weak because I wasn't allowing it to be led by God's Spirit. I had to put God's Spirit in charge of my spirit. My mind, will and emotions had to take a backseat.

There was a tug-of-war when I went in this direction. I had been allowing my mind to govern out of my soul's desires. So if my mind said, "You're hungry. Go ahead, eat that cinnamon roll or stop at that fast food drive-through," I would do it. My will agreed saying, "You can do whatever you want." My emotions kicked in as well telling me I deserved it. I needed comfort. I needed protection.

Food was always there helping me. But it wasn't helping me. It was slowly killing me. Just like a bad relationship like you think this person really loves you and then you find they've been going behind your back all the time. This was like my relationship with sugar and flour.

When I reserve something for myself, like my desire to eat whatever I want, whenever I want, then my voice will agree with the tempter. When I allow God's Spirit to lead me, my voice will agree with God. It's a choice. God always gives me a choice. His voice will be quieter. Unless we feed the voice of God and our spirit.

How can you feed your spirit? What is your favorite way to feed your spirit. We need to make the switch from being soul led to spirit-led.

What other addictions pull you?

We can't let our mind lead. We have to be spirit led and allow the mind of Christ to lead us.

We always have a choice. We can let the evil lead us. We can let our desires lead or we can let the Holy Spirit lead us.

What God requires of us is to stand strong against the pulls of our culture. Culture says, "Sure you can eat sugar. Sugar's fine. You just need to eat it in limited quantities." However, some of us cannot do that.

The combination of sugar and flour is addictive to me.

How God Speaks

When I made the decision to eat healthy, I knew I couldn't do it on my own. By myself I am weak, but with God I am strong. **(2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV)**

In my conversation with God, I said, "I can't do this without You. I've tried all my life to do it my way. Now I want to do it Your way. That means I submit to You completely in this area. Please remind me when I start to stray. Please guide me. Please give me the grace-power only You can provide. And when you speak I will listen because I've heard Your voice God. I know Your voice. And I will follow." (2 Cor. 12:9 MSG)

Because I had asked God to direct me, He did. He directed me through His voice speaking in my mind. It was different than the voice of evil. Instead of telling me to do something, God asked me to think about what I was doing.

God believed in me. He believed if I would use the brain He gave me, the mind of Christ He gave me, I would recognize the lie and go with the truth.

The grocery store instance, and many others throughout the years, taught me a lot about distinguishing the voices speaking in my head. I only want to listen to the voice of God.

I no longer question whether it is Him or not. I know that Isaiah 30:21 NLT says, "Your own ears will hear Him. Right behind you a voice will say, 'This is the way you should go,' whether to the right or to the left."

This has helped me on my healthy living and my destiny journey. If God is in it, I can't fail. If I allow Him to lead me I can't fail. If I start in a direction, I've given Him permission to lead me where I should go. Maybe starting in a direction, will lead me to somewhere else I'm supposed to go. I've learned I need to be putting one foot in front of the other and so do you. Whether it is this healthy living journey or something else God has called you to do, you can no longer stay static. You have to be doing something. You have to be going in the direction you feel God is leading you to and allow Him to change that direction if that's what He wants to do.

Towards Destiny

Starting to fulfill my destiny began with the Holy Spirit teaching me how to take care of my body. I couldn't go towards the purpose God had for my life when I was super morbidly obese and could barely walk. His desire was for me to become healthy so I could move to the next part of His plan for my life. The evil one knows this. He always hits at my weakness. As with everyone, my weakness is something born of a fleshly desire.

Jesus said it this way. "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly." (**John 10:10 NASB**) Satan's number one mission is to steal, kill and destroy my destiny. If he can, he will lead me off-course.

Every time the evil one did this, I had the nagging suspicion the voice speaking to me wasn't God. I listened, though, because it was something I wanted. After all, didn't God want me to be happy? This kind of thinking drove me to listen to the wrong voice.

What I Want

My mind is not bad. When I became a Christian, I received the mind of Christ. (**1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV**) Learning to exercise it is another thing. I must be tuned in to God's station so my mind is functioning in conjunction with the Spirit of God. I must desire to be led by God rather than by my own desires.

When I want my way, I can have it because I have free will. (**Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6 NIV**) I can be just like Eve. My I-want voice can scream louder than the voice of God. The devil will agree with what I want. If I want to hear it, God's voice will whisper softly to me. That whisper will speak louder than every other voice combined if I let it.

I choose who I want to listen to. I really know the voice of God and think you do to. Are you too scared to listen to what He says?

I know what His purposes are. I know how to discern His voice. I just choose whether or not I want to follow it.

I base my interpretation of what I believe God is showing me on the truth of God's Word. Does it go contrary to Scripture? Is it biblically-based? Did my revelation come while I was meditating on His Word? If it did, I am always more encouraged it is God who is speaking to me.

When I get godly counsel, is it in agreement with what I believe I should do? This is not always an accurate test. I have to weigh the intentions of those advising me. Is their opinion based on time spent seeking God or just a whim?

Does it feel bigger than what I can accomplish? Lately, I've come to realize this is a part of what God is trying to teach me. If it's bigger than me, I will rely on Him. If not, I'll try to do it in my own strength. He leads me places I'm sure I can't go. If I will follow Him, instead of trying to lead the way, He will empower and protect me.

My doubt is always removed when I read His promises. The words are life to me and tell me He's leading me into even greater things than I can ever imagine. "Never doubt God's mighty power at work within you to accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination. He will outdo them all, for His miraculous power constantly energizes you." **(Ephesians 3:20 TPT)**

He's got me. He won't let go. No one can take me out of His hands. **(John 10:29 NIV)**

The safest place for you and me is following His voice, attempting the impossible with Him. **(Luke 1:37 NIV)**

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." **(John 10:27 NIV)** Why do sheep follow the voice of the shepherd? Because they trust Him. He protects them. He feeds them. He finds water for them, shelter when needed and soft places to lie down.

When I began to understand God wanted only good things for me, not the things I think are good but what He knows are good for me, not disaster, which is what I was creating, I began to listen to His advice. I longed for His voice, His direction, His guidance. **(Jeremiah 29: 11 NLT)** His voice is like "food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat." **(Matthew 5:6 MSG)**

I began to live my life based on what He said to me. I began to hear Him everywhere. His is a voice, which fills all of me. There is no other voice like it. We have to begin to live our lives based on what He says to us.

"Then he (Elijah) was told, 'Go, stand on the mountain at attention before God. God will pass by.' A hurricane wind ripped through the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God wasn't to be found in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but God wasn't in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but God wasn't in the fire; and after the fire a gentle and quiet whisper.

"When Elijah heard the quiet voice, he muffled his face with his great cloak, went to the mouth of the cave, and stood there. A quiet voice asked, 'So Elijah, now tell Me, what are you doing here?'" **(1 Kings 19:11-13 MSG)**

What are you doing here, right now. What is your purpose? For each of us right now, our purpose needs to be getting healthy.

The voice of God doesn't have to be a "voice" at all. It can be His presence. It can be a look on stranger's face. It can be warm sunshine on my back. It can be a boisterous seven-year-old giving a hug to one of his best friends. It can be a three-year-old crawling up in her grandmother's lap. It can be a friend giving an

unsolicited hug. Or it can be a sense of purpose and a knowing that I just can't get out of my mind.

Is it an audible voice?

In 1979 when a pastor of a large church announced he was not running for a second term as president of one the largest denominations in the world, people were stunned. He said he was not running because God told him not to.

A reporter asked him, "Did God speak to you in an audible voice?" The pastor looked him in the eyes and said, "No, it was much louder than that."

I know God directs me, speaks to me, lead me when I'm willing to listen. He has hope for me no matter what predicament I've gotten myself into. Hope in God and His strength is my lifeline, the steadfast and sure anchor of my very being. **(Hebrews 6:19 NIV)**

ACTION STEPS:

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak a word of caution to you when you are going off track.

Make a Voices Chart. Think of a time when you were faced with making a food or exercise or healthy living decision. It could be a seemingly small decision like the one Teresa mentioned. Label a blank page in your notebook something to remind you about that decision, such as Cinnamon Roll or going for a walk.

Make three columns under the heading. Label them Tempter's Voice, My Voice and God's Voice. Beginning with the Tempter's Voice, list the things the Tempter would tell you about that situation.

Under your voice, list what you might be saying to yourself. The things you say to yourself may come from your mother, father, siblings or significant people in your life, as well as from yourself.

Now, list the things God would say to you and how you know it is Him.

Answer this question: If I know for sure what God is telling me to do, will I do it?
Or do I choose not to listen?

This week when faced with a healthy living decision, list what each voice is saying to you and then in your journal, write about what voice you followed and why.

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