

## **Theme: Windwalkers**

## **Topic: Hearing God Speak**

## **Date:**

**Opening:** Play pretty much any audio clip which has a lot of noise in it. It could be from a video (but don't show the video part), or downloaded from a movie, etc. Ask a number of questions to them about things they heard in the clip. Try to really test them as to things they heard. Question them about specific background noises, etc. Award a prize to whoever gets most questions right.

As we move forward with "WindWalkers: A Study on Walking by the Spirit", today we look at the one of the most fundamental things that must be happening in us if we are to "walk by the Spirit"... being able to hear His voice and know where He is calling us. This is NOT a time we'll talk simply about "Bible Study" or "Quiet Times" or the like. Too often we reduce communication with God to that, but it is much more. Our emphasis this session is on hearing God speak, being able to listen, and knowing where He is guiding us.

**Small Groups:** Split up into small groups and answer these questions:

1. Share your name and answer this question: name a music group, artist, or style of music whose sound you just don't like.
2. As we begin talking about hearing God speak, what are ways you think God communicates with us?
3. What do you think are the biggest obstacles to hearing God speak to us? What makes it difficult?

Get some feedback on these questions.

Read together this passage:

*"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it."*

John 10:3-5

Tell the story of Arnold Palmer being approached by a blind golfer, who challenged him to a round of golf. Arnold felt sorry for the guy, and declined, but the man persisted. He bet Arnold that he and the man who lined up his shots could beat him in a round. Seeing he could not turn the man down, Arnold agreed, and asked, "OK, fine. When do you want to play?" The man responded, "Tee time, tonight at midnight." This man had learned how to take directions from his caddy.

You may also want to tell a story of being lost, or in the dark, and needing someone to give you directions to get you somewhere. "Walking by the Spirit" is sometimes like both of these stories -- needing directions to get to the destination God has you going. That is not simply talking about "heaven", but the course for your life. But listening to God is a little different than listening to a coach, or a teacher, or a parent, or someone around us.

Here's how listening to God is different. (We will teach a statement which we will add to throughout the lesson.)

### **God's voice is often a gentle whisper...**

Look at 1 Kings 19:9-12. Tell the story beforehand of Elijah defeating the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. THEN Jezebel, the queen, sent out a declaration that Elijah would be defeated in the same way. Elijah ran. The point in this passage is that God didn't speak to Elijah in the powerful wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a "gentle whisper". Most everyone will be able to relate to that, that quite often God's voice to us is soft, not harsh; it is quiet, not loud; it is gentle, not forceful; it is quite often easy to turn away from, not in your face.

Ask them why they think God does this, speaking in a gentle whisper, as opposed to loud thunders? Perhaps it is because it makes us pay attention.

Perhaps tell another story here of how sometimes the most important things we need to hear are things we must pay close attention to, or we miss them.

### **...but even this gentle whisper can be heard...**

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

Jeremiah 29:13

- We can train ourselves to hear the faintest alarm clock, IF WE NEED TO.
- We can hear the phone ring when the TV is turned up loud, IF WE'RE EXPECTING A CALL.
- We can hear a coach quietly talking across a field, IF WE VALUE PLAYING.
- We can hear a song playing on the radio in the car next to us, IF WE LIKE IT.
- We can hear a baby cry softly in the middle of the night, IF IT'S URGENT.
- We can hear a gentle breeze blowing, IF WE PAY CLOSE ATTENTION.

Each one of those traits also enables us to hear God:

- if we know we NEED to hear from Him,
- if we EXPECT to hear from Him,
- if it's VALUABLE to hear from Him,
- if we WANT to hear from Him,
- if it's URGENT to us to hear from Him, and
- if we PAY CLOSE ATTENTION in order to hear from Him.

So do we have these traits?

### **...if we condition ourselves to recognize His voice...**

Look at John 10:1-5 in *The Message*. Note these phrases in vs. 4-5, "they follow

because they are familiar with his voice", and when talking about a stranger's voice "they aren't used to the sound of it."

Here's the point: THE ONLY WAY TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH SOMEONE'S VOICE, TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE IT, IS TO LISTEN TO IT OFTEN.

You can tell a story here from your own life about learning to recognize someone's voice. It comes with time. The more we hear them, the more we can recognize them.

### **...AND do what He says.**

"Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness,'  
Hebrews 3:7-8 (also repeated in vs. 15 and 4:8)

When we disobey, we harden our heart, AND our hearing. After all, why SHOULD God speak when we don't do what He says?

Think ahead of time about several youth who you know are fairly consistent about personal Bible study. Interview them in front regarding their times of Study. Here are some possible questions. (Let them know these questions ahead of time.)

- When do you usually have your time in the Word? Why then?
- What specifically do you do? Do you have a plan? What does it look like? How do you know where to read?
- How do you KNOW what God is speaking to you?
- What do you do when you have several days, or a week or more, when it seems a little dry?

So what does this mean for us if we want to "walk by the Spirit", to listen and hear God speak so we can walk the course He has for us? Here are two strong suggestions:

## **WE MUST GIVE GOD REGULAR TIME TO SPEND LISTENING TO HIM, SO THAT WE WILL RECOGNIZE HIS VOICE AS HE SPEAKS TO US. HOW DO WE DO THIS?**

1. Commit to spending regular time each day exposing yourself to God's Word, ie. block off a time to personally read and study the Bible.
2. Read the Bible in books. Spend a bulk of your time at first in the New Testament, but don't leave out the OT.
3. Each day write down what you think God is speaking to you about in that day's passage. Devotional Journals should help with this, so maybe take a few moments to talk about *journaling*..

Here are 3 Simple Questions for any passage:

- a. What was God saying through this passage to the first readers?
- b. What is He saying to me? Why did He want me to read this today?
- c. What should I do about it? This will become more natural as you spend more time in His word.

4. As God speaks to you in other ways (Bible Study leaders, preachers, circumstances, you begin to sense His direction in a choice you must make) recognize that God will never speak to you something contrary to what He has said in the Bible. While God speaks in ways other than the Bible, He does not speak in contradiction to it. That is why it is so important that we start here - it is the measuring stick with which we can tell if God is speaking to us in some other way.

**WE MUST OBEY WHAT GOD IS SAYING TO US, OTHERWISE  
WE ARE WALKING IN A DIRECTION OPPOSITE OF HIM,  
THUS MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO "WALK BY THE SPIRIT."**

We'll talk about this even more in weeks to come...