

CONSCIENCE

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Noise. It's everywhere! People talking, children crying, ambulances wailing, stereos thumping, lips smacking, people breathing. It's everywhere! You can't get away from it. And what about the static and noise that happens over social media? What about the drama that becomes blaring noise in your life that comes from issues and relationships? Life brings all sorts of "noise" that can flood your ears and mind with so many opinions and ideas, and sometimes, it's hard to hear God's voice in your life!

As a disciple of Jesus, it's important to be able to decipher God speaking to you vs. all the other noise that you hear, and I'm praying that through this lesson, you'll be more equipped to do just that.

After Jesus died and rose again, He was preparing to leave the earth and go back to Heaven. And while He is spending some of the last moments with His disciples, they have a conversation. As they are talking, Jesus gives them some wonderful news! Yes, Jesus is leaving, but He's giving them a gift too! Here's what Jesus says...

John 16:7: "But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the _____ will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus had to go to be with His Father, but He didn't leave humans alone. He left us with the Advocate (a.k.a. The Holy Spirit). And while Jesus' life and ministry changed the world, the ministry of the Holy Spirit reaches each and every person that wants Him to be a part of their life.

In fact, the way the Holy Spirit becomes a part of your life is through a decision that you make when you give your life to God. It happens at baptism! Here's what Jesus was telling Nicodemus as he encouraged him to fully devote his life as a disciple of Jesus.

John 3:5: "Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the _____."

And again in Acts, the disciples are urging people to be baptized, and here's what they are saying...

Acts 2:38: "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the _____."

The Holy Spirit is a beautiful gift that every disciple receives when they are baptized and give their lives to Christ. It's an incredible blessing to be given part of the Trinity as a gift! Once the Holy Spirit is invited into the heart of a disciple, He becomes a permanent fixture in your life. In fact, you become a living "host" for the Holy Spirit. He lives IN you...in your heart!

Here Paul talks about using your body in a way that honors God, the God (Holy Spirit) that lives in you. He writes,

1 Corinthians 6:19: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the _____, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"

John 14:16-17: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be _____ you."

When you invited God to live in your heart, He heard you and answered your invitation with the Holy Spirit taking up residence in your heart. But that's not the only place you'll find Him. No, you'll most likely find Him in your mind. In fact, so often, when you are trying to hear God's voice, that's where you'll hear Him. He speaks through the Holy Spirit in your thoughts and conscience.

While many feel like the Holy Spirit is some ambiguous spirit that can't be seen, that is occasionally "felt," He really performs some major functions in your life. He's the voice of reason when you have to make tough decisions. He's your conscience, helping you know what is right and wrong and what does and doesn't

honor God. He's the voice of empathy for someone that needs some words of encouragement. He's the voice of conviction, helping you to know when you have dishonored God. He's the voice of encouragement when He wants you to go and do something powerful for God. He's many voices speaking to you in a world where it's so hard to hear anything!

Isaiah tells us some of the many voices that He is in our lives.

Isaiah 11:2: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord."

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to you, so that God can connect with you on a more intimate level. He wants to be close to every thought that you think, every emotion that you feel, every choice that you choose and every decision that you make. He wants to be WITH YOU through everything that you face, and so God didn't just become one of us, but He lives INSIDE us! There is no closer place that God can be to His beloved children than inside them! He wants to help guide us into disciples that look more and more like Jesus.

BASIC POINT

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to you, so that God can connect with you on a more intimate level.

Jesus puts it this way in John 16:13:

John 16:13: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will _____ you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

The Holy Spirit's major function is to help guide you to be a stronger disciple of Jesus every single day! And here's the science behind it. Your conscience, that internal feeling when you are doing something wrong or affirming you when you are doing something right, is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your body. One news outlet puts it this way,

“Scientists from the Oxford University have for the first time identified an area of the human brain that appears unlike anything in the brains of other primates. It is part of the Ventrolateral Frontal Cortex, a region of the brain known for over 150 years for being involved in many of the highest aspects of cognition and language.”

Your conscience (The Holy Spirit) is deeply imbedded in your brain in the same area where you make all the decisions of your life. Every time you make a choice, the Holy Spirit (your conscience) is there trying to help you make the best decision for your life as a disciple. So often, we don't know what to do, or the right decision to make. Sometimes we don't even know what to pray for, and that's one reason the Holy Spirit is in you...to help you.

Romans 8:26: “ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our _____. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

So How Do You Hear The Holy Spirit?

There are several points that may help you in your quest to hear God speak to you. So here they go...see what you think.

1. Get rid of the noise!

Sometimes, the only way to hear something that you want to hear is to turn all the other noise off. What noise can you turn off in your life? Social media? Politics? Relationships? Work? Hobbies? School? What can you turn off so that you can hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak louder!

While you may think this one is funny, I believe that asking for God to speak loudly to you is an effective way to hear the Holy Spirit. In some way, you are simply opening your heart and mind to be ready to listen when God speaks.

3. Ask: Will this honor God?

So often, it feels like we are left with making decisions that affect our eternal destiny. That can feel lonely, but one way to hear the Holy Spirit speak to you is to give Him a chance by asking, “Will this honor God?” Just by asking this question, you are opening yourself to God to speak into your life and help you make a decision that will honor Him.

One last thing. I firmly believe that the more you get used to hearing the Holy Spirit speak to you through your conscience, the easier it gets. The more “in-tune” with God you are, the easier it is to decipher His leading. That is incredibly encouraging, because it means that it only gets easier!

As you turn off the peripheral noise and open your ears to listening to God speak to you, may you hear clearly what He wants you to hear, and may you follow His direction as you continue doing your best to live as a disciple.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the noises in your life that need to be turned down?
2. How have you heard the Holy Spirit in your life?

LESSON 11: LISTENING TO YOUR CONSCIENCE

