

Lord is that You?

James 1:5-8

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

When one hears a “voice” while praying, how can one discern who is talking? Living in an age of false Christs and false prophets, amongst the teachings of those who only preach to satisfy society’s itching ears of indifference; it is easy to mistake the voice of a masquerading angel of light for the voice of the one true God! To keep one from recognizing the voice of God in one’s prayers the powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil have declared war and made our minds a spiritual battlefield of allegiance. What does one do when the waves of our inconsistent and incongruent beliefs rage and drown out the voice of our Creator? The first part of this sermon is going to review how Scripture, spiritual gifting and servanthood can be used as litmus tests to help calm the storms of our minds and determine from whom did one get a message. The last part of this sermon is going to explain why living in God’s presence is the true goal of prayer.

Discerning Whom is Talking

Most Christians are skeptical when it comes to obeying the “voice(s)” they hear while praying for good reason! Apostle Paul warned Timothy that there would come a day when people



would abandon the faith and run after deceiving spirits and demonic teachings (1 Timothy 4:1).¹ Because these false messiahs and false prophets perform miracles and wonders many people will be deceived into believing their version of the “truth” (Revelation 16:14).² While some will outright reject Christ, others will refuse to put up with sound doctrine but instead surround themselves with a great number of pastors and teachers that say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). Preying on the sinful desires of our hearts (James 1:14-15) Satan

convinces many Christians that truth is not absolute but is to be based on the whims of each interpreter. He who masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) has entered the arena of our minds to change our allegiance from the one true God to as many gods as possible!

Many believers are losing this battle because they see no harm in allowing sinful images into their minds. While 75% of people say they are concerned about the morality³ and what enters their minds, they let their children watch about 3 hours of television a day containing

¹ Douglas J. Moo, “[The Letters and Revelation](#),” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2464.

² Bill Hybels, 148.

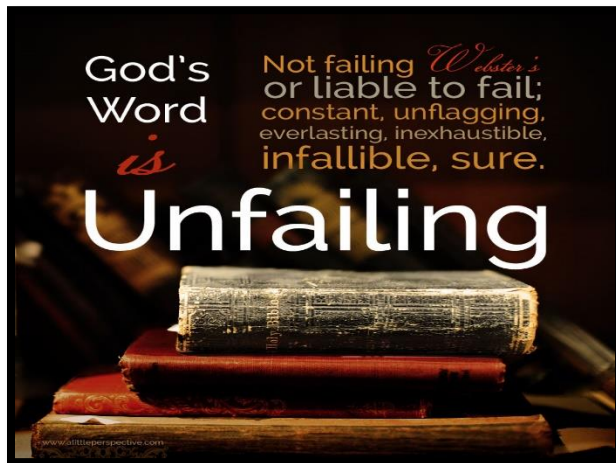
³ Taken from the following website: <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/7022283827.pdf>

approximately 20 acts of violence per hour. By the time a child hits eighteen year of age they will have seen approximately 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence.⁴ 75% of prime time tv shows have sexual content⁵ with soap operas leading the way with 90%, movies 87%,



comedies 73%, dramas 71%, talk shows 65%, news magazines 53% and reality shows 28%.⁶ Seeing these many images of violence and sex has a great impact upon the viewers. In a study of 13 and 14-year-olds it was found that heavy exposure to sexually oriented television increased the acceptance of nonmarital sex.⁷ Only one in thirty “secular” people and one if five highly “religious” people waits until marriage to have sex.⁸ Watching TV not only increases the likelihood of having premarital sex, but studies have also found that early childhood exposure to TV violence

increases aggressive behavior in both men and women.⁹ How can every thought be noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Philippians 4:8) when one fills one’s mind with such evil images?



Swimming in a sea of images from both Satan’s and God’s kingdom one can’t help but wonder: is it even possible to discern whose voice is talking in one’s prayers? Yes, there are three litmus tests that can help us determine if the “voice” in our prayers comes from God or not. First, promptings that come from God will always be congruent with God’s holy word (2 Timothy 3:16).¹⁰ So, if the voice asks you to work all the time to become rich then that voice is from Satan because God’s word says we are to run the race to win crowns of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), not stuff that is here today and

⁴ Taken from the following website: <https://www.livestrong.com/article/221006-how-tv-violence-affects-kids/>

⁵ Taken from the following website: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/3/576>

⁶ Taken from the following website: <http://www.jknirp.com/kaiser.htm>

⁷ Taken from the following website: <https://depts.washington.edu/thmedia/view.cgi?section=medialiteracy&page=fastfacts>

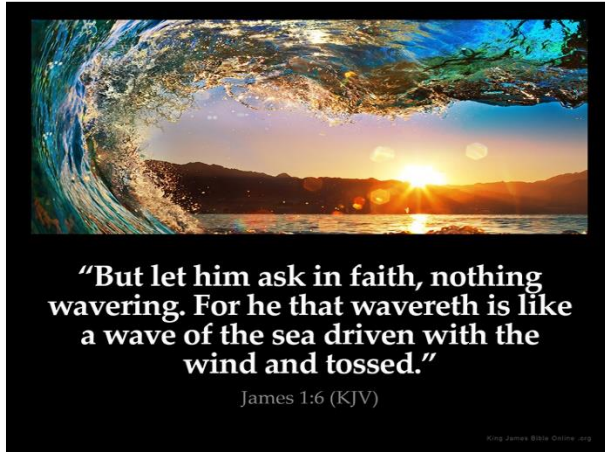
⁸ Taken from the following website: <http://waitingtillmarriage.org/4-cool-statistics-about-abstinence-in-the-usa/>

⁹ Taken from the following website: <http://www.apa.org/pi/prevent-violence/resources/tv-violence.aspx>

¹⁰ Bill Hybels, 150.

broad path of destruction (Matthew 7:13). It is not that God does not grant personal requests, He certainly does, but that our primary focus is to love and serve Him and all others (Matthew 22:37-40).

All these litmus tests are to be applied in conjunction with prayer! Wisdom is the means



in which the people of God discern¹⁴ and carry out the will of God for their lives.¹⁵ Apostle James says when we “lack wisdom we should ask God who gives generously to all” (1:5). So as one applies each of the above three litmus tests one is to pray that God’s voice will become audible and clear in our testing process. God will grant wisdom generously only to those who ask in the context of faith.¹⁶ The condition of receiving wisdom to discern the voice of God is not just the knowledge that God will speak audibly but also the desire to act when His voice is heard!¹⁷ So those who have prayed for wisdom and tested the “voice”

through Scripture, spiritual gifting and servanthood, James says must not doubt when God speaks and tells them the voice is either from Him or the Devil. Those who doubt should not expect to receive wisdom from the Lord because they are double-minded in all they do (verses 7-8)

Prayer and Living in God’s Presence

The purpose of prayer is to “maintain a constant communion with God the Father and God the Son through God the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ This intended close relationship is described by Christ as follows:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

¹⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation.”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2526.

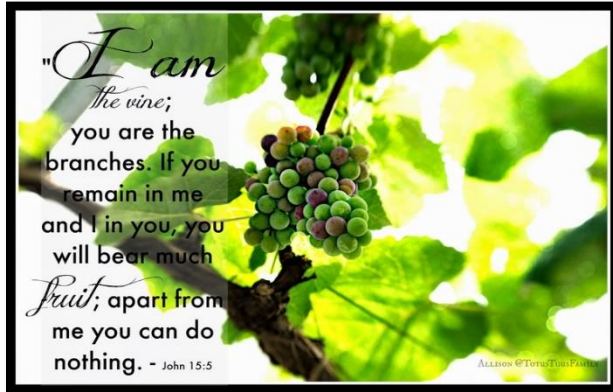
¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁶ Peter H. Davids, [James](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 29.

¹⁷ Peter H. Davids, 30.

¹⁸ Bill Hybels, 158.

The connection between us and Jesus the vine is maintained through His Spirit that dwells inside of us (John 14:16-17) but also through obedience and prayer. One remains in Christ by accepting



the authority of His word and through constant communication and obedience to His voice as revealed in prayer.¹⁹ Even though there is no where one can go to escape the presence of God's Spirit (Psalms 139:7-12), true communion with Him is not just based on proximity to each other but on our surrender and desire to speak to and have a close, personal relationship with our Creator! Prayer and the presence of God are two sides of the same coin. "Awareness of God's presence comes as the result of taking time to

speak and listen to Him through prayer; conversely, the power of prayer is unleashed in the lives of those who spend time in God's presence."²⁰

I want to finish this sermon series on prayer with one final thought. This world tells us that "success" in one's career is dependent on how many people one can influence. Since time is finite those who truly want to be powerful must multiply their influence over others by befriending those



who have attained influence over the greatest number of people. One only has to go to a public event to see who these "power brokers" are for they tend to speak only to their own! Jesus' statement "If you abide in Me" is a profound declaration that closeness to God is not offered just to the elite "power brokers" of this world but for everyone who chooses to submit to His authority! The Creator of this universe does not just know and invite the most influential to dine at His table but every single person. Our privilege

to be at His table is not based on anything we have done but on His sacrificial death for all people of every generation! So, I invite you to look upon the testimony of creation and hear the voice its Creator (Colossians 1:16) who is calling out to you to not only dine with Him but to be adopted as His very own child! What in life could ever be more important than talking to our Lord, Savior and King?

¹⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, "[John](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 152.

²⁰ Ibid.