

KNOWING GOD'S VOICE - PART IV



KNOWING GOD'S VOICE DEPENDS ON AVOIDING THE TRAPS

The road to effective communion with God is pebbled with obstacles and mined with dangerous deceptions that can cause you to stumble and fall. There are many traps that Satan, the enemy, sets to catch the unwary believer.

The clutter of hindrances and traps can keep you from hearing God, from distinguishing His voice and having the fellowship with Him that is your privilege as His child. For your safe travel on this journey, it is important that you understand the dangers and learn how to avoid them.

The Trap of Hurry and Busyness

This trap is a lifestyle that does not allow time to stop and listen to God and commune with Him. There seem to be so many good things to do that there is hardly a minute left to speak and listen to God. This attitude, often subconscious and unspoken, is that if God has anything to say he had better hurry.

You surely know people caught in this trap. You may even be one yourself. Busy people. Religious people. Over committed people. The let's-hurry-up-with-prayer-so-we-can-get-on-with-it people.

It's like going to the doctor's office, telling him or her all your symptoms and leaving before the doctor can make a diagnosis and tell you what to do.

If you have gotten into this trap, there is a way out; it begins with an understanding that the Lord wants your love and fellowship before anything else. Knowing that intimacy can never be hurried and rushed, you set a time in your life for meeting God and make it of primary importance. Make it vital. Many people have found an early-morning hour the best and easiest time for this fellowship with God.

You can hear God better when you give him quality time. It's time the saints of God awake to the fact that there is no substitute for quality time in His presence.

The Trap of External Distraction

Most people learning a new skill know they must give it their full attention because they are in an area of unfamiliarity. Beginners in the art of hearing God's voice are particularly prone to external distraction. Generally, they have a great need for quietude because they are so sensitively attuned to the outer world and are very conscious of it.

External noises or activities that might distract include TV, radio, talking and playing. Other attention-diverting activities could be doing something else while trying to hear God, such as vacuuming, driving or cooking.

Entering into silence is an effort that requires complete concentration. If you are, a beginner external distraction must be reduced to a minimum to enable you to begin to be conscious of the One who dwell in your inner world.

During the course of your day, God's communication with you will blossom out of the quiet time spent earlier with Him. You'll just automatically know what to do when circumstances and situations come your way.

Filtering out external distraction will help you focus on what God wants to tell you.

The Trap of Presumption

Do you sometimes tell yourself? "There is no reason to listen to God about this, when I already know what He's going to say."

One of the greatest areas of presumption is in what we think of as our "strengths" an area in which we are confident. However, we may not really be strong in an area yet are deceived into thinking we are, because we've been so richly blessed. This is called a "perceived strength." Presumption prevents us from even wanting to hear what God or anyone else has to say on the subject. How can we deal with "perceived strengths," that prevent hearing what the Lord would say to us?

First, there must be a total acceptance of Jesus' statement that 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5). If this is written deeply upon our hearts, then we will operate on the basis that we need the Lord at all times in every area of lives.

Second, you must become aware of those areas in which we move without contracting the Lord simply because we are sure we can handle the situation. Guarding against the presumption of 'perceived strengths' can have varying applications.

Parenting would be such an area, for parents with small children often assume that they know what to do and exactly how to do it. Everything seems to go well for the ten or twelve years they are able to force children to do what they want them to do.

However, there comes a day, often in the teenage years, when the parents begin to experience certain things with their children they can no longer handle. Then they seek help from the "experts." How often the help they get deals only with their specific parenting weaknesses.

If the parents had only understood from the beginning that they needed God's help on a daily basis, they would have had a different situation when the children began to express their growing independence.

Many times our lack of expertise is not discovered until it's too late. Here are some practical suggestions:

- ◆ Make a comprehensive list of your perceived strengths.

- ◆ Confess to the Lord that you have a tendency to operate in these areas without His help.
- ◆ Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a warning when you are moving in your own strength.
- ◆ Make an extra special effort to seek God's Will in these areas.

God wants you to understand that the adversary will come to you with the intent of deception. Your own feelings and opinions cannot always be trusted. However, you can trust God when He said, "I'll never leave you or forsake you."

There are four general precepts that will help you focus on what God is saying, thus giving you greater wisdom and strength to recognize and avoid the traps of the **enemy**:

- ◆ There is no need to be "uptight" in this matter, but there is a need to be sober and make sure that your mind is set on the Lord.
- ◆ Take the necessary time to wait patiently for the Lord to advise and answer you.
- ◆ Since God blesses faith, be sure you look at Him and not to your own opinion or others past experiences.
- ◆ Remember most of all, that "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." The Lord shows us many unexpected applications of His external wisdom and power. So never be surprised, but always be expectant.

Satan's traps are many and they can catch us unawares. He also has snares, those major, deceptively attractive things that we so often become entangled. Part V will reveal some of Satan's more insidious snare tactics against the believer.