

# Discerning the Voice of the Spirit

by Paul Hudson

## Scripture: 1 Cor. 2:9-14

(Greeting).

We are continuing in the series of the Holy Spirit and this morning we'll explore how to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit. There's no such thing as a step-by-step guide to discerning the voice of the Spirit, it has more to do with aligning yourself with God and maintaining that right relationship with Him. So what I have to share is only going to point you in the right direction, it is your daily journey with God that teaches you how to recognize the Spirit's voice.

These days there are multitudes of "spirit" voices seeking attention and offering guidance through life. Horoscopes, Zodiac signs, numerology, tarot cards and the like all purport to offer some kind of spiritual wisdom for guidance. Spirit Mediums are readily available in every city. Just down the road there is a psychic palm-reader where you can learn a thing or two about your life and get some predictions for a price. People pray to their ancestors, believing they can gain some kind of blessing, protection, or advocacy. People look to great spiritual leaders, philosophers, governments, the world's religions, and even science or nature for spiritual guidance. Many people believe their spiritual guidance must come through great spiritual leaders such as Buddha, Muhammed, Vishnu.

I could go on but you can fill in the blanks, there are a multitude of spiritual voices seeking to gain your attention and lead your life. There are so many spiritual voices because people need a voice of

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guidance from outside their physical boundaries. People are desperately seeking a higher, wiser voice for guidance, inspiration, blessing, protection, and wisdom, to the point that a myriad of spirit-type voices have sprung up and crowded the scene from corner to corner, which leaves this question: Which voice is true and not fake? Which voice is real and not counterfeit? Which voice is truly divine and not the imagination of the mind or the deception of a sinister evil? Which voice can be attributed to God?

As followers of Christ, the multitude of spiritual voices do not go away, they only get louder, stronger, and more numerous. So we, as Christians who are to be led by the Holy Spirit, must be able to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit and weed out all other voices. Have you ever peaked at your daily horoscope to see if you might find a glimpse of your future? Have you ever found yourself reading articles from dream interpreters to find the meaning of your recurring dreams instead of seeking God? What I mean by these questions is that we all too often have our ears tuned into the wrong sources for spiritual guidance and because of that, we fail to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit or where He is trying to lead us. We need to learn how to hear the Holy Spirit and recognize when He speaks. So where do we start?

To discern the voice of the Holy Spirit we need to first know who the Holy Spirit is, we need to recognize His role in our relationship with God, and we need to make a daily habit of responding to Him. So, to

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make it short: to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit we need to know who He is, recognize what He does, and respond to Him every day. As I said, this is not a step-by-step guide, but if you are mystified by the Holy Spirit and don't really know how He speaks or how to hear Him, I believe this short message will point you to a deep, meaningful, and incredibly wonderful relationship with the third person of the Trinity.

## Know Who The Holy Spirit Is

To discern the voice of the Holy Spirit we first need to know who He is. Pastor Brian already told us at the start of this series, He is the third person of the Trinity, the third manifestation of God's personal presence. Now, the Bible always refers to the Holy Spirit as a who, not a what, as a someone, not an it. Please always remember this, we refer to the Holy Spirit as a someone, not an it, the Bible never refers to the Holy Spirit as "it;" rather the Bible authors always seem to refer to Him in the masculine sense, as "he."

Pastor Brian has already shared a bit about the nature of the Holy Spirit, so we don't need to go too in-depth, but one very good way to further deepen your understanding about who He is, is to understand what He is not. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal energy force or power. Likewise, He is not a vibe or fuzzy feeling that can be sent to someone else through positive thoughts or a prayer. I hear this phrase a lot, even from Christians, "I'm sending positive energy your way"- first, from a biblical standpoint I don't really know what that means, but most importantly, this is definitely not a biblical way to intercede

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for someone because the Holy Spirit is not some spiritual energy force that we can channel with positive thoughts or good vibes. Also, He is not a third power option in your faith that you only call on when you need a miracle. He is not a magical genie that can make all your dreams come true if you rub him the right way. Further, the Holy Spirit is not merely the essence of God, in the sense of being simply a description of God's nature. Scripture says that God is spirit, meaning He is the invisible God, but the Holy Spirit is beyond a simple description of God's essential nature. He is the personal presence of God revealed to us on this earth, the One who is working to complete God's divine plan in creation today.

Now let's continue looking at a few important notes about who the Holy Spirit is. I already stated that He is a someone, not an it, the third person of the Trinity, the personal presence of God working to complete God's divine plan. In addition, Luke 11:13 tells us that He is a gift from the Father in heaven, "if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" For a long time I didn't really understand this scripture and how Jesus chose to relate the gift of the Holy Spirit to a gift from an earthly father like a fish... I'd think—shouldn't that read "how much more will your Father in heaven give you a great big boat, or four-story mansion... ? No! that's not what it says— He gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask— This scripture implies that the Holy Spirit is a gift far

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more valuable than any other gift you may get or give in this world! In

Acts 2:38 Peter further defines the Holy Spirit as a gift by saying,

“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 Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Unlike the gift of salvation offered by Jesus, which is a gift offered to anyone, the gift of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling is promised only to those who have been saved through faith in Jesus. So here, we need to understand that the Holy Spirit is not given to the unsaved, does not dwell within the unsaved. Can the Holy Spirit work upon or use an unsaved person? Yes He can and He does, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a gift reserved only for those who have been saved, and this indwelling was made possible only since the resurrection of Jesus. We have the full measure of the Spirit within us in a way that was not available to God’s people before Jesus came.

Another key aspect is the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth who glorifies Jesus and does not speak on His own authority- so in other

words, there is perfect divine unity between each person of the Trinity.

Let’s look at this scripture, John 16:13-14, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all 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. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.” People misunderstand the Holy Spirit because they don’t understand this part— you won’t find the

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Holy Spirit any where else but where Jesus is named and glorified.

You will not find fellowship with the Holy Spirit any where else but where Jesus is named and glorified. That statement may upset some people. He is not in Buddha. He is not in Mohammed. He is not in Joseph Smith. He is not found in all of the world's other religions. Fellowship with Him will not be found in science, nature, or wild animals. We do see the evidence of the Holy Spirit's creative work all around us, but you will not find fellowship with the Holy Spirit anywhere else but where Jesus is named and glorified. **The Holy Spirit is exclusive to Jesus and the Father!** Finally—-Pastor Brian has already preached about this so I won't dive into it further—- the Holy Spirit is our Advocate, our Comforter, our Helper, and our Teacher. This is a quick, non-exhaustive look at who the Holy Spirit is- and there is much more to this story, but for now we'll move on to the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

## Recognize The Role Of The Holy Spirit

To discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, we need to recognize His role in our lives. We can't recognize the Holy Spirit's voice unless we know what He is actively doing in our lives, right? If you believe the Holy Spirit is only there to bless you or make you rich, or give you a miracle today, then my friends, you will be led down a path that is far from the voice of the Holy Spirit. People walk away from Christianity every day because of these kinds of unmet expectations and misconceptions- they do not recognize the work of the Holy Spirit and are unable to hear Him speak as a result.

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A minute ago I said that the Holy Spirit is only found where Jesus is named and glorified and that is tied very intimately to His role in the life of the believer. First and foremost, the Holy Spirit's central task is to bring us into complete and perfect fellowship with God the Father through Christ the Son. That is true for the individual believer and for the entire community of his church. We must underline our understanding of the Holy Spirit's role with this — He dwells within us to unite us in perfect fellowship with God the Father through Christ the Son— that is His central task.

With this, He is concerned about the things that keep us from fellowship with the Father and with one another, so He gently guides us through our darkest moments into His light- but we have to let him. He opens our eyes to the truth of the Gospel and He reveals the sin in our hearts so that we may be set apart from the ungodly in this world. He revives and restores the dry, parched, and thirsty soul with refreshing rivers of living water— in John 7:38-39, Jesus said “whoever believes in me... rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” The Holy Spirit fills us and empowers us for service with spiritual gifts so that we can be his witnesses in this world and take part in advancing the mission of Christ's kingdom. Through all of this and more, the Spirit's central role is to unite us in perfect fellowship with God the Father, both as individuals and as a community of believers.

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Further, the Holy Spirit's presence within us is our seal of promise for our salvation. Ephesians 1:13b-14 says "... When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of His glory." Everything He is doing in us today individually and corporately connects to the promise of our eternal home and the fellowship that we will have with our Father and His people in perfection. What we experience with the Holy Spirit today is a foretaste of what is to come.

I cannot emphasize enough that the crux of the Holy Spirit's main task, the focus of his work, is bringing us as individuals and as a community into perfect fellowship with the Father. He is ever working to advance our salvation and finish the work that Jesus started, all the way to the final day. On that final day, the Holy Spirit Himself will resurrect us with the same power that brought Jesus out of the grave. We will rise to our new eternal home where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control will once and for all break the chains of our sinful nature!

Do you hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you yet? 2 Corinthians 3 talks about the life-giving ministry of the Spirit, verse 17 says "Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." The next verse, verse 18 clarifies what true freedom looks like, it says, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate, or "reflect," the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."



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My friends, the Holy Spirit's main task, His underlying purpose, is to bring us to that place of freedom, where we are transformed and brought into perfect fellowship with the Father God, our amazing Creator. Apart from this understanding of the Holy Spirit, you will have a very hard time discerning His voice.

## Conclusion: Respond To The Holy Spirit Daily

I am laying out a road map for hearing the Holy Spirit. To summarize what I've said so far, first you must begin to know who the Holy Spirit is, this will get you started: He is the personal presence of God; the third person of the Trinity; a someone, not an it; the Spirit of Truth; our advocate, comforter, helper and teacher; a gift from heaven who dwells only within the saved, exclusive to Jesus and the Father. In addition, you must recognize and receive the role of the Holy Spirit within you: His chief aim is to unite us in perfect fellowship with God the Father through Christ the Son, both as individuals and as a community of believers. He dwells within us with His life-giving power and seals us with the promise of our eternal inheritance, our salvation. He empowers us with gifts for service so that we may be Christ's witnesses working to build His church and advance His kingdom. He is ever working to transform us into the image of the risen Lord, perfect, holy, and free, until we arrive to our eternal home in heaven, a renewed creation where sin and death are extinct. Finally, my last part of this message, to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, we must respond to Him daily. That is all there is to it.

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Know who the Holy Spirit is and receive His work in you by saying yes— yes to the gentle nudge that takes you one step closer to Jesus and one step further from the sin that traps you. When he is shining his light in the darkest corners of your soul, know that he is not exposing your failures for your shame, he is transforming you, healing you, repairing you, reviving you— **so say yes,** let him do his work, don't resist, don't turn away, don't shut the door— open up and let his masterful hands fix your broken heart. Receive the gifts he has given you as tools to be used for building His church and advancing Christ's kingdom- hold nothing back, let Him show you what this life is really all about. He has given each of you exactly what His church needs and he is calling you, preparing you, and leading you for the purpose of Christ's kingdom. Let him use you- that is where you will find your fulfillment and His guidance— be his vessel, his hands, his feet, his voice, so that the salvation of Jesus Christ will be made known every where you go. Respond to the Holy Spirit, he dwells within you right now if you have made Jesus your Lord— he is speaking to you right now. Let him fill you and let his rivers of living water flow out from within you to everyone around you so that they may be refreshed and revived, that you and those around you might know what it means to live in the life-giving presence of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6:10 says that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, let the Spirit fill the sanctuary of your body, your heart, and set you apart for the sole purpose of life with Christ, where life has true meaning and purpose. Say yes to Him, let Him have his way in you

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every day as he is transforming you, setting you free, and glorifying Christ in and through you. Do this and you will hear his voice with more clarity than you hear your own. Let's pray.