

#7 The Still Small Voice

As noted last week, the Lord moves us prophetically by prompting us in the Spirit with a small voice, an impression, or a vision. He can use other methods as well, but these tend to be the most common. We looked at the use of visions last week. This week and next we will examine “the still small voice.” There are a couple of ways that the small voice can be made manifest in the prophetic ministry of the Church. Let us first examine God speaking to us in our times of personal prayer and meditation.

The best Biblical example of the Lord speaking prophetically with a “still small voice” is in the story of Elijah found in 1 Kings chapter 19. Elijah is fleeing for his life from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Elijah runs for forty days and ultimately comes to Mt. Horeb. There he finds a cave in which to hide. While huddled there in the quiet dark, the Lord speaks to Him and asks, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Elijah tells Him. Then the Lord says:

“Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:11-13) (Read the whole chapter in your Bible.)

It is important to note that the Lord does not give the word immediately to Elijah. He requires the prophet to do something first: “Go...stand.” And, though Elijah has run far from the turmoil of his life there are still distractions that need to be dealt with: wind, earthquake, and fire. But the Lord was not in these. It is when Elijah shows obedience and moves to the entrance of the cave and stands as instructed that the Lord speaks to Him giving him the prophetic word.

The keys here are that Elijah removed himself from the turmoil surrounding his life, coming to a quiet place where he could hear the voice of the Lord. It was there, in that quiet place, that he could be obedient to the Lord’s calling. Our lives are filled with noise and commotion. There are many voices vying for our attention, but it is the Lord’s voice that we need to hear. We need to retreat from the cacophony surrounding our lives and rest in a quiet place, tune into the Lord, and listen.

Coming to a quiet place does not need to be a dramatic, geographic relocation like Elijah’s. What is needed is a time set aside that belongs solely to God--a time, ideally on a regular basis, when we turn off our phones, shut down the TV, internet, radio, and other electronic devices, and spend quality time with God. Even then, there will be distractions and temptations: our own wind, earthquakes, and fire. These will come in the thoughts about things you could be doing, guilt over “wasting time,” or simply a wandering mind, a daydream, or exhaustion overtaking you. In addition, there will be temptations from the devil: “God won’t talk to you. You can’t hear His voice.” etc.

So, what do we do. Set aside a time, and preferably a place, that is uniquely yours for listening to God. Turn off the devices, pick up your Bible, your journal, and a notepad. Sit and get quiet. Ask God to speak. When distracting noises come--the thoughts and temptations--write them on the notepad. You can deal with them later. Pray, talk to God, then listen. If He prompts you to read something from Scripture, go there. If a specific verse, or even a single word, jumps out at you, write it in your journal. Then spend time with that word. Read it over and over. Then recite it out loud repeatedly. Pray. Talk to God about it. Then rest in the word, letting it soak into your spirit. Write in your journal what your impressions of that word are. Listen to what God is saying.

Sometimes this type of encounter with the Lord is simply for you; sometimes it is meant for the whole Church. Share what the Lord speaks with a prayer partner or the clergy and allow the Lord to minister prophetically through this word to the entire congregation for strengthening, encouragement, and comfort for the Body. This is part of the obedience--building up the Body.

Next week we will look at the small voice speaking to us in the context of worship or times of prayer and ministry.