

Voices

Introduction—If you have kids (or maybe this is true with your spouse), they are great at selective listening

- When the words *play games, go to grandma and grandpa's house, or grab a snack* come out of my mouth my kids don't miss a beat
- But when I say things like *clean your room, brush your teeth, or get ready for bed* they act like they never heard me mention such a thing
- They listen to the voice that says what they WANT to hear but they are quick to tune out the voice that tells them what they NEED to hear
- This is part of human nature...we ALL do it (in the home, at work, and even with God)

The Dilemma—We often surround ourselves with people who tell us what we **want** to hear instead of those who tell us what we **need** to hear

The Question—What voices have the greatest influence over your life? Who do you allow to speak into your life?

- The Biblical narrative we are examining may not be as familiar, but it certainly highlights this truth claim and gives us insight into the importance of listening to the **right voices**

I. What's going on in this biblical narrative?

A. Addressing some contextual matters first

1. Chronicles spends a majority of its time highlighting the leadership of those who are part of the Davidic line

- a. Kingdom was united under David and Solomon (ruled all 12 tribes)
- b. The Kingdom divided under Rehoboam (North—Jeroboam, South—Rehoboam)
- c. Chronicles won't examine the kings of the north (all evil) unless their story intertwines with the kings of the south—as in our story today

2. The primary players in this text are two kings: Jehoshaphat (Judah) and Ahab (Israel)

- a. Jehoshaphat was a good king for MOST of his life, but still fell short in leading a true spiritual revival among God's people

³ *The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal.* ⁴ *He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands*

instead of following the evil practices of the kingdom of Israel. ⁵ So the LORD established Jehoshaphat's control over the kingdom of Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so he became very wealthy and highly esteemed. ⁶ He was deeply committed to the ways of the LORD. He removed the pagan shrines and Asherah poles from Judah. 2 Chronicles 17:3-6, NLT

³² Jehoshaphat was a good king, following the ways of his father, Asa. He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight. ³³ During his reign, however, he failed to remove all the pagan shrines, and the people never fully committed themselves to follow the God of their ancestors. 2 Chronicles 20:32-33, NLT

- b. Ahab (and his family) were deemed some of the MOST wicked leaders in all of Israel

³⁰ But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. ³¹ And as though it were not enough to follow the sinful example of Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to bow down in worship of Baal. ³² First Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. ³³ Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him. 1 Kings 16:30-33, NLT

- c. A formal alliance existed between these two kings NOT because they shared the same relationship with Yahweh but because they were connected via marriage

Jehoshaphat enjoyed great riches and high esteem, and he made an alliance with Ahab of Israel by having his son marry Ahab's daughter. 2 Chronicles 18:1, NLT

NOTE—Jehoram (Jehoshaphat's son) married Athaliah (Ahab's daughter)

- d. You can see the writing on the wall already
- e. This formal alliance impacted the leadership of the Davidic line and resulted in a falling away from the Lord

¹⁸ But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the LORD's sight. 2 Kings 8:18, NLT

B. This alliance between two kings brings us to our story

1. Ahab desperately wanted Jehoshaphat, and the entire Southern Kingdom, to join him in attempting to recover Ramoth-gilead (2-3)
2. Jehoshaphat was COMPLETELY on board with this request (v. 3b—similar to Ruth)
3. But Jehoshaphat wanted direction from the Lord FIRST

NOTE—Seeking God’s counsel FIRST in matters that may be unclear should not be downplayed

4. The journey to hear from the Lord began
 - a. Ahab summoned 400 prophets (likely prophets of Baal or Asherah) and inquired about going to war against Ramoth-gilead (5a)
 - b. They promised victory (5b)
 - c. Jehoshaphat was leery of their prophetic wisdom and wanted a prophet of Yahweh to offer direction

⁶ But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not also a prophet of the LORD here? We should ask him the same question.” 2 Chronicles 18:6, NLT

- d. Ahab indicates there is such a prophet named Micaiah but he wasn’t interested in his prophetic wisdom because he usually prophesied trouble against him, but Jehoshaphat wanted to hear what he had to say (7)
- e. Micaiah, after messing with Ahab a little, did indeed prophecy trouble on Ahab (9-24)
- f. Ahab didn’t care for what the prophet had to say, so had him put in prison
- g. Ahab’s death was a mere accident

³³ An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops and hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. “Turn the horses and get me out of here!” Ahab groaned to the driver of the chariot. “I’m badly wounded!” ³⁴ The battle raged all that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans. In the evening, just as the sun was setting, he died. 2 Chronicles 18:33-34, NLT

Point of Emphasis—Ahab surrounded himself with people who told him what he wanted to hear not what he needed to hear, which led to his destruction

II. Several lessons emerge from this unique story in Scripture

A. Listening to the wrong voices may make you feel good in the moment but in the long run it may bring significant damage, harm, and destruction to you and those close to you

1. Stunts our spiritual growth

- a. If we are always being told what we WANT to hear, we won’t be challenged to grow in the areas where we may fall short
- b. Surrounded by voices telling me what I want to hear does not create an atmosphere for spiritual accountability—I may have areas of sin that I’m blinded to, so I need a trusted friend to point out

⁶ Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. Proverbs 27:6, NLT

2. Leads to unwise and unhealthy decisions

- a. King Rehoboam—took council of young and inexperienced, split kingdom
- b. King Ahab—only heard promise of victory from godless prophets, died
- c. We are called to seek out Godly counsel, but we must also do due diligence and ensure that the counsel is congruent with God's Word EVEN if it stretches us and stings a little because our decisions will have corresponding effects

3. Results in unwanted and undesirable consequences

ILL—As parents, we might tell our children “no” not because we want to suck the fun out of their life, but we want God's best for their life BUT if a worldly voice speaks into their life they may encourage them to say “yes” because it's “fun”

B. We need to learn to tune into the right voices even if their speech may sting just a little for the moment because the eternal impact is of greater value

1. We ALL need godly men and women to not only affirm us but offer godly correction when it is needed

- a. I need someone to speak the truth in love and full of much grace to me when I'm missing the mark
- b. I LOVE to be affirmed but constant affirmation without godly correction won't produce godly character
- c. That person may be a spouse, a parent, spiritual mentor, or a close friend
- d. Don't just surround yourself with people who will speak what you WANT to hear but also those who will speak what NEEDS to be heard (i.e. relationship is key here—Paul was good at this)

ILL—Pastor Josh and I have this kind of relationship (affirms but also not afraid to correct when needed)

2. These are the voices we should long to have speak into our lives—voices that both affirm and correct because it produces great spiritual growth and godly fruit

- a. Ahab ONLY sought affirming voices
- b. He turned down voices willing to offer godly instruction
- c. As a result, he suffered spiritually

C. More importantly, we need to learn to tune into the most important voice—God’s voice—and allow Him to shape and transform our lives

1. We must NOT neglect the value of listening when we pray

- a. Sometimes we get so caught up in talking that we don’t leave room for God to speak to our hearts (i.e. Peter on Mt. of Transfiguration)
- b. Many times, God is speaking but we aren’t listening

2. We must train our ears and our hearts to recognize the voice of God

- a. It’s often in the stillness that God speaks (i.e. Elijah), so quiet time is valuable
 - i. Pastor Ty—void of music (worship music can sometimes distract)
 - ii. Discipline of sitting in silence for a period of time to focus my thoughts
 - iii. Get away from the busyness and find time to be still (i.e. Jesus did)
 - iv. Psalm 46:10—Be STILL and know that I am God
- b. We can only recognize the shepherd’s voice if we know the shepherd

³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” John 10:3-5, NLT

- i. Need to spend time daily with the Shepherd to get to know Him
- ii. Time in His presence is essential
- iii. Time in His Word is necessary

3. God is speaking, but are we listening to His voice?

The trouble with nearly everybody who prays is that he says "Amen" and runs away before God has a chance to reply. Listening to God is far more important than giving him your ideas. Frank C. Laubach

Conclusion—Some questions we should seriously consider...

- What voices are we allowing to speak into our life? Voices that affirm only OR voices that will also offer godly correction for our own spiritual benefit? Voices that will tell us not just what I want to hear, but what I need to hear? Those are the people you want speaking into your life!
- Am I a voice that is speaking into someone’s life offering both affirmation and godly accountability (for our kids, spouses, and close friends)?
- Am I in a position to hear the most valuable voice—the voice of God?