



Lesson Overview

Week of March 7

1 Life Need:

Discuss why we need to pay attention when God speaks.

2 Bible Learning:

Discover what God spoke to Moses about the Israelites paying attention.

Suggested Material

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible sheet—God's Faithful Prophets

3 Bible Application:

Identify ways we can pay attention to God speaking to us.

Suggested Material

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—Attention!

4 Life Response:

Stop whatever is keeping us from paying attention to God's voice.

Church/Home Theme:
Revive Us Again,
O Lord!

Lesson Focus:
Pay attention! God still speaks.

Lesson Scripture:
Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Moses: Prophet of Deliverance

God's Mouthpieces—The world is a noisy place filled with screens, phones, talk shows, chat rooms, social media, and so many avenues calling for attention. Nevertheless, God continues to call out for humanity to pay close attention, listen to His voice. He desires for His messages to be heard above all the others. In Old Testament times, the prophets operated as God's mouthpieces. Still, first they needed to hear what the Lord had to say to communicate accurately. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, capturing his attention. He became one of the Father's initial messengers.

Be Careful—The Bible makes it clear: be extremely careful when calling yourself a prophet. If you make bold statements like "God told me to tell you..." these pronouncements should not then be your own opinions or thoughts. The Bible also warns those who make such spiritual declarations with their roots in a false god or philosophy. No one should blurt out personal opinions or statements claiming to represent God without really knowing Him.

Questions to Ask—How can we be sure if what's being heard is definitely from the true and living God? We ask, "Are the prophecies they are proclaiming coming to pass? Do these statements line up with Scripture?" The apostle John adds that a faithful minister of God's Word confesses Jesus came in the flesh and is absolutely the Son of God; a prophet's words will exalt Christ (1 John 2:18-27).

Listen—Daily, God pleads with all human beings, "Please look in My direction and listen to what I have to say." How can we be sure it's His voice? The key is continually asking the Holy Spirit for His counsel and insight about what is being shared.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class, make a poster board or draw on a white board three road signs that say: "Stop," "Detour," and "Slow down, men at work." As your students arrive, ask them to reflect on why these signs are important and what the consequences of us not paying attention to these signs can be. Guide your students in understanding that not following these road signs could not only affect our lives, but the lives of others. Just as it is important to pay attention to road signs, it is important to pay attention to God's voice when He is speaking to us.

Link to Last Week: Invite a few of your students to talk about any new groups of people they or your church have been reaching out to.

1 Life Need

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Moses: Prophet of Deliverance

Melissa plopped in the driver's side of the car and waited for her 15-year-old daughter to close the door. She turned on the car radio, knowing that Janell would put in her earbuds. However, she did not.

What had been preoccupying Melissa's thoughts and prayers for the past two weeks was a job offer that had come quite unsolicited. It was more than twice her pay, and more than 2,000 miles away. Melissa did not know anyone in Los Angeles. In addition, she and her ex-husband (Janell's father) had been talking about reconciliation.

Still, wouldn't Melissa have to be crazy to pass up such a great career move? Crowding in on her frantic thoughts were the words from the radio minister. He was talking about choosing God's way over fame and fortune.

"God will speak to your heart about what He wants you to do," the minister was saying. "God has a plan for you. Do not be swayed by your flesh or the world. Listen to God."

At that moment, Melissa heard the Holy Spirit whisper to her heart to stay where she was and watch Him do a new and glorious thing in her and her family's lives.

"I don't want to go to Los Angeles, Mom," Janell said turning to her mother.

"We're not going, sweetheart," Melissa said. "The Lord just told me to stay put!"

1. What are the means by which God speaks to us today?
2. Why is being sensitive to the Holy Spirit vital in paying attention when God speaks?
3. Why is listening to God essential in our walk with God?

LESSON FOCUS: Pay Attention! God still speaks.

Discuss why we need to pay attention when God speaks.

Read the anecdote in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then form small groups to discuss **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

Question 1 directs your students to reflect on how God speaks to us today. For example, God speaks to us through the Bible, the leading of the Holy Spirit, preaching, and godly counsel. Ask them to compare how God spoke to His people in the Old Testament with how He speaks to us now.

Question 2 provides an opportunity for your students to discuss the importance of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Holy Spirit is the primary means by which God speaks to us. The Spirit gives us understanding of His Word to help us discern God's truth.

Question 3 guides your students to understand that God speaks to us in order to fulfill His will for our lives—which is to ultimately glorify Him in all we do; therefore, we need to pay attention when He speaks. Our full attention is needed in order to grow in our walk with God and obey His will for our lives.

Before you start teaching on the prophets, you will want to read p. 3 in this teacher's guide.

2 Bible Learning

Discover what God spoke to Moses about the Israelites paying attention.



Before you teach this step, put up the poster “God’s Faithful Prophets” from the

Resource Kit and make copies of the handout that goes with it. On the handout, read the first two paragraphs, then point out on the poster the Rembrandt painting of Moses delivering God’s commandments to the people.

THE PROMISE OF A PROPHET

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-16 and highlight these important points in your class discussion:

- In response to the people’s fear of hearing God’s voice directly from the mountaintop, God promised them a prophet to speak God’s commands to them.
- The people were to pay attention and obey God’s words through the prophet.

BIBLE EXTRA

Divination

In the verses preceding this week’s text, Moses warns the people of the “detestable practices” of the Canaanites who currently occupied the land (18:9-14). This list included those who practiced “divination,” seeking information about the future through contact with the spirits of departed people, whom we recognize as demons today.

The Lord strictly prohibited all such attempts to obtain foresight into the future. Instead, God promised to send prophets to His people who would relay His message to them. They could depend on the Lord, rather than pagan fortune-tellers, to reveal His purposes to them.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The Israelites were about to enter the promised land currently inhabited by the Canaanites, who sought insight into the future through mediums and pagan diviners. Rather than follow the “detestable practices” (vs. 12) of seeking revelation in this way, they were to heed the words of the prophets God would send to them. These messengers would provide the understanding they

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The Promise of a Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:15-16, KJV

15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;
16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

Deuteronomy 18:15-16, NIV

¹⁵The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. ¹⁶For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

In contrast to the “fortunetellers” the Israelites would find in the promised land, the Lord promised to raise up prophets from among His people. They would speak for Him, provide needed guidance for the Israelites, and reveal their future as a people.

Moses’ promise of a “prophet like me” in verse 15 finds its ultimate fulfillment in God’s Son. At Pentecost, the apostle Peter recognized Jesus as the prophet that Moses spoke of in this text (Acts 3:22-23). Jesus may also have been thinking of this text when He challenged the Jews of His day with these words: “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:46). Like Moses, Jesus also rose up from among the Israelites and became a mediator representing God to the people, as well as interceding on our behalf to the Father (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Just as the people listened to Moses, so we must listen to the prophet who bridges the gap between us and the Father: the Lord Jesus.

The fire, smoke, and darkness that accompanied God’s presence and voice on the mountain when He gave them the Law terrified the people (Exod. 19:16-20). As a result, they requested that Moses hear God’s message and then relay His words to them (Deut. 5:22-27).

Moses knew his time with the Israelites was coming to



For more commentary on these Scriptures, read pp. 335-336 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

needed to understand the times in which they lived and reveal what they needed to know about the future.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

While the promise of this passage includes future prophets God would send to His people, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of Moses' promise. He is the prophet whom Moses said would be "a prophet like me" (vs. 15). Jesus is the final mediator for all His people (1 Tim. 2:5-6). The Jews of Jesus' day

expected the prophet who would fulfill this promise (John 1:20, 24), but most failed to connect the words of Moses with the Messiah who stood in their midst (John 5:46).

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LISTEN

Read Deuteronomy 18:17-19 and highlight these important points.

- God had heard the people's request to have someone speak on behalf of Him; therefore, He would choose a prophet from among them to speak through.
- The prophet would speak all that

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an end, but that would not signify the end of God revealing truth to His people. To fill this need, the Lord would send other prophets who would speak in the name of the Lord, culminating in Jesus, who would fully reveal the Father to us (John 1:17-18; 14:8-11). Jesus came as the ultimate revelation of God's message to not only the Jewish people, but to all of humanity.

4. Why were Moses' words in Deuteronomy 18:15-16 so timely for the Israelites?

5. Who ultimately fulfilled Moses' promise of a prophet?

The Responsibility to Listen

Deuteronomy 18:17-19, KJV

17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

Deuteronomy 18:17-19, NIV

¹⁷The LORD said to me: "What they say is good.

¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.

¹⁹I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name."

Verse 17 repeats God's granting of the Israelites' appeal for Moses to speak to them on His behalf (see Deut. 5:28). This did not, however, lessen their responsibility to listen to and obey those whom the Lord sent to them.

What the people heard would not be any different than if the Lord spoke directly to them; the prophets would serve as God's mouthpiece. The prophets who rose up from among the people after Moses would speak with the same authority as though the Lord Himself was talking. The Lord revealed

BIBLE EXTRA

A Prophet Like Moses

The words of Moses in the text for this week's lesson foreshadow both the Lord Jesus as well as the office of the prophet that would serve as God's mouthpiece to Israel before the arrival of the Messiah.

Jesus ultimately fulfilled God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses. In Acts 3:22-23, Peter refers to Deuteronomy 18:15 in applying this prophecy to the Lord, "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'"

The Jews in Jesus' day looked for the One who would fulfill Moses' promise of "the Prophet" (see John 1:21). But no one ultimately fulfilled Moses' promise in Deuteronomy 18:15 until Jesus Christ.

This vitally important passage of Scripture prepared the way for the Old Testament prophets. They would serve as God's messengers to the people, calling them to repentance, warning them of judgment, and reminding them of God's promises regarding their future. They would also tell the people of the coming Messiah so they would recognize Him when He came to them.

God commanded him to tell the people.

- The people were to obey everything the prophet told them to do or suffer serious consequences.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

The Lord expected His people to listen to the prophets because their words represented His message to them. The Lord would put His words in the mouths of the prophets, which would make the people responsible to heed their words. Because Jesus spoke the words of the Father to us and revealed Him to us, the necessity of believing the words of Christ extends beyond Israel to all of humanity.

THE TESTS OF A TRUE PROPHET

Read Deuteronomy 18:20-22 and note these important points.

- Moses said that a true prophet's message will come true, while a false prophet's message will not come true.
- Death is the consequence of false prophecy.

BIBLE EXTRA

Hananiah

During the course of his ministry to Judah, Jeremiah encountered a false prophet who contradicted his warnings of judgment for Judah. Jeremiah 28 records the story of Hananiah, who prophesied that within two years God would break Nebuchadnezzar's yoke upon Judah and bring back the "articles of the LORD's house" the Babylonian king had previously taken (28:2-3, 10-11).

Jeremiah responded with the test that comes from the text of our lesson, "But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true" (28:9). Later, the Lord told Jeremiah to confront Hananiah because he had caused "this nation to trust in a lie." He then prophesied Hananiah's death, which happened that same year (28:15-17).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

These verses provide two key tests for determining the genuineness of those who claimed to be prophets. First, they had to speak in the name of the Lord rather than on behalf of another god. Implied in this test would be adherence to what the Lord had already commanded His people. The second test was that of 100 percent accuracy in all of their predictions. Everything they prophesied regarding the future had to happen exactly as they said it would.

His message to them, and they acted as His spokesperson in giving His words to the people.

This was especially true with Jesus; He acknowledged that His teachings came from the Father (John 7:16). The night before His crucifixion, He prayed, "For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me" (John 17:8).

Because the prophets represented the Lord, He expected His people to obey their words and heed their warnings. If God would hold His people accountable for not obeying the words of His prophets, how much more might He do so with those who reject the words of Jesus (see Heb. 2:2-4)?

6. Why did the Lord expect His people to listen to the prophets?

The Tests of a True Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?

22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22, NIV

²⁰"But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death."

²¹You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" ²²If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

After explaining the necessity of listening to a prophet,

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

The people of Israel were to put to death those prophets who spoke in the name of Baal or some other pagan deity. This death sentence included those who encouraged the Israelites to worship other gods (see Deut. 13:1-5). The people would know that those prophets whose message failed the test of accuracy had not come from the Lord. They could ignore their words of warning without fear of the consequences.

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Moses anticipated the question of how they could know if a prophet was speaking for the Lord. The first test consisted of whether or not he claimed to speak in the name of the Lord. The people were to impose a death sentence on anyone who claimed to speak on behalf of another god (see Jer. 23:13).

We know from the later history of Israel that false prophets arose in Israel in the name of the Lord and tried to lead them astray (Jer. 23:23-32). Even if prophets were not as obvious as promoting idolatry, their words might still contradict other commands of God and thus reveal He had not sent them.

Moses gave Israel a second test to discern the genuineness of a prophet. The predictions of one sent from the Lord would happen precisely as predicted. Since many Old Testament prophets foretold the future in their warnings to the people, the people could examine their authenticity based on the accuracy of their predictions. A true prophet would have a perfect record in foretelling the future. A false prophet might get a few things right in his prophecies, but one sent by the Lord as His spokesperson would be 100 percent accurate in all he said about the future.

Prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel prophesied about events in the years and decades ahead of them as well as about events that are still future in our time. Daniel's prophecy concerning Babylon and Belshazzar, for example, came true hours after he informed the king of his impending doom (Dan. 5:24-30). Daniel's prophecies regarding the nations in chapter 2 and 7 came to pass with such accuracy in the centuries after he lived that many critics refuse to believe he wrote them in the sixth century B.C.

Even today, the unfailing accuracy of biblical prophecies verifies Scripture as the Word of God.

7. What were the tests of whether or not a prophet truly spoke for the Lord?

8. What was to be the fate of false prophets?

BIBLE EXTRA

A Son

Jesus is the final fulfillment of the Lord's promise through Moses to send "a prophet like [Moses]" to Israel. Because Jesus fully reveals the Father, we have an even greater responsibility to heed His words. In John 6:40, Jesus said, "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day." Belief in Him equals eternal life.

The author of Hebrews explains the significance of the Son's revelation versus all that came before, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (1:1-2). Jesus spoke words of life; the very words that the Father gave to Him (John 17:8).

Does this mean that only the Gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry matter? No, Jesus promised to continue speaking through His apostles (John 16:12-15). Jesus recognized that before the Cross, His disciples could not understand the full significance of His death and resurrection. The Book of Acts through the Book of Revelation represents the Lord's continuing revelation to His Church.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Listen to Him!

Often our relationship with God is one-sided—we do all the talking through prayer and don't wait and listen to God's voice. There are at least 74 Scripture verses where we are instructed to listen to God's voice. At least another 26 verses instruct us to pay attention to what God has to say, including "Hear now what the LORD is saying" (Micah 6:1, NASB) or "Give ear and hear my voice" (Isa. 28:23, NASB). Other synonyms used for paying attention or listen are "take seriously," "give attention," "take heed," and "be still and listen."

3 Bible Application

Identify ways we can pay attention to God speaking to us.

This lesson step provides your students an opportunity to identify ways that we can make listening to God a priority. Copy this page and give the instructions to each group. Also make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout: 'Attention!'

Read the handout and follow the instructions. After you've completed the handout, share your answers with one another.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Our First Priority" from the student book and respond to **Questions 9, 10, and 11**. Often we spend more time with our televisions, phones, and other electronic devices than we spend with the Lord. Sometimes an hour or two on Sunday morning is all the time the Lord gets from us. We can expand our time with Him by cutting out some of our time spent with things such as TV and phones, which usually are not bringing us "urgent" things to do.

Recognizing God's Voice

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10 and answer the following questions. Although this may be a familiar passage, focus on Samuel's response once he knew it was God calling him.

- Describe methods that God used in those days to speak to His people (vs. 1).
- Why do you think Samuel did not recognize God's voice at first?
- What role did Eli have in helping Samuel to recognize God's voice?
- What was Samuel's response once he knew it was God's voice calling him?

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Our First Priority

Jasmine reached to turn off the alarm, then grabbed her cell phone and started rolling through social media. Meanwhile, her Bible sat on the nightstand unopened. She continually wondered why she kept making wrong decisions in her life. Later that day, while talking to her father, he asked, "When was the last time you let God speak to you through His Word, the Bible?" Jasmine couldn't give a definite answer.

In the evening, when Jasmine returned home, she noticed that she had some emails on her laptop. Jasmine took her laptop to bed, read emails, then watched the latest episode of her favorite TV series. Before she knew it, it was after midnight, and she really needed to get some sleep. Jasmine went another day without taking time to listen to God through His Word.

After Deborah reached to turn off her alarm, she got out of bed and fixed a cup of coffee. With her coffee in one hand and her Bible in the other, she sat at her kitchen table and allowed God to speak to her. She felt refreshed after being assured that God would give her strength to get through her trials at work. She knew that God's grace would be sufficient for her. When she came home from work, Deborah checked her emails, then turned on her laptop to play last week's sermon from her church. Deborah fell asleep meditating on God's message through her pastor's sermon.

Jasmine and Deborah desire to have a close relationship with God, but Deborah's walk with God is growing because she has chosen to make listening to Him her first priority. Jasmine struggles because she's easily distracted by other things. Their hearts are right, but their results are different.

9. *What gets our priority more than spending time with God in our daily lives?*

10. *Is spending time with God a priority in your life? Explain your answer.*

11. *How can we make spending time with God a priority in our lives?*

4 Life Response

Stop whatever is keeping us from paying attention to God's voice.

Your class has discussed and studied the importance of paying attention to God speaking to us in our daily lives. We often know and desire to make paying attention to God's voice a priority, but the world and our flesh interfere. Ask your students to read "Stopping All Static and Interference" in the student book, and make sure they have paper and pencil to answer the questions. Remind them that God desires a two-way conversation with us. He wants to listen to us, but He also desires that

we listen to Him. We must deliberately choose to pay attention when God is speaking to us and get rid of all static and interference.

Close the class by reading aloud Psalm 46:10 and then give the students a few minutes of silent individual prayer time with God concerning what may be keeping them from hearing His voice. Then close in prayer, thanking God that He desires to speak to us and asking Him to show us how to make paying attention to His voice a priority. Encourage your students to set aside specific times in the next week to pay attention to God speaking to them.

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Stopping All Static and Interference

When I am calling family or friends from overseas, there is always difficulty hearing the other person. Sometimes, I even have to hang up and call back to get a clearer reception.

Similarly, we often have difficulty hearing God and need to make adjustments in order to hear Him speak to us. We may have to remove ourselves from a particular location to miss the static of the world over God's voice. Or we may have to hang up and start over to get rid of our roaming thoughts that interfere with us giving God our full attention.

► *What static or interference keeps you from giving God your full attention? What can you do to stop this static or interference the next time you want to pay attention to God's voice?*

KEY VERSE

The LORD will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

—Deuteronomy 18:15, NIV

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.

—Deuteronomy 18:15, KJV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 8 through March 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Hebrews 11:23-31—Rahab Rewarded for Her Faithfulness.
- Tues.** Luke 18:35-42—Jesus Heals Blind Man from Jericho.
- Wed.** Joshua 5:8-12—Enjoying the Manna and Local Produce.
- Thurs.** Joshua 6:6-14—Marching around the City of Jericho.
- Fri.** Joshua 2:15-24—Rahab and Spies Confirm Rescue Plan.
- Sat.** Joshua 6:22-25—Rahab Saved While Jericho Is Destroyed.
- Sun.** Joshua 5:13—6:5, 15-16, 20—Joshua's Successful Conquest of Jericho.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Joshua 5:13—6:5, 15-16, 20. Ask your students to think about what their plans are for the next six months.