

Communicating With God

By Todd Proctor

Todd Proctor:

Jesus once again we just recognize that you are the one who is worthy of our life's tension Lord, who is able to change us in ways that we desire to become, but it's only through you. So we ask that you would reign over this time, reign over our minds and our hearts. As we release our agendas, we release this last hour to you. We ask this in your name Jesus, Amen. Amen. Hey you can have a seat. Well guys let me tell you something. I'm very fascinated right now. Um, this is just a phenomena for me. I was at Biola three years, and I don't; think I ever saw the last session of Torrey. And this is it, thus is what it looks like? Clearly these are the spiritual elite of Biola's campus right here. Well done. So I just feel like we should sit at your feet. I mean, you guys probably have lots more wisdom than I do today, I know you guys have been, uh, poured into a lot. over the last few days. My heads even still spinning from last session and Bryan, and just thinking through even some of what um, God was speaking to my heart through his words and God's truth. Um, guys I as I was so thankful to be invited here, this is always a home community to me, I did go to school here. Um, and I love bringing friends with me. This is Jason Snashdown, Jason's uh recent grad of Biola and stud worship leader that I bribe big time to hangout with me every once in a while. And um this has Ben--yeah Ben's still here. eat you guys know Ben. And this is Matt in the back. And, we uh are just excited to see where God's gonna take us through this last session.

And I can honestly say I'm not sure where it's going to be, because as I was um, paring over what part I could play today, and Ron kind of gave me this ambiguous invitation. Hey, can you lead

worship, you can teach, do a little dance, whatever you want. I thought well Lord, what-what would you want me to do. And I'm banking on the fact that you've heard a lot already. Um, that you've maybe um almost fully absorbed or whatever that looks like for you, and um, I'm also banking on the fact that God's not going to quit speaking beyond this gathering. you know, he speaks powerfully in conferences and chapels, but he speaks way beyond those times. and I know for me, as a proud communication major of Biola university, which in my day meant you have no clue what you really want to do with your life, and that's the most brand one you can find. Is that right? Uh, I have learned an important thing about communication. Not only at Biola, I'm married now, and um, my wife and I are still trying to get this down. But communication is actually this two way process, it's not only somebody speaking, it's someone else listening. Right? And I've perfected many many years ago this great art of being there without really being there. Some of you guys are good at this too. This had to do with me and my dad, and the fact that I had a sister who never did anything wrong, so I just caught all the flack. And so, felt like almost every day my dad would sit me down and just begin this lecture.

After a while this got a little old, so I perfected this deal with my eyes, where I could look like I was paying attention, but I was actually, you know, watching my dad go from one dad to two dad, focus, out of focus, and just these really creative exercises, all the while looking like I was just, you know, enraptured by his great lectures and, and that has carried on through my life, and my relationship with my wife Lisa, where there's times when she's communicating articulately, passionately, um, with great verbosity, that's a word. But it just is not getting through because I can hear her but I'm not listening. And it's one thing to do that to your dad, it's one thing to do that to your wife. That's bad. But it's a whole other thing to do it to God, and to have hearts that

hear him but ultimately aren't really listening to him. And I know you have heard a lot not only this week, but you've heard a lot already this semester. You will hear a lot at Biola university. But um, a question you are always going to have to bring into these times and way beyond these times, just into your personal walk with god is, is my heart really listening or is it just hearing. And this is not, you know, some new phenomena for our time, this is something that really had challenged God's people from the beginning. If you would, I wanted to turn with you to Hebrews real quick. And we'll just check out one instance of this.

Hebrews is a book that is written to Jewish Christians, and um, its really in a sense a wakeup call because these Christian Hebrews have become to drift back into their old traditions, their old ways, and you know there's probably some good reasons for this. One of them was they were being intensely persecuted, but Christ was becoming less and less a reality to them. And um, their faith was showing it and so, the author of Hebrews was really you know, does a wonderful job, just articulating how Christ fits not only within you know the Hebrew faith but really is they key to it all, is the glue and it's supreme over it. But um in Hebrews chapter 13, if we turn there, and then after you've gone there, go to Hebrews chapter 3, because that's actually where we are going to go out of. There we go. Hebrews 3, verse 7, it was a test right there. You know, most of the conferences this summer have been--can attest to this. And it just reminds me there are places that exist outside of California, and this is a conference where it was a camp essentially with a couple thousand teenagers and they the big event of the week where these bible drills, and you sit on seats, and they have teams with matching t-shirts and they sit, you know, like four seats here four seats here, and the seats have sensors on them right, and so they call out something and the people jump up, and it was just this fascinating thing. And it had all to do with knowing your

Bible well, and I have no idea why I said that but it just hit me as I was turning my Bible quickly, um, avoid those things at all cost.

Okay, here we go, Hebrews 3:7, "Today," no I'm sorry let me back that up. "So, as the Holy Spirit says," notice that's not a past tense, that is a present, that is a, the Holy Spirit is saying something to this audience, and I believe the Holy Spirit continues to say to this audience today. "So as the Holy Spirit says, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in rebellion. During the time of testing in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me. And for 40 years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, set their hearts we're always going astray. And they've not known my ways. So I've declared an oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest." And guys, in this passage in even a little further down in verse 15, it quotes again, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts in rebellion. What the author of Hebrews is doing is saying look, your hearts are going a direction that this momentum seems to carry God's people. and it ultimately carries them to a place where you know their eyes were seeing things, their ears were hearing things their hearts just grew calloused to them. And he's trying to awake these Jewish Christians to the fact that don't forget what you've heard, what you've seen, what you've experienced. And what he's actually doing, this is kind of cool, there's a scripture within a scripture. Because this was not a foreign statement to these Hebrews this was part of the worship services, he's-the synagogue, and it's a little snippet of Psalm 95.

So turn to Psalm 95, Psalm 95, I'm pretty sure that is the right one. Psalm 95, it's probably a familiar one, it's a great worship song. It's a feel good, you know, come let us bow down and worship, come let us kneel before the Lord our God our maker. We-for he is our God, we are the

people of His pasture. The flock under his car, that's all from 6 down. But then it turns a corner. And this is a familiar corner now to us, because it says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in Meribah, as you did that day in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me till they had seen what I did. For 40 years I was angry with this generation I said these are people, they are people whose hearts go astray and they have not known my ways. So I have declared on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest." Now that sounds familiar doesn't it? I mean it's verbatim pretty much out of Hebrews, or really it's the other way around, the author of Hebrews quotes this Psalm. And you know the Psalm is really just a path unto worship. And if you look from the top down, it's just a wonderful look at who God is, look how great he is, let's come before him. He is our shepherd, he is our king. But there is a bit of a wake up call even in that approach to God saying, do not let your hearts grow hard. Do not let them get to the place where they hear but they are not listening, they're seeing but they're not reacting.

And not only is this a scripture within a scripture, check this out, there's actually scripture within a scripture within a scripture here. Because you see two code words, and I know two sons of mine, two of my fruit would be very excited about the prospect of code words, alright, 'cause they are all about spies right now. And the code words are Meribah and Masa. And these words are taken from Exodus 17. Now we are not going to turn there, but let me tell you a story that's probably familiar to you. Exodus 17 is really following all these crazy miracles God has done, I mean the plague that swept through Egypt, the people have been ushered across the red sea, and the people um are no sooner there, no sooner have a worship service, and they're already grumbling. And they're hungry, they're discontent. And so God provides this creative cornflake

sort of thing called manna, quail, you know, for the protein lovers, and, guess what happens next. Now they're saying now we're thirsty. And they had water in Egypt, oh if we could only have the Egyptian water, basically is the tone of things. And God allows Moses to do a miracle through water coming out of a rock, but it says they named that place Meribah and Masa, which means testing and grumbling. And it just refers again to a state of heart that these Israelite people have in the wake of all these things God is doing. And I know there's times in my life where I go, man, I would really pay attention to God if he spoke in that way.

You know, I mean, Lord couldn't you part a sea, or at least a swimming pool, or something? Couldn't you--you know I used to do these things growing up, Lord if you would just show me something, then I'd really believe. Then I'd really kind of wake up. And here we see these people the have just been in the midst of these radical movements, that are seeing and hearing things we can only imagine, and guess what happens? Even still their hearts grow calloused and hardened, and generations later this author of *Hers* is saying, guys we are going that way again. That familiar momentum is carrying us to a place where we may hear God, but we really aren't listening. And guy I just wanted to bring that to you today, to say that's us. Thousands of years later, we are people whose uh hearts are going to hear a lot of things over the school year, over our Christian lives, but I'm just convinced that we have a part to play in this, just as communication as I learned through Biola is this great two way process, um sometimes it doesn't matter how God's speaking if our hearts are not postured to listen to him then we are going to be left not only wishing we could hear from God, we are going to be left without our compass in life. I mean when our hearts--our hearts could harden to the Holy Spirit's leading, we are ships without rudders.

And I know if there's a questions, and I pastor a church that has many many many college students that go to it right now, and um it' just amazing how the resounding question seems to be, what's God's will for my life? you know, and that could be attached to a spouse or a career, or a specific relationship, what should I do with this thing. And we are definitely people who want to hear, we sing about it, we talk about it, we even pray about it. Lord would you just speak to me. But today what we want to do with this time, and Jason, and Matt, and Ben and I are just going to, not lead you, but just kind of walk this path with you. We just wanted to have a worship experience that helped posture our hearts towards listening. And um, worship is something we do in response to God, to who he is, to his revelation, past and even in moments like this. But I think sometimes worship, song, just create a backdrop, you know a beautiful backdrop, for the work that God wants to do in us in the moment. And so I want to do something right now, I want to pray a prayer, and we do this every week over services at rock harbor, we call it a prayer release, and it just says, Lord, um, we exchange our agenda for yours. and then we have just a few moments left together, but I want to ask that you would just in faith that God is going to either speak to you here today. Or at least God is going to be honored by you posturing your heart in a way that allows you to be a listener way beyond these walls, way beyond this gym, in this moment.

I'm just going to ask you guys to dive in, and we are just going to go through a few different heart postures that I am going to call you through. Postures that first of all probably most important, I just think they honor God, because if there's one thing we see a lot in the Psalms and Isaiah, and it echoes throughout God's word, it's that sometimes God's people are forced to just

wait on him in positions that are uncomfortable, that are frustrating, but I think that's sometimes where our most powerful worship is offered to God. And so, before he says another word to us, however he chooses to do that, let's just tell him we want to be people whose hearts are really ready to listen. So could you close your eyes.

[Silence]

Todd Proctor:

Before I pray, I just encourage you to begin praying now and would you just release whatever it is that would compete for this time? Distract you, I'm sure some of you have plans that are going to take you way beyond the Biola gym, and you're going to get there pretty quick after this thing let's out. But could you just release that for a few moments today. Release anything else that is just weighing on your heart or mind. For good or for bad.

[Silence]

Todd Proctor:

Lord we know that you are not a God that's concerned nearly as much with outward appearances as you are with what's inside of us, with our hearts. And so right now we just release these few moments together with you and ask that you would help lead our hearts to places that maybe they haven't been in a while. But Lord to at least a place that we're really ready to hear you, ready to listen. We ask this in your name, amen. And guys I want us to suggest three uh through different postures our heart can take together.

[Piano starts playing]

Todd Proctor:

And the first one is for me, um, probably the most challenging, because I think one kind of heart that listens to God is just a quiet heart. And we live in Orange County, where we are esteemed sometimes if we can multitask like cray. You know I, I think last night, I was watching a baseball game, preparing dinner for my kids, planning out this worship set, working on the computer, and on and own, and I can be in a weird sick way proud of that, but I can realize that man, that is not a kind of heart God is going to speak into. And Psalm 131 and the message, is psalmist says I cultivate a quiet heart, and I love that word, I cultivate, because um it suggests work, it doesn't happen instantaneously. You guys ever seen those noise elimination headphones? I actually borrowed, they're kind of expensive I don't think I could afford them, but my friend had a pair and I borrowed them for a plane trip, and they really work, it's pretty cool. I was on a plane with 6 screaming kids around me, which when I was single I was just cursing those parents, and as a parent I just pray for the parents instead, but I slipped these things on and suddenly it's like whoosh, and this white noise, and it's like gone. It's just silence. It's like insta-peace it's amazing. And I wish I had one of those for my heart, my life, but it doesn't work that way. Quietness just takes slowing down, takes work. So we are just going to be quiet for a moment today, and would you just cultivate a quiet heart before God, just slowing down, whatever slowing down looks like. Maybe close your eyes, and I want to sing a song over you. And then we're just going to worship in quietness for a moment.

Sometimes out of obedience we're speaking, just slowing down long enough and deep enough to know what kind of worship God desires. Another posture I know that God just desires our hearts to take is just a posture of brokenness. And that is a word that's probably overused in Christian

circles today. And, there's a lot of applications for it, I think there's just a messed up brokenness, there's a fear and reverence based brokenness before God, where as we see who he is, we just are also painfully aware of who we are. But I think there's also just an ongoing brokenness that he desires of our heart, it's much like you know, play dough. I've become this aficionado of play dough because I've got kids, and one thing that my kids have a bad habit of doing is just leaving play dough in various hidden places in our house, in our couch, and you find some old play dough, guess what, it's not what it used to be right? It's hardened. And dry. And, every once in a while you can kind of resurrect it, but it takes a lot of just breaking down in the right pair of hands. And God desires our lives to be adaptable in his hands, but man sometimes he's got to break through those callouses and keep us in a broken state. So I ask you this morning is that as we just in these heart postures just sing, Lord we just want to be listeners. There's something that needs to break in you, and I would encourage you to close your eyes, it's not a magic formula but man it just helps us to remember again that all that matters right now is you and God.

But maybe even right now that he would just identify in you something that is become calloused, built up in you, that maybe is just us, covering your heart in ways that your heart can't hear, can't listen. And it takes slowing down, it takes being quiet to see sometimes, but in the quietness right now, do you see something like that? And if you do can you just present it to him and say Lord, as a follower of you I've allowed myself to--I've allowed this to um in case my heart in ways that don't allow you to speak to me. Don't give way to your voice speaking in. And I just ask that you would even begin breaking me down and allow me to continue to be broken. Psalm 138, for the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly. The broken. The proud, the put together, he only knows from afar. Psalm 51, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart,

Lord you will not despise. And Lord, we know that these are things that take time, but we just can't presume to think that in 10 minutes that we are just suddenly going to be broken and humbled, but Lord even just a taste. Even just a beginning is what we ask for now. And if there are those hard and calloused places in our hearts would you let them crack, Lord. Show us where those cracks are Lord, so we do not try to hide them or try to somehow patch them up Lord, but just to expose them to you and your work. To give way to being broken. Our lives in your hands Lord. Amen. And man could you sit down?

Again I know uh, this may feel a little awkward just going, okay, Just getting started and we are stopping, but again today I just want to let you not only hear but maybe experience these three postures, and two of them we have already covered, a quiet heart and a broken heart, but guys finally um, the one I really believe is the most important to this God that we are before right now, and been all week that we've talked about servitude to just have a heart that's obedient. And, that sounds so simple but man, all of us want to hear God's will for our lives, like it's a mysterious thing that's going to be unveiled if we put the right combo of prayers and worship songs together, maybe walk the right way one day. And he does reveal it, but there's so much he's already revealed isn't there? I mean there's so much we already know. And I believe a heart that listens to God is walking in what he's already said. You know I have these three kids, these three boys, that I'm really proud of. And my oldest one learned to tie his shoes, quit a while ago, about a year and a half ago and he still comes and checks with me, as though he's got it wrong. And he gets hit right every time now. And every time I have to say yeah, that's right. There's even times where he's tempted just out of that insecurity to let me do it for him, and I don't need to because I taught him, he knows, and now go tie your shoes and live in peace you know, it's,

it's should be a check off the list and it's still a little bit cute now, but if he's 42 years old and he's calling my wife and I up in our retirement home saying Dad can you just check these shoes out one more time for me? That'd be pretty frustrating.

Guys I believe that people seeking God's will, we often come back to God saying, now Lord, what was that again, and is this the right way to do it? And he's saying look, I've spoken clearly on that issue through my word, through maybe this weekend in your life. The counsel of others, the leading of my spirit, walk in it and then I will lead you to even better deeper places. But first you've got to walk in the path I've laid out for you. And that's what I believe maturity in Christ looks like, it's people willing to walk in what they've heard. And as they keep walking they just keep discovering these new depths, they didn't know where--sometimes they're in these holding patterns and maybe you find yourself in a holding pattern today. And we're just going to close by just saying, Lord, not only do we just quiet down here, not only do we just present ourselves broken before you, we want to really resolve to be an obedient people. And would you ask for right now just one last time to come before him and just say Lord, what is it that I know that I'm just not walking in? And I just have confidence that he'll show it to you right now. In fact I see a few of my own right now, just in living color and maybe we could all just say that's where the path of worship is going to lead us today, out of this place--

[Audio cuts out]