

Mark 7:32-37 (NLT)

A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to him, and the people begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man to heal him. Jesus led him away from the crowd so they could be alone. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on his own fingers, he touched the man's tongue. Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly! Jesus told the crowd not to tell anyone, but the more he told them not to, the more they spread the news. They were completely amazed and said again and again, "Everything he does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who cannot speak." – *Ross will read this as the youth act it out*

Let us take a closer look at the seven actions of Jesus in this passage:

- a. He took the man aside by himself, away from the crowd. Being sensitive to the man's needs, Jesus most likely did this so that the deaf stammerer would feel more at ease and would be able to concentrate all his attention on his Healer.
- b. He placed his fingers into the man's ears. As the Great Physician, Jesus knew what the real problem was. The real problem was not that the man could not speak properly. The real problem was that the man could not hear. Think about it; speaking is simply the byproduct of hearing. The ability to speak is evidence of auditory learning. So if you cannot speak, it is most likely because you cannot hear properly. You might be able to mumble words at best, but they will never sound how they are supposed to because you yourself cannot hear what they're supposed to sound like! Take notice the wisdom of Jesus then, to go straight to the root of the issue. If the fruit was muteness or inability to speak properly, then the root was deafness or inability to hear properly. What Jesus did said with his actions was, "Something will be done for your ears first, and I will do it."
- c. He spat on his own fingers, and with a wet finger touched the man's tongue. The meaning was, "Something will be done for your tongue, too... and I will do it." As grotesque as this may sound, this was not the first time Jesus did such a thing. In John 9:6, He is recorded to have spat on the ground, making some mud with his saliva, and rubbing it into a man's eyes in order to cure him of blindness. Absurd, ludicrous, and just plain nasty are the words that come to mind to describe this,

until you understand something about saliva. You see, within saliva, a molecular substance is found that can actually identify a person! We call it 'DNA.' Much like a fingerprint at a crime scene, DNA in saliva can also identify a suspect or a perpetrator! So when Jesus spat on his fingers, I believe He was demonstrating, "I'm now going to put my DNA in you, my Divine Nature Attributed, and this is the very substance of life that's going to heal you!"

d. He looked up to heaven, indicating that his help came from above; in other words, that in prayer he was "taking hold of" his heavenly Father. This prayer-posture aligned Jesus for God's miraculous power to flow through Him once more.

e. He sighed. With him, that is, with the Sympathizing Jesus, this was entirely natural. It showed that he was taking the man's condition to heart. The sorrows of this man were his sorrows. Isaiah 53:4 reveals that Jesus took up our pain and bore our suffering as his own. He never healed anyone half-heartedly. He always put everything he had into his work of mercy, thus revealing the compassionate nature of God, who sympathizes and takes pity on our weaknesses.

f. He said, "Ephphatha!" This, too, was natural for him, for Aramaic was the Jesus' mother tongue. For his non-Jewish readers Mark translates the term, informing them that this means, "Be opened." It probably applied to the entire man: both ears and tongue, both reception and response. The root and the fruit of his issues would now be miraculously and simultaneously healed! At once the man's ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he started to speak distinctly. His ears were opened completely. This happened at the same time. He probably heard the very word Ephphatha as it was being spoken by the Lord. His ears were opened. His tongue was released. More literally, "the bond" —that is, whatever it was that hindered the tongue from functioning properly—all at once came loose, so that suddenly the former mumblor or stammerer was speaking distinctly, clearly.

g. Finally, Jesus quelled the crowd's elated response to the miracle by warning them not to tell anyone. This sounds so backwards, right? I mean, if it was me, I would be so pumped up that I'd probably Facebook Live the story. Hashtags would be created, as I took a selfie with the guy on Instagram. The caption would read, "Behold, the man who was healed through these very fingertips!" It was not so with Jesus... Instead, you see his humility once again, never pointing to himself to draw attention. He wanted all the glory to go to His Father, God. Yet, his attempt to calm them was in vain, as they broadcasted the news all the more, and Jesus' fame among the people spread even more across the countryside.

Much can be gleaned from this incredible passage. But as I studied it, I began to wonder, how many of us have ears that are likewise closed up, not to the voice of people, but to the voice of God? And how many of us have mouths that do not speak properly because of this? You see, it is essential in our walk with God that we learn to comprehend the voice of the One we are following. In fact, it is necessary. Like sheep that have all gone astray, we all have fallen away from God at one time or another. But praise God, our Good Shepherd has made a way for us to hear Him! It is by the gift of the Holy Spirit that we hear the voice of God!

John 16:12 - "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will *guide* you into all the truth."

- Illustration – *Blind Track Race*

There are some who have preached messages with faulty doctrine, claiming that God no longer speaks as he once did to his prophets. They say things like, 'The canon of Scripture is complete, so God no longer speaks to his people in the same way.' But I say that is nonsense, and it goes against the very words of Jesus! Hear what Christ said to the Pharisees, the religious teachers of the Law, in his day.

John 10:1-5, 27-28 (MSG) - "Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are *familiar* with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it... My sheep *recognize* my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them real and eternal life. They are protected from the Destroyer for good. No one can steal them from out of my hand."

Notice that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said that His sheep would be *familiar* with and *recognize* His voice. If you have been born again by putting your faith in Jesus and giving your life to Him, allow me to submit this very key truth to you: It is your **birthright** to hear the voice of your Shepherd. It is your **birthright** to hear the voice of your Heavenly Father. It is your **birthright** to hear the voice of God!

- Illustration – *Oreo the Sheep*

So the question remains... How does God speak? This is a simple question with many answers. God speaks in so many different ways, it's amazing! He is not limited to one or two means of communication as we are. He can speak through your conscience, with a voice sounding similar to your own, or perhaps the voice of an authority figure in your life. He can speak through your parents or grandparents, your boss or even your president, if you can accept it. He can speak through a song on the radio, or a billboard on the roadside. As I have shared before, He even speaks through dreams and visions in the night! Think about it... We sleep approximately one third of our lives. That means by the time you are 60 years old, you will have slept for 20 years! Do you think God could have spoken to you at some point during that time frame? Of course!

God speaks in so many different ways, it's astounding. Our job is simply to detect and distinguish the voice that is speaking to us! I'll say it another way, we must **learn to discern** His voice!

Let us listen to the thoughts of David, the ancient Hebrew writer of the Psalms:

Psalms 139: 17-18 – “How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! If I were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.”

He said God's thoughts towards him were greater in number than the grains of sand on the entire earth... How do you think he came to such a realization? He must have been familiar with and recognized the voice of God!

Don't you think God would like to reveal His numerous thoughts to you as well?

Hear a quote from Carl Jung, prolific writer of the 20th century as we close today:

“Christians often ask why God does not speak to them, as he is believed to have done in former days. When I hear such questions, it always makes me think of the rabbi who asked how it could be that God often showed himself to people in the olden days whereas nowadays nobody ever sees him. The rabbi replied: ‘Nowadays there no longer anybody who can bow low enough.’”

This answer hits the nail on the head. Lord, may we be a people who bow low enough. As we humble ourselves before you, may you open our ears & speak to us. To our own ears we say, “Ephphatha! Be opened!” Amen.