

## Listening, Knowing, and Following Jesus' Voice

*"My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me."* John 10:27

Jesus voice is different than all others. There were times when he spoke with authority. There were other times when he spoke with tenderness. Sometimes people got upset at what he said and they plotted to kill him. The one thing that seems to be true about the voice of Jesus' was that it was unique.

How do we hear His voice? We can be sure that when we read the Bible it is God's voice. Titus 3:16 tells us that every word of the Bible is "inspired". This means it is God-breathed. This way we can be sure he is speaking.

Sometimes God leaves the choice up to us. I worked shortly with a young man who had difficulty making a simple decision. We were on two weeks duty in a rural area. We were going out to visit the Soldiers under my care and we skipped lunch and did not bring any Meals Ready to Eat (MREs). Poor planning on my part. We finally made it to a town that had a few choices for food. I made it clear that I was going to treat him and pay the Bill. He could not decide between Burger King or Denny's. I asked him numerous times where he wanted to eat. It didn't help that I was very hungry. I suggested we go to Denny's. After we sat down I asked him why he found it difficult to make this decision? Did he need a certain diet? His response was, *"I was waiting for God to tell me where to eat."*

For this young man his desire to listen to God was admirable, but his desire was misplaced. God has given us a mind to make decisions. He has given us the freedom of will to choose between two alternatives like Burger King or Denny's. Both choices were God pleasing. **We are not saved by our decisions, but by God's decision.** Sin is greater than our decisions, because we were born in sin before we could make any decision. God is greater than our hearts and when our hearts condemn us God forgives us. 1 John 3 reads, *19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*

How do we follow the Shepherd when we our schedules are interrupted? Maybe I should ask this another way? Have you ever been irritated by someone's need that seems to be placed in the middle of the road of your day? I am talking about someone's true need and not just a want. Could this type of interruption be the voice of the shepherd?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Life Together, The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* wrote, *We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions...When we pass by, like the priest passed by the man who had fallen among thieves, perhaps reading the (his) Bible. When we do that we pass by the visible sign of the Cross raised sideways in our path... Sometimes God's path is a "crooked yet straight path" (Gottfried Arnold). But it is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform a service and that we do not assume that our schedule is our own to manage, but allow it to be arranged by God.* (page 99)

Keep listening, knowing and following Jesus' voice!