

There is a classic scene in a Pink Panther movie where the Clouseau character asks a passer-by, "Excuse me, can you tell me what time it is?" The person stops and says "yes" and continues walking.

Communication is much harder work than we usually think it should be. To be really heard is a privilege, and a rarity. Listening to understand is often replaced by listening while waiting to reply; or worse, to retort. Hearing partially is epidemic in most relationships. All this lack of communication can have significant and lasting consequences.

Unfortunately we are often no better when it comes to listening to God. Listening takes effort. It takes effort to really consider what is being said, and why, and what it means. Understanding is critical before thinking about an appropriate response. In fact a great response is much more likely when we have truly heard. All of this takes time, and remaining silent. Silent but not inactive. Silent but not inattentive.

Reflect on Psalm 62 (ESV). Listen to understand. Sit in silence. Write down what you 'hear'.

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.

² He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

³ How long will all of you attack a man to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?

⁴ They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.

They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Selah

⁵ For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.

⁶ He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

⁷ On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰ Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

¹¹ Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,

¹² and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work.

Communication is necessary in a growing relationship. Hearing only part of what is said can totally change the message. Failing to hear the intent can also dramatically change the response.

A boss might say “Do you think these letters will make it to the client Wednesday if they are in tonight’s mail?” and the subordinate says, “yeah, that would work.” So the boss says “Great” and walks off assuming that both parties agreed that the letters *will be* completed and in tonight’s mail. The subordinate thinks he has agreed that the letters *would reach* the client by Wednesday *should they be in tonight’s mail*, but not that the letters *will be in tonight’s mail*.

There are consequences when miscommunication happens. Questions thought to have been asked never get answered. Actions considered to be agreed upon don’t happen. Frustration builds. Trust can be broken and relationships become distanced.

There are also implications to really hearing and understanding. Trust is built. Relationships grow. Harmony and unity can lead to great intimacy as well as accomplishment.

So too, the difference between hearing and not hearing God’s voice will have grave consequences or eternal implications.

Consider John 5:19-29

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

²⁵ “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Do you hear harsh judgement or passionate invitation? In the context of the whole of scripture and in light of God’s character, his plan of redemption, his suffering and dying on the cross. What do you hear? God has spoken. He continues to speak. Do you really understand?

Complete the task of understanding before deciding on your response. Do respond though. The message of the written word (Bible) and the Living Word (Jesus) requires a response. Begin by hearing what he is saying.