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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Tuning into God's Channel**  
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Today our topic is *Tuning into God's Channel*. What do we mean by that? Does God have a channel? How would we find it? Does God have a channel? How would we find it, if He does? Well, let's see if we can figure it out.

Jesus tells us something about it. It's in John 10:27. He said:

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

So, two things to observe about His statement: *My sheep* – so, He's knows us. And, *hear My voice and they follow Me* – so, we know Him. We recognize His voice and we want to follow Him then. So, here Jesus is talking about our relationship with Him. So, the term I use – *channel* – is only a metaphor for a relationship with God. When we connect to Him, we're in communication with Him.

So, what does Jesus' voice sound like? Do we know it when we hear it? When I was twelve, I would listen to a crystal radio I had made at school. I was in an electronics class. The way it was tuned was by pulling a little rod in and out of a coil inside this little radio. That would change the frequency within the AM band. So, there was no dial you could at. I couldn't go to 1090 on the dial. I just had to go until I would find somebody saying, "The might 1090," which is how they identified themselves. So, I didn't have a dial to look at. I couldn't tune the channel by looking at a dial. But I didn't care about the frequency, because I was looking for a particular program and a man who always spoke on this program. And after listening to him for a number of times, I began to instantly recognize the sound of his voice when I heard it. When I heard his voice, I knew I had dialed into the *World Tomorrow* program.

But Jesus' lesson that He's giving there in the scripture is not about literally knowing someone's voice. It's about recognizing His teachings, His values, who He is, the way He believes and feels

about various issues, and how we're to respond to them. So, there are lots of voices out there, but why would a middle-schooler be interested in this kind of message? Strange, right? This particular man and his program struck a cord with me somehow. It fascinated me. It made sense to me. It seemed, more than anything else, right. It kind of clicked. Now, most of the time, the voices we hear are not the ones we're looking for. But that one was for me. Now, I didn't know that at the time, but what that meant was, God was lifting Satan's deception off of my mind so that I could hear His voice. And that's how I found God – He found me first.

So, how do we find the right one to listen to? I mean, I didn't know that that was going on – that my mind was being opened. I didn't for quite a long time. So, from our side of it, how do we find the right one to listen to? Well, let's start with this scripture – it's in Isaiah 8:20.

**Isaiah 8:20** – *To the teaching and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

So, the testimony that God refers to here is the Bible. The Bible is God's testimony, or instruction, for us about Him, and His ways, and His will. Now, in the New Testament, John told us that God is love. And he also told us that love – God's love – is expressed in His law. Love God and love fellow man. These are the two great commandments, we learned in the Gospels. We're to love fellow man the same way He loves us. So, the law is God's testimony of who He is in His heart. It's how we know Him – know His voice. So, we're talking that intimate part of God that causes Him to love us and everybody.

So, we're talking about how God loves us *individually* and *relationally*. So, how would the law help us with that? Well, I heard about a person once who heard a voice telling him to kill his children. Is that God speaking to that person? No! How do we know that? Because that's not who God is. He would never want us to do that. And we know that, from the law of God, we can read that in the Bible. So, it's all there. So, when it's God's still small voice that we think we hear, we can identify Him because the things He tells us are truthful and never would cause us to violate His law. So, His communication to us is always going to guide us into a deeper obedience to God. That's the difference between God's channel and all the rest. His programming is based on His law, which is about how much He loves us and how we should love Him and others.

Notice this, also, in Hebrews 5, 12 through 14. This is really important to get this. Paul said to the Hebrews (That would be the Jews in the church, not so much the Gentiles, but certainly they were listening in too and could take the point.):

**Hebrews 5:12-14** – *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles – or the revelations – of God – all of them come through the Bible. You have come to need milk, not solid food, for everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age – so here, he's going to tell us what determines spiritual maturity – to*

*those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use – experience, in other words – have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* So, that's one of the identifiers of spiritual maturity.

Now, earlier in this presentation, we delivered the yardstick of good and evil, and that's the law of God. Both good and evil are always around us. The trick is to know the difference. The way you do that is, you hold up the yardstick of the law against it. And that tells us whether it's from God or not.

Okay, with these items put down as a foundation, let's move now to how to listen to God. Most Christians know to pray when they need help – so that's us talking to Him, right? Or, maybe, when we want to praise God, or are thankful, or seek instruction on some area. But there are lots of things that aren't covered in the Bible that we need to make decisions on, right? So, we need God's help for that, so we pray. But do we know how to listen for the answers to our prayers? Or, to understand our own feelings and motives? Or, learn how to overcome our sins? Or, understand God's will in our lives and recognize what good thing God wants us to do next? Right now? Sometimes we don't think about it from that point of view.

So, let's talk about what happens inside us when we listen. It's not about your ears. It's about understanding. You all have heard the equation  $E=MC^2$ . Do you remember the first time you ever looked at Einstein's equation and fully understood what it meant? Neither do I. Because it never happened. So, let's talk about something that's more my speed. We're talking about internal things here. So, the best things I know about internal things are internal things that happened to me. So, I'm going to talk about one of them.

I remember a time, when I was about nine. Our family was in a grocery store – with my parents – and we were in the checkout line. I mean, there's my little brother, Jim, and my mom and my dad. She's up at the cash register, getting her checkbook out, and I saw a Snickers bar there, and I picked it up. Now, I don't remember craving it, or hoping my parents would buy it for me, if they saw me with it. I was just passing time in the boring checkout line, to the best of my memory. But the checker saw me, and he said, "Picking up that candy bar causes me to wonder if you're going to put in your pockets without paying for it." And I looked at him, surprised that I was being addressed. He didn't have a mad look on his face. He was just saying that. Next, he said, "I would have to watch to see what you do while I'm checking out your groceries, making my job harder. And, if you do put it in your pocket, then I would have to call the manager, and tell him I caught a shoplifter. And then, he would have to call the police and you would be in a lot of trouble." Of course, that would have never really happened. He was just teaching me about the seriousness of stealing. "Even if you don't put it in your pocket, it makes me nervous. So, please put it back." My parents stood silently by, letting this kind man deliver a message in a kind of way they couldn't.

So, what was going on in my brain while he was talking. Well, there was some electronic activity occurring in my brain. It connected a number of neurons with a number of other neurons. And a

tiny change in the shape of my brain occurred from that new connection set up that made a network. I made connections that day about handling small merchandise in stores and saw exactly how that might get me in trouble. Now, I wasn't thinking I was stealing it, but for the first time, I realized that it put a checker on alert. It wasn't just about me. So, the connections about "look, but don't touch," and "Thou shalt not steal" were attached at that time to other connections that occurred in my brain while this situation was ongoing. That other connection was: Don't present the appearance of evil. I didn't think it those words. I didn't know the scriptures then, but I got the point – don't make the checker suspicious. Also, I think some connections were made about what makes people nervous – what causes them difficulty.

So, could we call these spiritual connections. Well, I see this event as one way God taught me something about His law, *Thou shalt not steal*. The connections were physical in my brain, but that's not all. We can't explain everything that happens in the human brain by understanding neuro-connectivity. There's more to it. Even the great brain researcher, Daniel Seale said that publicly. So, these new constellations of connection did, however, form a spiritual lesson in my mind. And that's because I also have a human spirit that factors into it. And, into that spirit, Paul said, is written the law of God. You might say, "Well, that wasn't God. That was the grocery clerk." And I might respond, "The Bible says everyone has the law of God written in their hearts. So, maybe He was expressing that." I don't think I was born knowing it was wrong to pick up a Snickers bar in the store, but we're all born with the ability to empathize, to understand the experience of others through our own experience. That's something that's inborn. There's been a lot of research done on that. And experiments with babies...babies are born empathic.

I have another personal example of that. Quite a few years ago now – maybe seven years ago – I was at the Common Faith Network festival site, and the sermon had ended, and I and my three-year-old grandson were slowly managing our way down the very crowded narrow side aisle to the back of the hall. He, of course, was several yards ahead of me – unending energy. Ahead of us, on the left side where the chairs were, was a little girl with her back to us, and face down on her chair, and her head turned toward the aisle and the wall. I didn't know she was there until my grandson, in the most carefree way possible, wheeled up beside her, bent over and put his face down on the chair, his nose almost touching hers. That lasted about two seconds and he was up, motoring down the aisle, ahead of me again.

Now, statements like, treat others as you would like to be treated, or help people who need help, didn't fit. He didn't know any of that yet. He didn't even think about it. It was simply *in* him – a natural connectedness to other people. A lot of that gets covered up by us as we get older, or it goes dormant because of the hard things we go through, but he wasn't one of those kids. He had it pretty good and so he just expressed himself. I'm sure that was also modeled for him by his mother, but it was already there when he was born. God's law is written in his heart – not in Ten Commandments – he didn't know any of them yet – but a much more organic, positive connectedness to other people, and the ability to see somebody who looked like they were in distress, and to come up and be with them – for two seconds.

Okay. So, that's not how a lot of us think about God's law, but that's really what it is. Jesus didn't say, "A new commandment I give you, so here's number eleven." No, He said, "Love each other as I have loved you." That's kind of a blanket thing, isn't it? It's organic, not numerical.

I saw a documentary recently about a bi-polar man. If you know the most extreme end of the bi-polar world, it is *difficult*. He worked in a commercial laundry. It wasn't that he was stupid. It was that he was disabled by what went on in his head. I think he might have lived with his parents. I know that, at times, he was suicidal, and he would have to go to a mental facility for a while to get reoriented – because of his suicidality. He said when this happened, his parents, who were 14 and 15 when he was born.... His dad quit school so he could work to support his girlfriend and his son-to-come. And they had stuck together all those years and found a way to make a living and be together and raise a family. He said when he had to go to the hospital, they would always come to visit him and be very encouraging and positive and loving toward him.

Okay, that's his background. He was also a Philadelphia Phillies baseball fan. And, at that time, the Philadelphia Phillies had not won a baseball championship – the World Series – for 86 years. Phillies fans were loyal, loud, demonstrative. They booed their own team when they would make mistakes and throw trash on the field and so on. But this one year, the team was doing especially good, and mid-season they traded for the best shortstop in baseball. And everybody got really excited about it. The first thing this superstar did – he was a shortstop – was make two errors in every game for a couple of weeks and then go 0 for 17 at bat. Everybody was really discouraged, and going crazy, and the bluebirds were out, and they were throwing more trash on the field, insults at him and cursing him. You get the picture. Now, I'm not sure how this happened, but somehow our bi-polar guy got the attention of the media. (Now this is quite a long time ago. I think they did have baseball on TV at that time, but they didn't have all the social media that we have.) Somebody picked up his story and he had a chance to tell the entire city that the next the superstar came to bat, everyone was to stand up and give him a rousing standing ovation. Somehow, the idea took hold. Signs started appearing, and it just suddenly became clear to everybody, that's what we should do! So, at the next game, when the hero came up, everybody stood up, and clapped, and screamed and yelled support, and help up big signs – positive for him – and in that game, while they were all screaming and hollering for him, he got his first hit as a Philly – a single, but scored a run. Well, the place went wild. On his next at bat, he hit a home run! So that broke the negativity and he started being the best shortstop in baseball again.

So, to me, it was interesting that this man, who had such a hard life, knew to do this empathic thing. He knew what it was to be discouraged – down. He had learned from his loving parents, who had helped him. So, he put those two things together, and he simply applied those two understandings to the superstar, and suddenly knew what would help. And when everybody else heard it, they understood that was right. So, that's, I think, maybe even more amazing. The whole town, when presented with this Godly approach – and that's what that was – we shouldn't call it anything else – instantly understood it. The light went on!

So, let's think about that. Do you think any of the people who saw what happened overlaid that on to their relationship with others – their mate, their children, their friends, fellow workers? There's no way for us to know that. But that would make a bi-polar man God's transmitter, wouldn't it? He'd be the channel that particular day.

So, what I learned from that story is, truth is where you find it. God talked to Balaam through the mouth of a donkey. Right? That's the lesson there. When they were all screaming and hollering for him and trying to encourage him, that was God's love they were practicing in a very real way. Treat others the way you would like to be treated. Isn't it interesting that Philadelphia means brotherly love? We know God loves our ????. I think that when they when they were listening to this bi-polar man, the whole time they were listening to God on His channel.

Now, does God care that much about baseball? I probably don't think He does so much, but He does care about all of us – even the people He's not calling now. And He has written His law into every human heart. It's not that hard. It's right there already. And that law is the grip handle that He uses to connect to us. Peter said that we should live godly so that, when all the people who are doing us wrong – He isn't working with right now – everybody who doesn't know God – comes up in that resurrection at the end – where everybody else comes up after the church – they will remember the bi-polar guy and understand He was one of God's tools to expose them to the love of God in baseball. They'll have that in their memory bank.

God's law is all about relationship. It's love. And I believe that was God talking to me through the checker at the grocery store. And, if that's true, then God has used you and me to talk to other people – if we were tuned into His channel.

So, what's the point? Well, the subject today is listening to God. And what I have learned from all these examples is that God uses many and varied kinds of transmitters. One channel, but different transmitters. So, truth is where you find it. Even the Catholic Church has truth. Now, I say that sarcastically, not toward the Catholic Church, but toward us in the Church of God with a spiritually strangled way of looking at things. I know some Church of God person is out there thinking, "Yeah, but they don't keep the Sabbath, so what they say doesn't count." If you're that person, I don't have time today to explain the spiritual defectiveness of that thought, but don't worry, before you hear the sound of the trumpet, God will give *you* every opportunity to understand it. So, be looking for it when it comes.

Okay, back to our subject, listening to God. Listening to God is not about finding the right antenna or transmitter. It will find us. We can listen to God while we're watching a documentary about the Phillies, or studying our Bible, or watching our grandchild, or during some kind of trial of illness, or financial problems, or whatever, or when we wake up at 3 am with something on our minds – and it seems like, with a lot of people, it's especially at that time of night – or even when we're just listening to a sermon.

Think about the sermons you've heard, and how many times, of all the sermons you've heard, you realized God was talking to you. And yet, I believe, every time we hear a sermon preached, God has something for each one of us in it. But we have to know how to listen to all these channels. Be looking for what's there. If we will do that, He talks to us. He teaches us, from His own heart to ours – through the things that happen in our lives, as well as from the Bible or church services.

Now, I mentioned earlier that God is always talking to us, whether we know it or not. If we don't know He's talking to us, or we're not listening, we're missing out. Have you ever had an experience of hearing something all your life, and then suddenly, you understand it in a new way? I mean, God runs it by us over and over and over again sometimes.

So, I had that happen to me this year when I finally understood more about what Jesus meant when He said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." So, that's God, in my case, putting out there, over and over and over, until I finally got it. He is willing to do that for us. He is patient. He knows we're not good listeners and still loves us. So, we don't have to feel bad about that process. To Him, it's just a process He's using. And since He's way smarter than we are, He always gets His point home. So, we don't have to worry. We just have to try.

So, is there anything we can do about that though? Is there any way we can pick up more of what He's telling us to do? I think that there is. Maybe – staying in the metaphor – spend more time on His channel or listening to His podcasts. I'm thinking specifically about something Paul said repeatedly. His primer on the topic can be Colossians 3:1 through 10. Here's what he said:

**Colossians 3:1-10** – *If then you have been raised with Christ* – okay, have you? Have you been baptized and made a commitment to God and raised to new life? Okay, if you have, then *seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth* – not throwing trash on the field because you're mad at the shortstop, but expressing love to him, like you would like to be treated yourself. Jus makes sense, doesn't it? Live in the kingdom while on the earth by putting your mind on that way of living – those things – being tuned in to the things of God. So, Paul said, "Pray without ceasing" and listening without ceasing. We have to be attuned to what's going on. It says in the Bible that, when we have the Holy Spirit, we have God the Father and Jesus Christ in us. And they connect with our spirit – their Spirit to ours. That's in the Bible. I can show you the scriptures – not going to do it today, because it's already long enough. Let's continue on with what Paul says here. *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* So, when is He going to appear? At the sound of the trumpet, right? And you're going to be resurrected at that time. And you're going to not just appear as you are now, but in glory. You're going to be immortal. You're going to be a member of His own family. So, when God called us and showed us that His Son died for us, we agreed to die for Him. And that's how our life is hidden in Christ. That is, we're

going to Him and His things ahead of everything else in our lives. But, sometimes we have a hard time with that – maybe all the time. But what we’re to do is set our minds on the things above. Set our minds on being resurrected in glory. Set our minds on acting the way Jesus acted when He lived here on earth. He didn’t have any enemies, if it were on His side. He fellowshiped with everybody, and didn’t look down on people. So then Paul continues in verse 5: *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.* So, get rid of that. Jettison that – the part the devil contributes – and focus on the things above. Kill sinful desires. “Crucify those things,” Paul said. Focus on that one good thing God wants us to do next. Wake up thinking that way. “What do You want me to do today?” Wake up looking for it. Let’s read more – verse 7: *In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* That is how our lives are hidden in God – always thinking about what we’re seeing and thinking, and following that law that God has put in our hearts. The law, enumerated in Ten Commandments, yes, but also a much greater application – an overarching application of the law, written organically, in our hearts – to love God with all our heart and to love every one of His children. That’s the law that He’s preaching to us, as well.

So, to focus on the main point today, if we listen for this and what’s going on around us, we will hear God talking us, and it gives the term, *listen up*, a whole new meaning.