

Listen To God –Psalms 46:10 – 24 June 2012

The problem with the church today is not that there is much speaking, but there is very little listening. Our problem, is not that God doesn't want to speak to us, but that we are not often ready to listen to Him. I read something, and let me share this with you. I want to ask you a little question and in order to make it really precise and correct, I wrote it down.

You are driving a bus, and the bus goes east for 12 km, turns south, and goes two kilometers, takes on nine passengers and then turns west and goes, 3 km and now, drops of four passengers, how old is the driver. (Laughter in the congregation). Pastor, what are you asking? I said, how old is the driver. But, pastor, you didn't say anything? I did!

This little question, illustrates the problem of us, of our lives. We often, do not listen well enough. We like to focus on what we like to focus and what is really important, is missed out. You see, when I shared that little paragraph, we got focus, all we get interested in the distance, in the directions, and in the number of people that came on and went off. But the most important statement that is probably this, you are the driver of the bus. So, how old is the driver? Depends on how old you are.

I think, in the whole busyness of transition, of life, of trials in your own life, that's a lot of things to take care of, the distance, the directions, the number of passengers, but don't forget, far more important than resolving the issues, is to reflect what God is saying to me. Let's hear His voice. You see, we often think, God speaks to us, in the spectaculars. When God speaks, He is like out of the burning bush. Well, God can speak to you out of spectaculars. But do you realize today, God often speaks to us also in His still small voice.

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It doesn't occur only, or appear to you only in the earthquakes, or in the whirlwinds. He speaks to us in the still small voice. Realize, that He called young Samuel, not in the busyness of the daytime, but He called Samuel in the quietness of night. And so, I feel at this point of time, we need to realize Psalms 46 where God says "Be still, and know that I am God".

Listening, is key to a growing relationship with Jesus, it is. And so, this period is the time for me to sit down and listen to God. Much goes through my head, but through it all I want to say "Lord, what are you saying to me." And, in my reflections, is the same as the way I think, I preach, God gave me three Ds. Three D's, I want to share with you. Now, I know that, maybe you are concerned about what is going to happen, pray, and will of the Lord to direct us, but this morning, I want to encourage the church to think, spiritually, biblically in all that we are going through. And these three pastoral reflections, I hope, would be a blessing to your heart. God said three D's to me or give me three points I want to share with you and first of all, is the D that stands for devotion.

Devotion-

God is speaking to me about my devotion, about my love, my loyalty. Jason, through this whole transition, who are you really devoted to, where is your love and where is your loyalty, where is your devotion. Who do you really love? You see, when Ian first broke the news to me, I did not rejoice. At least, not immediately. My first response, was one of concern and if I may say, trouble. Because, straight in my mind, my mind works like this, is like a domino effect that came on, thud, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat. I know that when Ian leaves, some will leave with him and together with the some who will leave with him, the some, some will also leave with him. And then, when the some, some, leaves, then, you have the some, some, some, who will leave with the some, some, who leaves with the some who leaves with Ian. (Laughter in the congregation).

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So, I do know, and realize that there would be severe repercussions there go down the life and body of this church. And so, my concern was one of troubles, what will happen. And you say, what's wrong with that pastor, I say, there's really nothing wrong in a sense, that's a natural concern of a shepherd for his flock. Now, if you were in my position, God would likewise give you in the heart to care for the people and I'm sure that would be natural and there's nothing wrong with a genuine, wholesome, concern for the shepherding needs of the people.

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But on reflection, I do know and I know my heart in a sense, that a large part of it may not be genuine concern for the church of Jesus Christ, but maybe, it's an unworthy concern for my church, emphasis, "Mine". I did not say it of course, I was far more experienced and clever to "How can you do this?"

But, I know my heart. The first thing, the Lord allowed me to think in mind reflection is, ", Jason, who do you really love, who do you really serve?"

This is not about the decision Ian made, this is about my own reflections, and what God is saying to me, you see. I sense in me, a selfishness and a pride, that can arise in a time such as this. I am reminded of the lady in the Bible. This lady is a dear lady, a godly lady, she loves Jesus and Jesus loves her. She has seen great things done by Jesus Christ. Most obvious one, was when her brother was so sick and eventually died, that Jesus came into their lives and brought her brother back to life.

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I'm sure by now, you know that I'm talking about this lady named Martha. She has another sister name Mary and a brother named Lazarus. When Jesus would come to Bethany, often times, He would come and stay in their home. Small little house, probably, but they would take care of Jesus and Martha loved Jesus. She sought to make sure things are well done for Jesus. I can imagine, when Jesus comes to the home, she's excited she mops the floor clean, everything up, prepares Jesus' favorite dishes, eagerly, wants to be hospitable to the Lord.

But, she has so much to do, you know, clean the cutlery, utensils, tables and floors and the chicken and the salads and everything, and I can imagine, and the self, just running to and fro, to and fro carrying all the dishes out and accidentally, she trips over the table and one drumstick drops to the ground. And in that moment, that was the last straw that broke the camel's back. She could not take it anymore and she blurted out those words, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve all alone, tell her to help me." These words, as I often say, were not spoken in Shakespearean English, "Lord, do you not care. No, no, no." I don't think that's the way she would have spoken it. It would be one of exasperation and frustration, "Why, Is No One Helping Me?".

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She started off loving Jesus, wanting to serve Jesus, but in the busyness and the hectic schedule she has to fulfill and in all the multitudes of tasks, she has to perform, somehow, her devotion, her loyalty, her love has slowly, but surely shifted from Jesus to herself. Look at the number of times, she has mentions herself. Me, mine, me.

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I see myself, that Martha syndrome, you know. The Lord call me to ministry, when I was 18. That was the day, that year, I trust that the Lord, very soon, after I was led, was convicted and sure that I will give my life to Christ. I knew, I would be called to preach one day and subsequent years I learned that, what does it mean to love Jesus; He said, feed my sheep. And I wanted to enter the pastoral ministry, just for Christ, not for anything else, that is my heart's desire. But you know, in the time such as this, God is saying to me, do you love me more than these. Who are you really loyal, loving to, who are you really devoted to. I started out, wanting to be up your servant of Jesus, but I can so easily become a Martha to be selfish, self-centered and prideful, in my thinking.

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This is a picture of the Taj Mahal. Beautiful, one of seven wonders of this world, isn't it? This magnificent architecture, required 22 years of construction. This 22 years of construction, was the result of the king's devotion and love to his wife. Legend has it, that this was constructed around the body and the corpse of his dear wife. Weeks went by, months went by, years went by and, the king, one day, as he was touring and looking at the construction progress, kicked against a wooden box that was full of dust, that was neglected and he said to the people there, who in the world, would put the box right here. People, men, take it away and throw it, because, he forgot, that was the coffin the casket, in which, his dear wife lay.

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I thought to myself, we are like that you know. We started saying, we want to serve you Lord, you are the center of my life. But often times, in the process of time and busyness, we get focused on the project and forget the Person. You know how Jesus said to the church at Ephesus. I know, you are doctrinally sound, I know you watch for false teachers, I know that you are diligent, but I am somewhat against you because you have left your first love.

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Oh, it's such a subtle, but clear and present danger in our hearts. Who am I really loyal to? I see myself in Martha and the Lord reminded me to learn from the other sister. Her name is Mary, and the Bible says "She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at Jesus's feet and heard His Word." Mary's posture, is a posture of worship, you see that. She sat there, with her eyes fixed on Jesus, it's a posture of worship. And I learned, that it is worship that drives pride and selfishness out. Otherwise, pride and

selfishness will drive worship out. Time alone with God, focusing our eyes on Him. Worship, devotion, God is not here asking us to build Taj Mahals. First and foremost, this is what God desires, that we would worship Him, that we would know Him and out of that worship, there will be fruitful ministry, but it begins first, with the right heart of devotion.

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And in order, to truly worship the Lord, it's not just Sunday mornings, it's a habit of life, it's what we are, the time to be holy as we sing, to take time to be alone with God. We live in a culture where things move so fast and we have no time to stop and ponder and to worship. It was I think, a few days ago, I was somehow, looking at my SMSes and an SMS that was in my phone, a year ago, just came up. Don't ask me how he came up, but it came up and I laughed at it when I saw it, because, this is the SMS, I printed the screen here for you. Basically, it was about the lunch appointment for the pastors and he says, "The leaders of GLCC, for lunch on Tuesday at OCBC, can you invite all the pastors." I said okay. I checked with the pastors, and I replied, "Pastor Chee Keen and Pastor Vic overseas then, Ian's teaching and then I said "Mum, Simon and myself, okay."

I said, when did my mom become one of the pastors." (Laughter in the congregation). Then I thought, Simon, Simon is not in the pastoral staff. Then I looked on, in my SMS, I mean, Pastor Muk and Pastor Sinon. (Laughter in the congregation). Blame it on the iPhone auto correct function. But you see, it was so fast, I never stopped to check and errors can come. I thought to myself, isn't this what life is. We rush, we are quick to reply, we don't really stop and ponder.

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God is saying to me Jason, in the midst of all this, where is your devotion, who is your love, wherein is your loyalty. Mary, has chosen the good portion. It's a choice. It's easy to be caught up with the busyness of life. It's so easy, there are 1001 things to do everyday. But this is a choice we all have to make my dear friends, choice, to hear from your God, choice.

Again, I see, in this time, not just the need for us to resolve but to reflect, to hear what God has to say. Really, I look at it this way. It's not that we need to fix the church, but I need to fix my eyes. I want to encourage you today, maybe you are in a mess, your family is in a mess, your work is a mess, your personal life is a mess. Can I

ask you today, to stop and ponder, "What is God saying to you, what is God saying to me?" Fix my life, fix my job. It begins with fixing my eyes on Jesus Christ.

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I read the book of Psalms, and the book of Psalms, depict a life of adversity. Plenty of trials and plenty of heartaches. But in that adversity, God is working out intimacy. The voice of God is always calling His people, to draw near to Him. Be still, and know that I am God. Listening to God is key to a growing relationship, a loving relationship with Jesus. Be listening, be listening. Just last week, I was with my family in Toa Payoh, we had dinner and again, my wife reminded me, she's my alarm clock, my conscience if you want to put it that way. She reminds me "Jason, you are always on the iPhone", You see, that time I was arranging for meetings lah. Blah, blah, blah, you are always on the iPhone, you are with your son, but you're not communicating with him, you are not listening to him. Are we like this?, Planning your life and God is speaking to us but we are not really listening.

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The first D, I want to share with you this morning, is `therefore, Devotion. In your life, I want to apply it for you, in your life, fix your eyes, not just fix your life, hear Him.

A second D taught me and spoke to me about, these two or three weeks of reflection is Dependence.

Dependence.

Wherein is my dependence, this is the day, we are going to enter a period of uncertainty, I am excited of what I think is going to happen for the next two, three weeks. There seem to be a plan for the young adults, but the youths, I have no plans for at this juncture. I said this candidly with our youths, I share with them the difficulties, I wanted to involve them and engage them and encourage the entire church to look up together and say, let's pray for our youths and ask God to show us how, we have to serve our young people in this church and we want to, we are committed to. But it is a time of great uncertainty, because there is no clear plan as yet. But I hear God saying to me, "Jason, as I have spoken to you to love Me, I also want to speak to you, trust Me." Trust Me, and I think, that's where the Word of God is so precious to my heart. That's why, I enjoy preaching through the book of Romans. I know you guys, sometimes so scared of Romans, wah, so chim ah, so

doctrinal, but let me tell you, it has done something to my soul, it has. Of all the people who have benefited the most, it is probably me because I hear myself and you're forced to hear me. (Laughter in the congregation)

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But I have benefited a great deal, and in a time such as this I rejoice in the Word of God. I don't base it on some clever thinking by men or some oratory of man, I base it on the Word of God. I remember that great verse, Romans 8:28, that all things work together for good to them that love God, all things, pleasant things, unpleasant things, nice things, not so nice things, all things synergize to work together for good. And that this famous quote you remember, by a very famous man, very classy, scholarly statement, you remember that statement, it looks like this, God's good is gooder than our good. (Laughter in the congregation). By the very famous man, Jason Lim.

God's good is gooder than my good. What I think is good is not can it be good enough because God's good is always gooder than my good. What a time for us to trust God, trust Him. Remember also that message, God has a plan, He has a plan. You see, what a mess, why is it that Israel, God's own people would reject Him. It seems like God is out of control. No, He is sovereign and He is sovereignly good. He is, having His plan, working out His plan A, because there is no plan B. His plan A, always works and it would ultimately result in great salvation amongst the multitudes and I say to myself, God, You have a plan. It's okay, I can rest in You, I can trust You.

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One of my basic philosophies as pastor of the church, was preached, five years ago and in the letter I received, the voice article that I received, I look at it in the back page and this is what it looks like and I was reminded of somewhere right there in Matthew, in the middle, Matthew 16, that the builder of the church is Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I will build My church". That's enough for me. I am not the builder, no man is the builder, please, no man can compete with Jesus for this job. He alone has declared "I am the builder." What a promise, what a joy, I can rest in Him, even in uncertain times, because it is not uncertain to Jesus. He will build His church.

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I was with my son, last Saturday, we went to East Coast Park, look at his cheeky face, just that kind of a you look, he doesn't quite know how to pose properly yet, but this is the best I could take. And we were there, building sand castles. He loves to play with the sand and we built sand castles and one thing, was weird to me, is after the towers and blocks were built up, what Shaun would immediately do is to demolish it. He says, demolish, he knows the English word, demolish. He loves the word demolish, he loves to demolish all the things I built up or rather, he also built up. What ever he builds, he demolishes, whatever he builds, he demolishes. I say, why do you do that. He can't give me an answer, but he just wants to do it.

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And I thought to myself, I am so glad, Jesus is not like Shaun. Jesus doesn't build His church to demolish it. I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He's not going to destroy it. I am building My church, trust Me. I am not like your son, I am not going to demolish GLCC, I will continue My work amongst, My people. Trust Me.

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After this time, my son loves to stand in the sea, in the waves. If you stand there, maybe some of you have not been to the beach for quite some time, let me describe to you, when you stand there and the waves come, and the waters retreat, what it does is that it draws away the sand, right. So, when you stand on the beach, you have a funny little feeling that the sand is just ebbing away from you. He loves that. But it is only ankle-deep and I said Shaun, you have got to experience more. So, I say, let's go deeper. He says no!, The scary cat tone that he has, no!!!, I don't want, I don't want. I say, let's go, daddy is going to go with you, don't be scared. I forced him to go deeper, and we were journeying into the waters, not very deep, but we went further on and further on and, he was really, really scared. How do I know, I was holding him, my hand was on his tiny little chest and I could feel his heart pumping away. Wah, he was really, really scared. When we went deeper, the waves came, stronger and it was just about the time, the tide was rising anyway. So, the waves came, blow-by-blow by blow and soon enough, we were so, we were deep enough for the waves to come to hit him, make sound of him spitting out the water). The waves, the water would enter his mouth and he would taste it. He was initially very scared but as he went on, he started to smile, he started to giggle, he started to be really excited and when the ways come, he will be laughing and he was really, really excited about it and after



several waves, he looked up to me and say "Daddy, I love you." (Laughter in the congregation). He was excited about this entire adventure of going deep.

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You know, life is so boring if it is planned out by us. I would stay at the beach, where the water would go up to my ankles. That's it! But, when it is God leading us it's an exciting ride. You know something, He puts His hands to our chests and He feels our heart. He knows, but He is with us, that as the waves of life would come, we will be able to experience His support, His love, His solidarity and will be able to look up and say "Daddy, I love You." Because, I see, it is so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to prove Him, over and over."

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So, God is saying to me, "Jason, love me, don't just fixed the church, fix your eyes. Jason, number two, trust Me." Now, some of you may be concerned, wah, pastor, that means you're going to chobo. (Laughter in the congregation). Trust You, then you can sit back and kiow-ka (colloquial for putting the legs up) then the church is going to work out fine. Not quite. Now, by the way, I need to show you this before I move on. You see the T-shirt, if you think I am cool, look at my dad. (Laughter in the congregation). And he is excited about it. Okay, Move on.

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Does it mean then that as a church we slacken, we trust God and then we say that let's just carry on business as usual, we don't have to do much. Well, didn't you know the birds said, God said he would feed the birds of the field so, I can kiow ka and sleep in my nest. Corrie ten Boom, a lady of faith in the years gone by said "God gave every bird it's food, but he does not throw it into the nest." (Laughter in the congregation). Do you agree with me? I think so. So many of us, may think this allows us to be like the lazy bird. Now, let me say this, when we realize, Jesus is the builder of the church, it prevents your pastor from going crazy, because, stress and worry is not the will of God for any man. So, when He said, I am the builder of the church, it prevents your pastor from going crazy but it doesn't make him lazy, it should not. While we rest in Jesus, we can be confident in Him but we're not to be complacent. God is going to take away the worry, but He is not going to take away the work. The last D, God is saying to me, is Diligence.

Diligence

Trust Me and work for Me. Diligence, especially in a time such as this. There is a group of our brethen, who are excited about God and wants to take new steps of faith to reach new souls. I asked myself, what about us, Gospeliters who are called to belong here, are we going to slacken, no. What a wonderful, positive provocation for us to say, let's serve the Lord with all our hearts diligently.

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You say, what are we going to do pastor, are we just going to run more programs, set up more platforms, run around like a headless chicken, no I don't think so. Come back to the Scriptures, come back to the will of God, be clear about these things. I think, in the church today, that is a great confusion about these two statements. I will build my church, go make disciples. I'll say that again, there is a great confusion about these two statements, I will build my church, go make disciples. Where is the confusion you say, the confusion is we're confused, who said what? Because, today's church, we believe, we will build the church and Jesus will go make disciples. So, we build up our programs, we run things nicer, fancier, we build up a lot of programs and we say, Jesus, please grow this person. Please make this disciple, faithful to You. We have gotten it the wrong way round. Jesus said "I will build My church, don't you worry, don't you stress, but you, go, diligently, make disciples." And this is a command, not just to me, the pastor, but to the church, to you my friends, those who say, are followers of Jesus Christ, this is your ministry, apply yourself, diligently, to disciple making, to reaching the lost, helping a new convert, grow in Jesus, develop their spiritual gifts and their walk with Christ, so that they themselves would be harvest laborers. The church ministry is not just a pulpit ministry. The pulpit ministry is vital, but there is that private ministry, Jesus Himself exemplified.

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He got for Himself, a few good men, invested deeply in them, and they became world changers. Let me say this to you, you may say, pastor, I'm not like Jesus, I cannot minister to 12. All right, can you minister to five? No, it's too hard. Three? No! Two? No! How about one? If every one of us, had the heart of Jesus and apply ourselves, diligently to reaching another, the church would be a different place. What a reminder to us, we're not here to sit and soak and enjoy this present life. We are strangers and pilgrims, we have a mission, we are here to be the salt and the light, we are to diligently go forth and make disciples, every single one of us.

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I'm praying for the church, where the Better Halfers, would be excited about God and about the things of God and would invest their lives, in the next-generation. I'm excited about the young adults, arising and serving the youths, the teens, serving the children and each one of us, reaching the people around us. In the times, such as this, I am reminded of this disciple making necessity. We have a group of brethren, leaving, they are the leaders and what we have left behind is a vacuum. There is a gap, there is a need. And I say to myself, it is just a reminder to us, we have not really be making disciples well enough, otherwise, there should be a consistent leadership pipeline, isn't it?

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You see, leadership development in the body of Christ, is not to be sporadic but it's to be consistent. It is not to be an accident, Wah, Wah, this one leader? I didn't know. It is not to be an accident, is to be intentional. It is a reminder for us, to apply ourselves diligently. And so, my friends, in the midst of this transition, I want us, not to be caught up with all the mechanics of the transition and maybe, in your own life, as you struggle through the struggles, as you are facing trials and difficulties, would you be still and listen to God. Maybe, He saying to you the same thing, "Love Me, love Me, trust Me, grow in Me and then go for Me. Listen to His voice.

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I close with a final illustration. In the 1800s, people communicate not via the Internet or phone signals, they communicate using telegraph and you need morse code operators to click on it, to send out messages and there was a interview process to look for a morse code operator. A group of men were gathered outside an office, waiting for your turn to be interviewed. A young man stepped in, at this time, he's the last to arrive. He sat down together with the rest of the men and after several minutes, he walked up, or he stood up, walked across the room, knocked on the door, opened the door, went in and after about 15 minutes, he came out with a smile on his face, and the employer came out of the room and said to the other men that were gathered in the room, "Gentlemen, thank you for coming, but the interview is over, this young man has gotten the job, you may now be dismissed."

The rest of the young men gathered there were shocked. They say what, we came earlier than him, he was late and we didn't hear, anyone call us to go in. How is it that he could get the job, he was so rude to come in to your room in the first place. The employer said "While he was sitting there, I was sending out the morse code

message, if any man could understand this message, come in and the job would be yours." (Laughter in the congregation) This young man, heard the morse code through the noise, the phones, the typewriters, he heard the message, he got the job.

Life is full of noises, voices, but learn to hear the voice of God, listen to Him, speaking to your life, in all circumstances, Be still and know that He is God. As God spoke to Samuel in the quietness of the night, may God speak to us in the quietness of your soul. Let's bow, for a word of prayer.

Father we thank You today, that You are always ready to speak to Your people. And so often, we have cultivated that ignorance that indifference towards Your voice, caught up with all the do's and don'ts, nuts and bolts, so much, following the footsteps of Martha. Dear God, we pray today that You would speak to us that we may hear Your voice, saying, love Me, trust Me, grow in Me and then go for Me. I pray today that as a church, we go through transitions, that we would fix our eyes on Jesus, because, it's all about Him. May He be supreme, may we see Him do great and mighty things, may our hearts leap with joy, because of who He is. So, dear Lord, speak, O Lord to our hearts, turn our eyes unto Jesus, bless Your Word, bless Your people, we ask and pray all this now in Jesus Name amen, God bless.