



# THE VOICES



## PREVIEW

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## PRAISE

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## PARABLE

You hear all kinds of voices every day. You're walking through a store when you hear the voice on the intercom say, "We are closing in thirty minutes." Or you hear your parent's voice call for you, knowing full well that you forgot to take out the trash. Perhaps you have a significant other who is lavishing compliments on you. Or perhaps you've been listening to the voices of criticism and temptation, of flattery and false opportunity. The point of this lesson is that the voices you allow into your life will either lift you up or crush you.


You may ask, "How can I hear God's voice? How can I distinguish His voice from the voice of the enemy?" When the enemy sees you making a move toward God, he ramps up the volume and shouts lies to intimidate you. (He knows you tend to listen to the loudest voice.) In contrast, the voice of God is a still, small voice. The voice you listen to will propel you to your God-given destiny or to a destiny with the enemy.

## PRESENT

Have someone read Nehemiah 2:10, 19; 4:1–3.

Nehemiah had heard the voice of God telling him to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall. After much negotiation with King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah began his journey with the favor of God and the king. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he discovered the wall was in heaps of rubble and the gates torn down and burned. What was already a hard task was made even harder when certain people in the land began opposing Nehemiah's efforts.

What strikes me is this: Nehemiah did not allow the enemies' harsh words to overpower the word he had heard from God. We can learn from Nehemiah's example that whenever we hear the voice of God and move to obey Him, we will hear several other voices besides God's.



### (1) Doubt / Fear / Peer Pressure

The words of Nehemiah's enemies were hurtful as they mocked and abused the workers verbally. They told them they would never complete the work and they were stupid for believing in Nehemiah. "How can you follow a man like that? He's working you so hard on an impossible task!"

Doubt, fear, and peer pressure are possibly the loudest voices you will ever hear. The reason is the enemy wants to control you. He knows that every person wants to be liked, respected, and acknowledged, but when all of those things are stripped away, we tend to cower before the enemy and give up what we're trying to accomplish for God.

One thing I've seen in this generation is that if a couple of influencers are doing something, the masses soon follow. New words are generated, and that's how we know about memes and GIFs and dances from Tik Tok. It's easier to go along with the loudest voices than it is to stand against them. Nehemiah had to make a stand regardless of how difficult and uncomfortable it was. The voice of God was greater in his life than the voices of doubt, fear, hate, and peer pressure.

### (2) Your Past

Have someone read Ezra 3:12.

The mission of the Jews who returned under Ezra was to rebuild the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. After the foundation was completed, they held a great celebration with musical instruments and singers. Their shouts of praise and joy were so loud that the voices of the younger people, who had never seen the former Temple, couldn't be distinguished from the voices of the older people, who were suffering grief and anguish because they knew this new Temple would never be as great as Solomon's Temple. All they could think about was how things used to be.

The voice of your past can be one of the toughest to overcome. Maybe your past is pulling on you right now—the mistakes; the hurt; the pain; the hang-ups. "You're not good enough. You've thought these thoughts; you've said those things; you've done these things; you've looked at this; you won't ever go back to do this or that for God." Only when you allow the voice of God in do you remember your past is as far from you as the East is from the West.

## PRACTICE

### 3) The Voice of Triumph.

Have someone read Ezra 3:12.

The Hebrew word in this verse for "shout" is the same word used to describe what happened in 1 Samuel 4:5 (NLT): "When all the Israelites saw the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD coming into the camp, their shout of joy was so loud it made the ground shake!" It was the voice of triumph! There are some things in your life that will only be freed by the shout of triumph—so loud it can cause the ground to shake.

The shouts at the dedication of the Temple foundation were "heard afar off" (Ezra 3:13). Your voice of triumph won't echo throughout eternity and time unless you realize that while it may seem like there's no way to lift up your voice, you have to! When you get over the doubt, the fear, the peer pressure, and the past, the next voice everyone around you ought to hear is the voice of triumph!

## PRAYER

God, thank You that I can hear Your voice above the voices of my enemies. Thank You for using my pastor and my spiritual authorities to speak into my life. Thank You for enabling me to shout with the voice of triumph in the face of my enemy.

## PLUS

What voices are you listening to? Are they positive voices or negative voices? Do they point you to God or away from God?