

A Voice You Can Trust

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Filter 6: Is this turbulence in my life God's way of getting me to listen?

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (Heb 12-NIV)

One of the sweet families from our church in Washington, at Marysville First Assembly, was from Shri Lanka. And Indian culture off the coast of South India. Desi Smythe and Curry Smythe, on Thanksgiving would often open their restaurant, The Village Inn for Thanksgiving to the needy. They would provide free dinner to those who had no place to go, those who were facing financial challenges, and those who just wanted a free thanksgiving dinner with some friends. About a month after Thanksgiving, on Dec 26, 2004, the 3rd largest earthquake ever recorded by a seismograph occurred in the Indian Ocean near Desi family home in Shri Lanka.

Desi and Curry were in Shri Lanka for Christmas that year and told me weeks later of the Tsunami disaster that hit her island the day after Christmas. She and her family, like so many, were at the beach when the massive wave washed ashore. As they retreated to a nearby hotel balcony's rescuing them like Noah's Ark, they could see the effects of the wave as it washed past them on the street below destroying everything in its wake.

The energy from the earthquake deep below the earth's surface produced the equivalent of 23,000 Hiroshima type hydrogen bombs.

The earthquake registered 9.1 on the Richter scale, and from it waves reaching over 100 feet in height, traveling at over 500 miles an hour and hit land with a radius effect of over 3000 miles. This deadly Tsunami claimed over 227,898 lives, making it the deadliest Tsunami in history. (Whisper, pg 95).

One group of people living in the path of the Tsunami survived without a single death. The **Moken are an Austronesian ethnic group** that lived as a nomadic sea-based culture. They live on the open sea from birth to death. Their handcrafted boats are called a *kabang*, and they function as floating houseboats for the sea faring gypsies.

Moken children learn to swim before they can walk. Their eyesight under water is significantly better than us landlubbers. And as Mark Batterson tells us, if there was an underwater, breath-holding contest, there would be no contest.

The Moken ability to hold their breath underwater, is synonymous with Patrick Mahomes fans who have to hold their breath for long periods of times, as #15 scrambles in the backfield, then tosses a game winning touchdown past the unsuspecting 49ers defensive backs, for a game winning touchdown.

We can only hope and pray!

Moken children and Mahomes fans can both hold their breath for long periods of time.

Now, back to the point I am making, it wasn't the holding of their breath for long periods of time that saved the Mokens from the Tsunami.

What saved them was their **love** for the ocean, **communication** with the ocean and **intimacy** with the ocean.

We too are saved each day from life's terrible turbulence because of our love for the Father, communication with the Father and our intimacy with the Father.

The Mokens know the mood and motion of the ocean. Moken's read ocean waves like Andy Reid, reads defenses.

On the day of the earthquake an amateur photographer from Bangkok was filming the Moken off the coast of Thailand. The Moken people became

concerned with what they sensed, what they perceived, what they were intuitively reading as the **ocean began to speak to them.**

The ocean began to recede, and the Mokens began to cry.

Birds stopped chirping.

Wildlife on the nearby land had gone silent.

Elephants were headed for higher ground.

And Dolphins were swimming further out to sea.

What did the Moken's do? Those who were near the coast of Thailand, beached their boats and immediately ran for the highest possible elevation. Those out to sea, sailed further, out to sea.

The waves, the birds, the elephants, the dolphins, were all speaking to the Mokens and this sea-loving and ocean listening people group survived.

God has been creating worldwide turbulence, so the world will listen to him. Wars. Economics. Upheavals. Global Contagions.

The Moken illustration reminds us, God is speaking, not only with words from the sea, but also with words from the Father. And one of God's languages today **is caution, and warning**, I am shaking the earth. And everything that is not secured in me, will be destroyed.

When you listen to the news, you see a world that is collapsing. Wars in the Middle East. Storms in the west. Famines in Africa. And unrestrained virus in Asia. Drugs crossing borders. And sexual perversion ideology infiltrating schools, military, and politics.

A Tsunami like effect is forming in the atmosphere, physically and spiritually. And God does not want his people to be ignorant. He wants us to look closely at the signs, **at the turbulence that is forming.**

God wants his people to get our heads out of the social media sand and get our heads into the bible. God wants us to make investments in his kingdom work in the earth, and not just investments for an earthly retirement.

Rather than getting mad at God, because of turbulence, you ought to declare, “Lord, your servant is listening.”

All around us, it looks like chaos is out of control. And daily the prophetic pundits at best can offer the phrase, “**I think.**”

Human opinion trying to make sense of the senseless. A culture in chaos. But God offers his church, followers of Christ, **like the Moken’s the ability to read the sea, and read the Spirit.**

You may be facing your own chaos. Not just national and global, but your life is walking through personal chaos. Sickness has entered your body. Finances have disappeared from your bank account. And Tsunami like marital conflict threatens to tear your marriage apart.

The only hope for making sense of what you experience personally and collectively as a people on this planet, is to **listen for** and **receive a word** from God. Our confidence is in God’s word, and God’s spoken word to each of us. Don’t make the mistake of listening to the wrong voices, to the wrong whispers, to the wrong promptings.

God’s Voice is a Voice you can trust.

(1) Some will outright reject what God has to offer, that is a risk I am willing to take. Because I am only responsible to God, for offering you the truth of his word.

(2) For others it is risky to tell you how God rolls, you will hear it but not like it. You won’t reject it; you just won’t like it.

(3) But, for most of us at Bethel, on-line worshippers of God and in the house worshippers of God, we are in the last category, Speak Lord, your servant is listening. Who is in that camp? Who wants to hear a word from heaven?

My goal is not to win friends, and influence people, it is to give you God’s word. God’s principles. God’s purposes.

God's eternal and never changing perspective. God is telling us through the writer to the Hebrews do not look at things that are seen, we look at things that are unseen.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor 4:18-NIV)

If the Mokens had looked at the scene, a big 100-foot wave, they would have drawn. Instead, they looked for that which was unseen. **Elephants hoofing. Dolphins diving. Birds being totally silent.**

If you can see it. Taste it. Feel it. It is not where you are supposed to start. If you start with the reality of your 5 senses, you will miss the invisible. You will miss eternal. You will miss the supernatural.

When you start in the wrong place, you will end up in the wrong place.

If all you see is what there is to be seen, then you will never see what there is, that is the unseen.

We don't start with what is seen. God says we start with the unseen. Look at this verse in *Heb 1:1. Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we **do not see.** (NIV)*

So much of faith, and especially our future joy of heaven is accomplished by asking God to help you see the unseen.

By faith Joseph, when his end of was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites. (Hebrews 11:22-NIV)

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child. (Hebrews 11:23-NIV)

Here is some modern-day vernacular, which paints an even clearer picture. The life that God blesses starts in the invisible and goes to the visible. Starts in the eternal and then features the temporal. Lives for the fruit of the supernatural but learns manage activity daily in the natural.

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. (Heb 11:1-2-NIV)

When I start with the unseen, I don't have to start with, "I think," or "I wonder," or "maybe this or that." When I start with God, I have assurance, confidence and steadfastness God is in charge and God is speaking. I don't start with I feel, I prefer, or I wish upon a star or in a distant galaxy far away. My confidence is in A Voice I Can Trust. Is this yours? What about you?

I have a sure word. I have an eternal word. This does not come from your thoughts, perspective, and hints, this comes from the word of God. And certainly not from the news. It comes from your Bible.

In Hebrews 12, the author reminds us, ²⁵ *See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?*

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (Heb 12-NIV)*

This biblical verse expresses the idea and conviction, God is still speaking. And he plans to remove those things which can be shaken. Those parts of a person's life that are not rooted, anchored, or tethered to Jesus Christ.

God is trying to shake up something in the physical, so He can transform you in the spiritual.

God is shaking up something in the physical of your life right now using- sickness, unemployment, a winter storm, a grumpy neighbor, disability, debt, depression and even death, so he can transform you in the spiritual. It doesn't matter how many years, you have served God, this seldom gets any easier. Perhaps, a couple biblical examples will remind us of this truth.

What if Noah had ignored the weather forecast? (Gen 6:13-14)

If Noah had ignored God speaking, he and his family would have died in the flood, and human history as we know it would have ended right there.

What if Moses had walked right past a burning bush? (Ex 3:4-7)

If Moses had not been listening and kept on walking right past the burning bush when God spoke, God's people would have never made it to the Promised Land.

What if the Wise Men had missed what the stars were saying? (Matt 2:1-2)

If the wiseman had not been reading the stars, following a star, or even asking Herod about a star, Jesus would not have had gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

All of these signs from God, had to be interpreted by Noah, Moses and the Magi. And there is a theological art to interpreting signs from God. God wants to teach you how to read signs, not read into signs.

God wants you to learn to read them, and this happens when you realize the sign is really, just a voice you can trust.

But a word of caution. There are a lot of signs, which are not from God. Horoscopes. Tarot cards. Palm reading. Witchcraft. All of these signs and so many more, are nothing but forms of divination, and will result in false signs. Trusting a cross, instead of who died on a cross. Leaning a bracelet instead of the bible verse, on the bracelet.

Oh, one more, don't make your big decisions based on fortune cookies. God wants you to learn to read signs, the way you read scripture, as Mark Batterson reminds us.

God expects you to start moving in the general direction of faith.

God is going to speak to you somewhere between here and there. As you start pouring water, it will become wine.

⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." (John 2-NIV)

As you start walking toward the health czar, leprosy becomes healed bodies.

When he saw them, he said, *“Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. (Luke 17:14-NIV)*

Keep collecting water pots and keep walking toward the medical clinic. Would you have bought that answer? God is saying, you trust me with your faith and collect water and walk toward the priest, and I will intervene. I will give you a sign.

It is faith along the way!

The God who opens and closes doors in the Word, opens and closes doors in Wichita. In Rev 3, experience what an open and closed door really is. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. (Rev 3:7-NIV)

Do you have a check in your spirit? Is there an absence of peace? This is God’s red light. Wait patiently for the light to turn green. No sneaking through the red light when no one is around. Don’t make excuses, the light must be broken. Oh, this is an emergency.

God closes doors to protect us. God closes doors to redirect us.

Keep those insights in mind, I will circle back around in a minute. One last truth about how God speaks to us.

God loves the element of surprise.

It is so easy to read the bible with low expectations. Is it just a history book, or is it miraculous, alive, and speaking? Do you read the bible, believing the lie, God has stopped doing miracles? Healings? Speaking?

He is the same, yesterday, and forever. In fact, Jesus told us, hang on to your hat, God tells us we will do even greater things.

¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12-NIV)

Do we need to hear God's voice today? Yes.

Do we need a miracle of provision? Yes.

Do you need a sign for clarity? Yes.

Do you need to open a door? Yes.

And finally, do you want God to surprise you as in ancient times?

God always shows up at the right time and in the right place. God's timing is nothing less than miraculous. Unpredictable. Impeccable.

He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters." (Luke 22:10-NIV)

It is easy to glance right over this. This sounds like a youth-group scavenger hunt to me. And my favorite, it left Peter shaking his head for a long time.

... go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours. (Matt 17:27-NIV)

This has to be one of the most amazing sets of instructions in scripture. Maybe, Peter needed to hear it twice, is Jesus really asking me to go fishing? Peter had caught a lot of fish over the years, this fish with a coin in its mouth, was one for the ages.

What are the odds? What are the chances?

God loves to blow our minds. God will not be figured out or become predictable. God often throws curve balls. God loves to surprise us when we least expect it.

When we trust in our skills, health, money we often find ourselves needing God less. Jesus could have provided for Peter's tax debt in a more conventional manner. But that provision from Jesus would not have stood out.

So, let me summarize the final filter: Filter 6: Is this turbulence in my life God's way of getting me to listen?

I am not sure which is more of surprising and what produces more turbulence on the way to hearing God speak. A talking donkey or a fish that is used as a safety deposit box holding coins.