

Following the Voice of Jesus

by Michael Koulianos

Michael Koulianos teaches on the importance of discerning and following the voice of Jesus through scripture, humility, and community support.

Duration: 41:47

Scripture: Proverbs 13:13

Topics: "Jesus", "Hearing God's Voice", "Humility in Discipleship"

Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the importance of discerning and following the voice of Jesus, urging believers to seek wisdom and guidance from Scripture while being open to correction and advice from others. He highlights that true discipleship involves a willingness to be uncomfortable and to confront our own motives, as well as the necessity of humility in our walk with God. Koulianos warns against the dangers of emotional decision-making and encourages the congregation to cultivate a community that values godly counsel and accountability, ultimately leading to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Transcript

Hallelujah. Well, we're gonna continue with the teaching on the voice of the shepherd. Take your Bibles, if you would, to Proverbs chapter 13.

I think this is where we ended last week. And I'm just gonna go through verses 16, verses 18. And then I'm actually gonna, actually, I'm gonna begin with Proverbs 13, 13 through 15.

And then I'm gonna take a minute to expound on that. And then we'll go through verses 16 and 18. All right.

People who despise advice, this is Proverbs 13, 13 through 15 are asking for trouble. And those who respect the command will succeed. The instruction of the wise, listen to this, is like a life-giving fountain.

And those who accept it, avoid the snares of death, a person with good sense is respected. A treacherous person is headed for destruction. So again, something I would love to see our church, certainly, and certainly our camp at large, I want them to begin, I want all of us to begin learning how to hear the Lord, how to determine His voice, how to follow Him, following His voice, which is a huge portion of being a disciple of Jesus, and understand how to put, this is a weak word, how to put this recipe together to consistently hear the Lord's voice.

And I think what we're really good at in charismatic, in the charismatic community is getting a word from somebody else, maybe a dream, a sense in our heart, and I'm not discounting any of those, to be honest with you, because my life has been radically impacted by having dreams that I know are from the Lord or God speaking to people to give me a message that He had for me or a deep sense in my heart. I'm not discounting all that. All I'm trying to teach you is how to put all of that together to walk in the assurance that you've heard from the Lord.

And areas I think we could get better at, in fact, I know we could, is what does the Bible say? What does the scripture teach? So recently I was on the phone with someone begging them to hear the Lord properly. And to be honest with you, turn away from decisions they were making. And I read about seven passages to the person.

And when I read the passages, I said, look, forget about my opinion. I'm gonna read these passages to you. And literally, these people have been in the kingdom probably since they were kids.

I said, we love Jesus, right? Yes, we love Jesus. Okay, we love the word of God, right? Yes. Is the word of God non-negotiable? Yes.

Okay, so forget about what Michael has to say. I'm gonna read the Bible to you. And so I read about six to seven verses, maybe more, maybe 10.

And by the end of it, the sweet person who I love was like, I know, but that sort of thing is what destroys people's ability to hear the Lord. Because the Lord's voice is much like a scalpel that brings a death to self that is needed if we're to carry God's glory in his perfect destiny. It's actually resting in the command, this holy knife, this holy sword, the word of God.

That yes, there's a war against the devil, but it also, as the scripture says, divides bone and marrow and the intentions of the heart. And we'll get to that later. But the scripture actually says that the word of God is sharp, it's active, it divides.

It divides even bone and marrow. And speaking of dividing the intentions of the heart, it has this ability to begin reading us and revealing to us what our true motives are. And in the command of scripture, God begins to reveal what's really going on inside of us.

And that's where we get to motive, why we do what we do. Why are we, are we really willing to obey the Lord at all costs? And so when I read Proverbs 13, I want you to understand that this is, it's one ingredient in this massive pie of hearing and determining the Lord's voice. Okay, now let's go to verse 16.

Wise people think before they act. You'd say that is a super, why are you even reading that? That's common sense. It's so much less common than you could ever imagine.

I promise you. All of you are saying, amen. Look at the person next to you and say, amen.

Okay, the next portion of the verse. Fools do not, listen, and they brag about their foolishness. Have you ever heard anyone make a really dumb decision and brag about it? I have.

And because the way you accomplish that is by surrounding yourself with a company of people who consistently make bad decisions. So they actually become a tribe that you can share your testimonies with that are rooted in disobedience. And they'll actually spiritualize it.

You wanna hang out with people who have consistently hit the mark regarding God's voice. You'll gain a value for his voice and you'll learn to hear his voice as you watch them. And that's the beauty of hanging out with people who are burning for Jesus.

Now look, wise people, verse 16, do not think before they act. And this is where the devil comes to steal, kill and destroy, right here. He waits until we're wiped out, emotional and exhausted.

I'm telling you, it's the pattern of his approach to Jesus. He comes to the Lord and tempts him in the middle of his fast. He's in the wilderness, the Lord is physically tired and the devil comes with three temptations.

And by the end of it, he actually has the audacity to ask the son of God to worship him. When Jesus created him, he didn't create Satan. He created Lucifer and it was the devil's choice, I should say, to become satanic.

You know what I mean by that? But prior to that, Lucifer was the anointed cherub, the scripture says, that covered. He was heaven's worship leader. He had really an amazing ministry.

If you read the text and very carefully, you'll see that he was an amazing being. He was constructed with timbrels and pipes and literally was like a moving instrument. And then through really that desire to be God, that is the spirit of Babylon, the desire to be worshiped, the desire to take the highest place, he's thrown out of heaven and then is judged.

And that's where we see Satan's activity and really the arrival of the satanic heart. So all that to say is when does the devil come to Jesus when he's tired and worn out? We see it again in this war in the Lord's heart, in Gethsemane, when he's sweating drops of blood, there's this war over his will. Jesus says that when a devil is cast out, that he comes back at a more opportune time.

This is in the gospel of Matthew, bringing seven more who are stronger than him. And what is the opportune time? There are a few components there, but the one I wanna touch on here is when you're super emotional in a negative way, because we're emotional beings. I'm not discounting that.

When you are emotional, write these down, tired, here's a great one, offended, alone, I'm pausing so you can write, okay? And then here's another one, prayerless. Okay, so prayerlessness will open the door to fleshly activity and fleshly decisions in our minds, which gives birth, if you stick with that prayerlessness, and you actually yield and commit to those fleshly thoughts, that's what the Bible teaches, that they start in the heart and eventually are manifested in the body. And that becomes habit.

Those habits become strongholds. And now slowly but surely, you become numb to the voice of God and you start missing the mark as a habit. What I mean by missing the mark, not regarding your salvation, regarding your ability to hear and discern in transition.

So missing God's voice actually becomes the norm. Okay, so prayerlessness is a massive trap. Prior to prayerlessness, I mentioned being alone.

Okay, say this out loud. God's destiny rests in the heart of God and in my brothers and sisters. Okay, say this out loud.

I need brothers and sisters in the Lord. You better be saying it. I'm telling you right now, Carla's gonna get so mad.

God's destiny, I don't even know what I said first, but let me say it a better way. God's destiny for me rests in his heart and in my brothers and sisters. Now say this, I need my brothers and sisters to fulfill the will of God in my life.

Now you're probably saying, Michael, but you wrote the Jesus book and you told us that loving Jesus is all I need to do and that spending time with him is number one. It is, it is absolutely number one. There's no doubt about it, but eventually you're going to have to interact with people all right, and what God is trying to craft in you is not necessarily limited to more time in your prayer closet, though he wants more time, but the ultimate goal is what I shared with you last week, which is Romans 8, 29, that we be conformed into the image of Jesus.

Actually, let's put that up, guys, on the screen because this is actually a way of meditating on the word of God is to actually see it with the eyes. The Bible teaches, do not let it depart the law from your eyes. So seeing it actually does something.

So let me put that up there. I'll read you Romans 8. I want you to hear it in your soul. I know you have it memorized.

Thank you, Jesus. For God knew his people in advance, listen, and he chose them to become like his son so that his son would be the firstborn among many brethren. Let me switch translations there, go to a more sanctified one.

I'm just joking. For whom he foreknew, this is the new King James, for whom he foreknew, this is so powerful, he also predestined. See, we think that the gospel was our idea and that becoming like Jesus was our idea.

I have news for you that should make you so happy that the gospel is the Lord's idea. The gospel was first preached by the Lord himself in Genesis 3, that the serpent's head would be crushed by the seed of the woman, and that is Jesus. So the Lord preached the gospel for the first time.

The gospel is the Lord's idea. The gospel flows from the loving heart of Jesus. That being said, the gospel doesn't end when you say the sinner's prayer.

Jesus himself is the gospel. And Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 15 that we were saved by the gospel and it's in the gospel by which we stand. So Christians today need to stand in the gospel.

So throw that verse back up on the screen. The Lord foreknew us, he predestined us, this was his idea, to be conformed to the image of his son. Okay, there you go, that's the goal.

That he, Jesus, might be the firstborn among many brethren. The father wants to give the Lord a family and he has given the Lord Jesus a family. And he wants that family to be like his son.

So that is the goal. Now, that being said, being like Jesus requires something that we can only get from him. We cannot produce it on our own.

And we cannot muster it as badly as we wanna try. Only he carries this aspect of his character that we so badly need and it starts with an H and I wish it was capitalized in every writing. It's the word humility.

Humility, humility is glorious. Listen to me, humility is more glorious than those fields at Jesus 22, being filled with 20,000 people. Humility, being a humble people, being a humble church, being a humble lover of Jesus.

Friends, listen, this is the win, the humility of Jesus. What draws us to somebody like brother Yun? What draws us to somebody like brother Yun? Is it, of course, his amazing testimony, but are we drawn, he's been at my table multiple times. Am I drawn to sit there with brother Yun because he's over 13 million members of the Chinese church? Is that why? Is that why our team loves being around him? Is it because of his stat sheet or is it because he's still like a two year old child in God's presence? Is it because there's something that emanates from him that is so otherworldly? What is that? It's the humility of Jesus.

He's not at my table because of his stat sheet. By the way, he's coming to Jesus 22. He's not coming, we didn't invite him because he has this massive responsibility and we value that, we honor that, but I'm trying to get to the nitty gritty here.

What is it about him? I mean, at Jesus 19, I gave the altar call and he was the first one who ran down. And my friend grabbed me and said, congratulations, you just led brother Yun to the Lord. Well, it's so hilarious to me.

He ran down to the altar because I said, if you wanna love Jesus more, if your heart's, if you know you need to love him more, if there's something more in you that you know the Holy Spirit has for you regarding the love of Jesus, get down here. And he ran. And it was blew me away that like 32 year old pastors were sitting there like this.

And brother Yun ran down. It's so telling to me. It's so telling to me.

And that's the danger, listen to me. That's the danger of finding identity in God's stat sheet and claiming it as your own. All that is happening in us is happening by God in us and through us.

And when we start laying claim to that from an identity perspective saying, oh, look what God has done in me. That's who I am. No, no, no.

Who we are are lovers of Jesus and all God does through us, we celebrate and give him all the glory. But I wanted to get down to the core of this thing. What is it about a brother Yun? What is it about Bill? What would cause me to wanna stay here? There's no place in the world I'd rather preach than be in that room with you guys.

It's the greatest place in the world for me. God's presence is there. Like no place I've ever been so consistently.

But what would cause me to stay? You know, Bill's not the most demonstrative, talkative friend I have. The most talkative person would be Jess for sure. She's not in this office and she's not sitting next to me.

Or she's not in the church. So she's probably watching for sure. I'll probably get a text, but she's certainly the most talkative person.

And I love it most of the time. But what is it about Bill? Why would I stay here? It's because there's something in him, this humble, broken, soft, tender, faithful to the Lord behind the scenes kind of person that I didn't even think twice to be loyal to a friend like that. This is what the church needs.

We are, I've said this before, but please hear me. We have so many initiatives and we're telling the world how we're gonna change it. And she's laughing at us.

And so is heaven at times. Well, I'm gonna do this. I'm gonna do that.

And the whole time the Lord's going, you haven't even come to the burning bush. You don't even have a staff yet to raise. How are you gonna part the seed? And I think we're attempting to accomplish God's ultimate goal without encounters with God.

And to those who've encountered the Lord, once they've encountered him truly, when God does start moving through them, they trace it back to the Lord who met them because they actually have that testimony. And so this humble side is so glorious because it doesn't depend on natural capability. And it's vital.

It's vital because remember, when I commit to being with Jesus, the word of Jesus will flow from him to me. And that will call me to uncomfortable circumstances. Please hear me.

Uncomfortable conflict resolution. Uncomfortable conversations that I don't wanna have. Uncomfortable moments of saying, forgive me, I repent.

The natural side of us just wants to move on. This body of flesh, this body that will decay. It wants to move on.

It just wants to hurt people and not make it right and assume it's gonna be right because it's easier on us. And what we end up doing is avoiding that rub, that rub of obeying the word of Jesus. And it's that rub that actually is like a sandpaper that gets the stuff off us that is not like Jesus, that is like Michael.

So that Romans 8, 29 can actually be fulfilled in us that this is that conforming thing. You see the word transform in the Greek means to be changed within. And that's the word used on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Jesus began to shine from within and his visage changed. That word is metamorphic. It means to be changed from within.

And we saw the glory of Jesus on the holy mountain, Peter said. The word conformed means to be molded. And that's why actually Paul in one portion tells us do not be conformed to this world.

This is a different conforming. This means the hands of Jesus are on us. And by the Holy Spirit, we're being conformed into his perfect image and Michael is removed slowly but surely until the day comes where Jesus is shining brightly through us all.

So knowing the voice of the Lord and obeying is meant, hear me out, to make us uncomfortable. We need the discomfort. We need to understand.

Listen, do you remember what Jesus said? Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. Okay, then the scripture says that he learned obedience through the cross. What does that tell us? That it was the will of the father because he said, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

It was the will of the father that Jesus walked through that journey of Golgotha and that he learned in that journey, the glory of obedience as the firstborn among many brethren. And that's what he wants for us. So

hearing him is so important, knowing what he's saying.

And again, these passages are focusing on a way to hear him through advice. Verse 16 is wise people think, or Proverbs 13, throw that back up there, please. Wise people think before they act.

Okay, you ready for this? Think, you are allowed to think it through. Do not ever make a decision in your life that you know has to do with calling, destiny. Here's one, spouse.

Now, some of you think too much about spouse. You think you want your spouse to be like Samson physically and Solomon mentally and John the apostle in the heart. And they're most likely never coming.

So don't hold your spouse to the standard that you don't hold yourself to. Some people think about it so long, then they never get married. And I'm not saying you have to get married, but if you wanna get married, do not look for this Avenger Bible figure who is just like supreme and all his or her ways, okay? All right, think, this is vital.

Think, think through the voice of the Lord. Wise people think before they act. Some of the worst decisions I've seen made in friends' lives, in the life of Jesus image, since we've been doing this, are people who get pummeled by the devil.

They are thrust into this ditch. It's an emotional, toxic ditch. They alienate themselves and they are alone.

And then the weakness comes and it becomes physical and emotional. And then other voices start coming and there's a knee-jerk reaction and they make a quick decision. You don't want to do that.

My team gets on me because I'm a slow mover. I'm not, I cannot, with authenticity before the Lord, make decisions that are gonna impact myself, my children, you, your families. I can't make decisions like that quickly, unless God is speaking quickly.

Okay, so think, you may want to write it, maybe even get a tattoo. I don't know, so much of the church could use it. It's Christian to actually think.

All right, now, fools do not think. And that's what the Bible says. Fools don't, look at the end of that verse.

And they even brag about their foolishness. And I mentioned these testimonies before. I have heard so many people share testimonies to other offended people who also make bad decisions.

And they actually begin celebrating the horrible decisions. Here's what I want you guys to do. Have the courage.

Have the courage to go to someone about your decision who might disagree with you. And if they disagree with you, love them enough to not cut them off. Verse 18, let me get this thing moving.

Are y'all enjoying this? Can you just wave at me? I'm preaching to myself. I'm actually on the screen. Okay, put both hands up and wave at me if you're getting this.

Okay. All right, okay. Love you.

All right, verse 18, Proverbs 13. If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace. I shared this with you last week.

I want it to go deep. If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty. You don't want that.

So be open to criticism. The root word there is critic or critique. Now, criticism should come to you in a healthy way, biblically.

It's always to build you up, never to tear you down, but just be open to it so that you don't end up in poverty. You do not, look at the verse. You want to end up in disgrace.

The word disgrace means dis, cut off from grace. Not your salvation, but the grace of God, the flow of the spirit, the empowerment of the spirit. You don't want to limit that in your life.

If you accept correction, you will be honored. Now, I know the staff's there in our team. All right, the staff members that I feel closest to and that I trust the most are the ones who accept correction the most frequently and the most graciously.

The ones that I feel like I cannot correct, there's a gap that needs to be closed there. I can feel the distance, but it's the people who are like, hey, I'm here, talk to me, call me out, love me that way, call out my junk, encourage me when I need it, I need to be corrected, do it. There's a trust there.

And what I would like to say to you is God trusts those same people because the Bible says there's a certain type of heart that God does not despise, and that is the contrite and the broken heart. It's the heart that is not easily offended and that is soft towards the Lord's voice and towards correction. Amen? Okay.

Proverbs 13, 19 through 20. It is pleasant to see dreams come true. I'm back in the new living, by the way.

I copied and pasted the wrong version onto my note, so you'll have to bear with me. It is pleasant to see dreams come true, but fools refuse to turn from evil to attain them. Wow.

You ever heard the terminology, they're drowning in their dreams or they're suffocating in all their ideas? When God gives a vision or a dream, he actually expects it to come to pass. But some people who are most discontent are people who get a ton of ideas or they have a dream from God. I don't mean a literal dream, it could be, but an assignment of their life.

They do not see it come to pass because they refuse to turn. And that's a very down word for repent. And that's not a bad word.

Repent means turn away from and turn fully to Jesus. Not just the mind in the entirety of our life. That's the biblical context.

The mind is part of that. So when people have ideas and dreams from God, especially mandates, and they don't see them come to pass, oftentimes it's because they will not turn away from what is keeping them from being accomplished. And we think the reason things aren't accomplished at times is because of opposition.

This is gonna stir some people up and hopefully it stirs up hell, to be honest with you, what I'm about to say. So being opposed is needed. Being ridiculed is needed.

Raise your hand, say, I need that. Get us free from it. Say this, I need to be persecuted.

I need to be misunderstood. I need to be spoken about. Because Jesus promised it.

Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and say all types of evil against you. For my name's sake, rejoice and be glad for so it was in the lives of the prophets and great is your reward in heaven. Okay, so it's a promise.

It is a Matthew 5 promise. Blessed are you. There's a blessing that comes.

You need it. You need it. Now, I also wanna say that if you are in God's will and you are living righteously before the Lord and with his people relationally, there is no demon and no person who can oppose you to keep you from fulfilling God's mandate over your life.

I have been opposed. Jesse and I have been opposed. We all have, all of you have.

So consistently as of late, but the train is still moving. The kingdom suffereth violence. Slap, slap the person on your shoulder, very nicely.

Very common. The kingdom suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. The kingdom, God's kingdom train is moving.

God's will will be accomplished. God's will for Jesus' image will be accomplished. We will be in the glory of God.

We will watch our children and our children's children basking in God's precious manifest presence. We will grow old and watch it. We will have our own building.

We will be on the land. There will be constant fragrance and incense going up before the Lord and prayer and worship. It will happen.

It will happen. All of you, if you want, if you want, if you want this, all of you will fulfill the mandate of God on your life. Nobody can oppose it to that level.

No one. There is nobody, listen, outside of you, if you commit to obediently following the Lord, there is nobody outside of you that can stop it. They can oppose it.

They can get pushed. They can push against it. But like Jesus said to Paul, Paul, how's it been going kicking against the goads? In other words, the thorns.

The goads are a thornbush. He, in a loving way, mocked him. Paul's killing the church, killing the church.

That's opposition. And Jesus rocks his life on the road to Damascus and sarcastically, in a way, asked him a question and lovingly mocked him. Hey, Paul, how's that going for you? You like kicking thornbushes? Kick them as hard as you want.

The thorns go in deeper into your shins. It's not gonna work out for you. And then he says, why do you persecute me? In other words, you touch them, you touch me.

I am married to them. They don't just work for me. They don't just sing to me.

I'm the bridegroom. They're the bride. I'm married to them.

And when you touch them, Paul, you touched me. So now I touched you. And now you're on your back and you can't see and you're blind.

And now I'm actually gonna use the Jewish scriptures that you clung to and use to kill my bride. Now I'm gonna open the book because I'm the only one who can open the book. There's one found worthy to open the scroll and break the seal.

There's only one who can open the book. And now I'm gonna open the book for you, Paul. I'm gonna change your name and I'm gonna change everything about you.

Now, when you open the book, instead of using it to kill my people, I'm gonna use you as you open the book. And then I open the book and then the hearts of millions are gonna open, billions around the world one day and the generations to come. That's Jesus.

And so I just wanna say unequivocally, nobody, no demon, nobody can stop the church. No one, they can try. But according to the book of Revelation, Jesus's words of the church of Ephesus, there's one thing, one thing alone.

One thing to be concerned about, just one, not governments, not people who turn their back on you, not people that betray you, not a husband that cheated on you, not somebody who thinks lowly of you, not somebody who's doctrinally on some quest to make your life a living hell. No, no, nobody, nobody, no one can put out the light of the Holy Spirit in his church. There's just one thing, one thing, the loss of first love.

Jesus said, return, repent, come back to first love, those first works, return to them, return to the heights from which you've fallen, return to them, or I will put out the lampstand. And do you know, 50 years later, within the next 50 years, the church of Ephesus was no more. And I think I may have shared this with you.

The church of Ephesus founded by Paul, given to Timothy, most, many historians would say that John the Apostle was the bishop of the church of Ephesus, and that the Virgin Mary, because John took her in, the Virgin Mary was there in that church as part of it. Now, what a church pastoral team, what a team. It'd be easy to say from the congregation's perspective, ah, the lights went out in this church, it's dead because of the leaders.

Something tells me the Virgin Mary loved Jesus, I think. Correct me if I'm wrong. Something tells me that Paul knew Jesus.

How about John, the beloved? I think he knew Jesus. How about Timothy taking over as a bishop? What's my point here? That lamp going out, missing the Lord's will for our life, that grace with the spirit lifting, it's so much more convenient to point at others and say, I missed his presence and I missed his will for my life because of something external. But what I submit to you this morning is that the issue's always in us.

It's in us. No one can stop God's perfect plan for your life unless we bail on it. And I know that's not your heart, but I wanted to give you confidence today and peace and faith.

Help me there, Joel, just a little. I wanted to give you confidence. Of course there'll be opposition.

Swat it away. Looking unto Jesus, the author, the finisher, the perfecter of our faith. When life gets tough, when life is filled with turmoil, swat away the distraction.

I'll never forget the Lord saying to me, Michael, you will never slay dragons. If you spend all your time swatting flies, treat these things as what they are. Swat it away and commit.

Commit to a humble life of following Jesus, of opening yourself up to the scriptures, of opening yourself up to criticism, opening yourself up to thinking and waiting and pondering and meditating on the scriptures and hearing people that God has put in your life. Open yourself up to that. It's a sign of humility and humility is greatness in the kingdom because the last are first and the first are last.

Thank you, Lord.

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