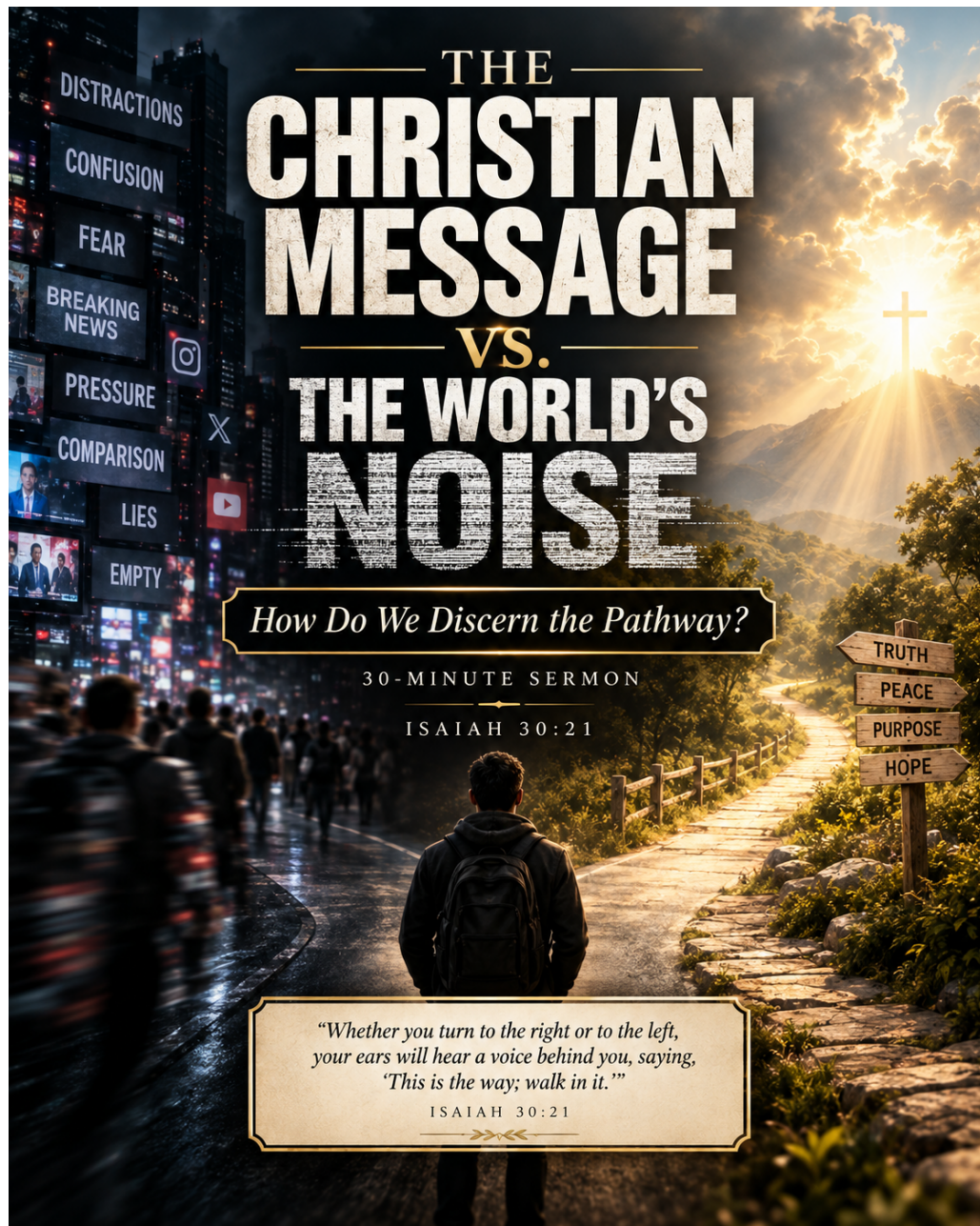




The Christian Message vs. the World's Noise

How Do We Discern the Pathway?

Main Scripture — Isaiah 30:21

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”

Introduction

We live in one of the noisiest generations in history.

Not simply noisy in terms of sound.

Noisy in terms of messages.

Before many of us even get out of bed in the morning, the world has already begun speaking to us.

News.

Social media.

Messages.

Videos.

Advertising.

Opinions.

Warnings.

Predictions.

Arguments.

Everybody seems to have something to say.

And the Christian is left asking a very important question:

“Lord, amongst all these voices, what are You saying?”

That is really the heart of this message.

Because the Christian life is not simply about hearing voices.

It is about learning to recognise the **voice of the Shepherd**.

Jesus says in John 10:27:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Notice the progression.

They **listen**.

They are **known**.

And they **follow**.

That is discernment.

Hearing.

Relationship.

Obedience.

The challenge is that there are so many competing influences trying to shape the pathway we walk.

So today I want to look at seven principles that can help us discern the Christian message from the world's noise.

1. Learn to Recognise the Shepherd's Voice

John 10:27

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Discernment begins with relationship.

Think about someone you know very well.

Perhaps your husband, wife, child or close friend.

Imagine being in a crowded room.

There may be fifty conversations happening at the same time.

And then somewhere across the room, that person calls your name.

You immediately recognise them.

Why?

Because relationship has created familiarity.

You have heard that voice many times.

Something similar happens spiritually.

The more time we spend with Christ, the more familiar we become with His character.

We learn what sounds like Jesus.

We learn what reflects His heart.

We learn what agrees with His Word.

We learn the tone of grace and truth.

And gradually we also begin to recognise what does **not** sound like Him.

That is important because not every loud voice is authoritative.

Not every popular opinion is true.

Not every strong feeling is guidance.

Not every opportunity is God.

And not every fearful thought is the Holy Spirit warning us.

Sometimes we need to ask:

“Where did this voice come from?”

Is this God?

Is this my fear?

Is this my past?

Is this pressure from other people?

Is this culture?

Is this insecurity?

Is this spiritual opposition?

Discernment begins when we become more familiar with Christ than we are with the noise.

And that immediately raises a question for us:

Which voice currently has the greatest influence over my life?

Because whatever we repeatedly listen to eventually begins to shape us.

2. Test Every Voice Against the Word

John 17:17

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

If there are many voices, we need a reference point.

Imagine a musician tuning an instrument.

If the reference note is wrong, then everything tuned against it will also be wrong.

Scripture becomes our reference point.

We do not decide something is true simply because:

It sounds convincing.

It is popular.

It is emotionally powerful.

Everybody around us agrees with it.

Or someone says, “God told me.”

Everything needs to be tested.

The Christian question is:

“Does this agree with the Word and character of God?”

Psalms 119:105 says:

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

Notice that Scripture is directly connected to the pathway.

When we do not know where to walk, God’s Word helps illuminate the next step.

But Scripture does something else as well.

It does not just challenge the world.

It challenges **us**.

Hebrews 4 tells us that the Word of God is living and active and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Sometimes we read the Bible.

And sometimes the Bible reads us.

It exposes motives.

It questions attitudes.

It challenges assumptions.

It reveals where our thinking has slowly been shaped by the culture around us.

One of the most dangerous things we can do is approach the Bible already knowing what we want it to say.

We have our opinion.

Our experience.

Our preference.

And then we search for a verse to support it.

But discipleship works the other way around.

We do not reshape Scripture around ourselves.

We allow Scripture to reshape **us**.

So one of the key questions of discernment is:

“Am I allowing God’s Word to shape my thinking, or am I simply looking for Scripture to support what I already think?”

3. Understand the Battle for the Mind

Romans 12:2

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

The world’s noise does not always stay outside us.

Eventually it can move inside.

A message becomes a thought.

A thought becomes a belief.

A belief begins to affect our emotions.

Our emotions begin influencing our decisions.

And our decisions eventually shape the pathway we walk.

That is why Paul speaks about the renewing of the mind.

There are two processes in Romans 12:2.

Conforming.

And transforming.

Conforming is outside pressure shaping us.

It is like being pressed into a mould.

Without noticing, we begin thinking the way everyone else thinks.

Worrying about what everyone else worries about.

Chasing what everyone else chases.

Measuring success the way the world measures success.

But Paul says:

“Be transformed.”

How?

By the renewing of your mind.

This means that not every thought deserves to be believed.

Not every thought deserves to remain.

Some thoughts need questioning.

Where did this come from?

Is this true?

Does this agree with Scripture?

Is this producing faith or fear?

Is this conviction or condemnation?

That last question is very important.

The Holy Spirit convicts.

But conviction says:

“Come back to God.”

Condemnation says:

“Stay away from God.”

Conviction may be uncomfortable, but it leads toward repentance, restoration and freedom.

Condemnation leads toward shame and hopelessness.

That is why we need discernment.

And then there is the battle of imagined futures.

“What if everything goes wrong?”

“What if I fail?”

“What if I lose this?”

“What if God does not provide?”

Nothing has happened yet, but our mind has already built the whole story.

Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow.

Not because tomorrow does not matter.

But because God gives us grace for the place where we actually stand.

Biblical thinking is not pretending everything will be easy.

Biblical thinking says:

“Whatever happens, God remains faithful.”

That is much stronger than positive thinking.

The renewed mind learns to answer fear with truth.

“You are alone.”

God says:

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

“You cannot do this.”

God says:

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

“There is no future.”

God says:

“I am making all things new.”

The pathway becomes clearer as the mind is renewed.

4. Not Every Open Door Is God's Door

Proverbs 3:5–6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

Christians often talk about open doors.

“The door opened, so it must be God.”

Sometimes that is true.

But not always.

Jonah found an open door.

There was a ship.

There was space.

He could pay the fare.

Everything worked.

Except he was travelling in the opposite direction to God's instruction.

So availability is not the same as God's will.

Just because we **can** do something does not mean God is telling us to do it.

When an opportunity comes, we need to ask:

Does this agree with Scripture?

Will this draw me closer to Christ or slowly pull me away?

What is motivating me?

Is it faith?

Or ambition?

Fear?

Pride?

The need for approval?

What are wise and mature believers saying?

And is there a deeper peace beneath the decision?

Now, peace is not the same as comfort.

God may lead us somewhere difficult.

We may feel nervous and still know deep down that it is the right direction.

And something may look exciting while there is a quiet warning inside.

Discernment learns the difference between excitement and peace.

And sometimes God's answer is simply:

“Wait.”

The world says:

“Act now.”

“Don't miss out.”

“Take the opportunity.”

But faith can sometimes look like refusing to force a door.

Waiting is not always lack of faith.

Sometimes waiting is faith.

It says:

“Lord, I trust You enough not to push this open myself.”

A closed door is not always rejection.

Sometimes it is protection.

Sometimes it is redirection.

Sometimes God is saying:

“Not this way.”

That is still guidance.

5. Look at the Fruit

Galatians 5:22–23

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

One of the clearest ways to test a voice is to examine what it produces.

Jesus repeatedly taught that fruit reveals the nature of a tree.

So when something begins influencing us, ask:

“What kind of person am I becoming as I listen to this?”

Am I becoming more loving?

More peaceful?

More patient?

More gracious?

More faithful?

More like Jesus?

Or am I becoming increasingly fearful?

Angry?

Suspicious?

Bitter?

Restless?

Divided?

That is worth noticing.

We live in a world that is very good at capturing attention.

Fear captures attention.

Outrage captures attention.

Conflict captures attention.

Controversy keeps people watching.

But something holding our attention does not mean it is spiritually healthy.

Even something that contains facts can be presented in a way that feeds fear.

That is why discernment asks not only:

“Is this true?”

But also:

“What is this producing in me?”

Now, God’s voice does not always make us comfortable.

The Holy Spirit may challenge pride.

Expose unforgiveness.

Confront compromise.

But godly conviction leads somewhere.

It leads to repentance.

Freedom.

Restoration.

Growth.

A destructive voice often leaves us stuck in shame, fear or anger.

So another key discernment question is:

“Where is this voice leading me?”

Closer to Christ?

Or further away?

Closer to peace?

Or deeper into fear?

Closer to humility?

Or deeper into pride?

Fruit reveals the voice.

6. Create Space for the Quiet Voice

1 Kings 19:11–12

Elijah is exhausted.

He is under pressure.

And God tells him to stand on the mountain.

There is a powerful wind.

God is not in the wind.

Then an earthquake.

God is not in the earthquake.

Then fire.

God is not in the fire.

And then comes the gentle whisper.

We often associate significance with volume.

The loudest voice feels most important.

The strongest emotion feels most convincing.

The biggest event gets our attention.

But God does not always shout.

Sometimes He whispers.

And whispers require closeness.

You have to be near enough to hear.

That is why Jesus repeatedly withdrew from crowds to pray.

He created space.

He stepped away from noise and demand.

Psalms 46:10 says:

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Stillness is becoming rare.

Phone.

Television.

Music.

Messages.

Notifications.

Videos.

There is always something filling the silence.

But spiritual discernment needs space.

Perhaps sometimes we ask:

“Why can’t I hear God?”

And maybe God has not stopped speaking.

Maybe the environment is just too noisy.

Sometimes one of the most spiritual things we can do is turn something off.

Create ten minutes.

Put the phone away.

Take one Scripture.

Sit quietly.

Do not force God to say something dramatic.

Simply make yourself available.

Because sometimes the first thing God gives us in stillness is not an instruction.

It is awareness of His presence.

And from His presence, clarity begins to grow.

7. Discernment Must Become Obedience

Isaiah 30:21

“This is the way; walk in it.”

This is the final step.

Discernment has a purpose.

God does not simply want us to recognise the pathway.

He wants us to walk it.

There comes a point where prayer, Scripture, wisdom and conviction begin pointing in the same direction.

And then faith must move.

We can spend a long time asking for more signs.

“Lord, show me again.”

“Give me another confirmation.”

“Send another word.”

And sometimes God says:

“I have already shown you. Now walk.”

Abraham had to leave.

Peter had to step out of the boat.

The Israelites had to move toward the Jordan.

The disciples had to leave their nets.

Faith involves movement.

And sometimes the noise gets louder when we begin obeying.

“What if you fail?”

“What will people think?”

“Are you sure?”

“Why don’t you just stay where you are?”

But the question is not:

“Is this easy?”

The question is:

“Is Jesus leading me?”

Because the right pathway is not always the easiest pathway.

And opposition does not automatically mean we have missed God.

Sometimes we can be exactly where God has called us and still face difficulty.

The safest place is not always the most comfortable place.

The safest place is with the Shepherd.

John 10:27 ends:

“They follow me.”

Hearing is not the final goal.

Following is.

Christian discernment is not about mastering a technique.

It is about walking with a Person.

Jesus.

The Shepherd does not simply stand at the beginning of the road and point.

He walks with us.

And perhaps that is the greatest comfort of all.

We may not know the whole future.

But we know the One who goes with us.

Conclusion — Which Voice Will Shape Your Pathway?

The world will probably not become quieter.

There will always be another opinion.

Another headline.

Another argument.

Another prediction.

Another voice trying to tell us what we should think.

So maybe the goal is not to silence every voice around us.

Maybe the goal is to become so familiar with Jesus that His voice becomes increasingly recognisable.

Let me bring the seven questions together.

When you are trying to discern a pathway, ask:

- 1. Does this sound like the character of Jesus?**
- 2. Does this agree with Scripture?**
- 3. What thoughts are driving me?**
- 4. Am I assuming an open door automatically means God's will?**
- 5. What fruit is this producing?**

6. Have I become quiet enough to listen?

7. If God has made the next step clear, am I willing to obey?

That is a good framework for discernment.

And perhaps today you are at a crossroads.

You have been praying.

Thinking.

Waiting.

Listening.

And God may not show you the whole road.

But He may show you the next step.

And somewhere beneath all the noise, you may hear that gentle voice:

“This is the way.”

The question then becomes:

Will you walk in it?

Final Response Challenge

Take a sheet of paper sometime today or this week and divide it into two columns.

On one side write:

THE NOISE

And list the voices currently shaping your thinking.

Fear.

Social media.

Other people's expectations.

Past failures.

Anxiety.

Comparison.

On the other side write:

THE VOICE OF TRUTH

And beside each one, write what God's Word says.

Then begin deliberately replacing noise with truth.

Because whatever voice you repeatedly listen to will eventually shape the pathway you walk.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You are the Good Shepherd.

Teach us to recognise Your voice.

In a world filled with noise, keep us anchored in Your truth.

Renew our minds.

Give us wisdom when opportunities come.

Help us recognise good fruit.

Teach us again how to become still.

And when You say,

“This is the way,”

give us courage not simply to hear,

but to walk.

Help us not to be controlled by fear, popularity, pressure or opinion.

May Your voice become clearer in our lives.

Lead us in the pathway of truth.

And help us follow You one step at a time.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.