

## Listening to God: Filters Aren't Always Good

### Introduction:

- I. We use filters for all kinds of applications where we need a good end product that might otherwise be polluted in some way.
  - A. The most common beneficial filter we might think of is a water filter.
    1. Wherever we move, one of my first tasks is installing a water filter of some kind.
    2. I've always appreciated the benefits of filtered water.
  - B. Your car has filters, that keep the oil, fuel, and cabin air in a healthy state.
  - C. Generally speaking, we always perceive the thought of a filter as a good thing.
- II. There are "bad" filters, and that is what we will discuss in this lesson.

### Body:

#### I. Message Filters...

- A. The idea of a message filter is nothing new to you. It takes a statement and seeks a meaning that might not have been intended. In so doing, the hearer is not dealing fairly with the speaker.
- B. Filters we place upon our hearing are always dependent upon what we *want* to hear.
  1. They may be placed in anger, wanting to make the worst of what we hear.
  2. They may be placed with yearning for something – like the boy who reads romance into the kindness of a pretty girl.
  3. For whatever reason they are placed, it is always to get what we want — the truth actually becomes irrelevant.
- C. This is humorously applied to wives hearing their husbands.
  1. A husband says, "Darling, your beauty far excels the rose in Spring."
    - a. If all is well, the wife will thank her husband for his kind remark.
    - b. If not, she might reply, "What do you mean, I have more thorns than a rose?"
  2. A husband says, "Drive carefully, sweetheart." She may hear, "You are such an incompetent driver."

#### II. How Well Are We Listening to God?...

- A. Any "filter" placed upon our understanding of God's message is a bad thing.
  1. **II Tim 4:2ff** *"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."*
    - a. People who disregard God's will in many matters know this passage exists.
    - b. With their filters set up properly, they can imagine that this passage applies to everyone but them.
  2. The important lesson to learn is that we aren't listening to God better than anyone else just because we know problems can arise.
- B. Here are a few filters we must beware of using to listen to God:
  1. **Filter: It Doesn't Make Sense** (mentioned in the Bible class).
    - a. Examples of this filter may be found all through Scripture. Humans tend to pass judgment on God's commands.
    - b. **Ex 4:2ff** *"And the Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' <sup>3</sup> Then He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. <sup>4</sup> But the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail' – so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand –"*
      - (1) God didn't ask Moses which end he wanted to grasp.
      - (2) The tail wouldn't be my first choice, but if God says to do it, I had better do it!
    - c. **II Chr 20:20ff** *"And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.' <sup>21</sup> And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.' <sup>22</sup> And when they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed."*
      - (1) Singing unto victory doesn't make much sense from a human standpoint.
      - (2) This was reminiscent of the battle at Jericho, or the battle in the valley of Aijalon.
    - d. Baptism may not make sense to many people, but it is still God's command.
    - e. Not having a centralized church government may seem backward to some, but it is God's pattern.
    - f. Not using mechanical instruments of music in worship to God.

2. **Filter: This Will Get It Done Better.**

- a. When God tells us to do something a certain way, we can easily see bigger and better ways to serve.
- (1) In actuality, God has not asked us to see anything bigger or better.
  - (2) Whether we want to admit it, or not, improving upon God's plan is about our ego, not glorifying God.
- b. **I Chr 13:7-10** *"And they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. <sup>8</sup> And David and all Israel were celebrating before God with all their might, even with songs and with lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals, and with trumpets. <sup>9</sup> When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, because the oxen nearly upset it. <sup>10</sup> And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzza, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God."*
- (1) This wasn't just about Uzza touching the ark.
  - (2) **I Chr 15:12f** David said, *"You are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup> Because you did not carry it at the first, the Lord our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance."*

3. **Filter: I Am Obeying God.**

- a. **I Sam 15** God told Saul to go out and utterly destroy the Amalekites. *(Here is another filter: "Surely God didn't mean that")*
- (1) **I Sam 15:19f** *"Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord?" <sup>20</sup> Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I did obey the voice of the Lord, and went on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.'"*
  - (2) **I Sam 15:24** *"I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice."* (people fear the rejection and ridicule of others)
- b. Among ourselves, we like to pick and choose how we will serve God.
- (1) I call this checkbox religion (or the "bucket list" approach).
  - (2) We excuse our lack of zeal, or perhaps, laziness, by going over our "bucket list."
  - (3) e.g. Sunday evening services, gospel meeting, teaching a Bible class, or even divorce and remarriage.

4. **Filter: God Can't Argue With My Being Happy.**

- a. **Num 20:12** *"But the Lord said ..., "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."*
- b. Can you imagine the sorrow that must have filled the heart of Moses?
- c. What happiness have you worked harder toward than Moses leading Israel to Canaan?
- d. People use this on everything from missing services to gambling to bar hopping to adultery.

5. **Filter: God Is Speaking to Me.**

- a. Countless people are convinced that God is speaking directly to them (members of the church, too).
- (1) **Jer 23:21** *"I did not send these prophets, But they ran. I did not speak to them, But they prophesied."*
  - (2) **Jer 23:25f** *"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!' <sup>26</sup> How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even **these prophets of the deception of their own heart,**"*
- b. People claiming to hear God's voice, go to God's word to validate their messages. What they do, is they take passages from their contexts to enable themselves to change the word of the Lord.
- (1) **Jn 16:13** *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*
  - (2) We have brethren who are convinced God is speaking to them: **Jms 1:5** *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*
  - (3) The context of these passages have nothing to do with the uninspired receiving messages and special insight into Bible meanings.

## Conclusion:

- I. As long as a person is using a filter to hear God, no study on authority will be of any benefit.
  - A. They will hear whatever they want, and be content because it pleases them.
  - B. They will be convinced that it is precisely what God wants them to understand.
- II. In other settings, we call this intellectual dishonesty.
- III. Paul called it itching ears.
- IV. It will lead to destruction, because the message in Scripture will not be heard — they just won't be listening to God.