

Hearing The Voice of God

Five Assumptions

As we begin this lesson there are five assumptions you must make concerning God's voice.

1. God wants to **speak** to you.
According to the Scriptures God has been speaking with men since their creation and many of His words have been preserved in the Bible.
2. God has given you the **ability** to hear and obey through faith. This is evidenced by the fact that man was given an instruction in the Garden of Eden but chose to disobey it. *"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."* (Genesis 2:16-17)
3. If He speaks and you hear and **obey** things will happen. Continuously throughout the Bible it is demonstrated that man's obedience to God's word produces rewards, blessings and miracles.
4. Satan will try to do something that creates **static** between you and God. Ever since Eve's temptation in Garden, Satan has attempted to undermine man's relationship to God.
5. You must **learn** to distinguish between God's voice and those around you. Like any relationship it takes time to distinguish a person's identity by their voice.

Three Disciplines Of Relationships

God's voice comes to you out of your relationship with Him. In any relationship there are three great disciplines that must be maintained.

1. Presence – you have to spend time with the person.
2. Shared responsibility – you each have to speak, listen and act.
3. Observation of character traits – you have to understand one another.

Four Keys To Communication

There are four keys that open the door to two-way communication with God. The basis for this can be found in Habakkuk 2:1-2. **1)** *I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and* **2)** *I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.* **3)** *Then the LORD answered me and said,* **4)** *"Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run."*

Key #1 - Prepare yourself to hear God's voice. (*I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart.*)

1. Have a clear conscience before God and man. Confess your sins.
2. Cultivate a deep desire to yield to the Holy Spirit's direction.
3. Make the commitment to obey.

Usually it helps to quiet your own thoughts and emotions. Psalm 46:10 says, *"Be still and know that I am God."* Sometimes a quiet worship song helps to get you still and focused. If thoughts of things you have to do come to mind, write them down so you don't forget, you can review them later.

Key #2 – Listen intently and fix the eyes of your heart upon Jesus, seeing in the spirit the dreams and visions of God. (*I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me.*) The spirit world around you is full of angels, demons, God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Be prepared to see a vision and if you see one ... keep looking! When Daniel saw a vision He said, “*I was looking ... I kept looking ... I kept looking.*” ((Daniel 7:1, 9 and 13)

God continually revealed Himself to His covenant people using dreams and visions throughout the Old Testament. Since the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), we should expect to receive a continuing flow of dreams and visions. Jesus, our perfect example, demonstrated this ability of living out an ongoing contact with Almighty God. He said that He did nothing on His own initiative, but only what He **saw** the Father doing, and **heard** the father saying. (John 5:19, 20 and 30)

Key #3 – Learn to discern the voice of God. (*Then the LORD answered me and said.*) Many Christians are expecting to hear an audible voice from God, either internally or externally. God definitely speaks like this ... sometimes. The Scriptures tell us of accounts like these: the prophet Elijah referred to the still, small voice (inner) and God spoke the Ten Commandments out loud to the entire congregation of Israelites (external). However, most of the time, God’s inner voice comes to us as **spontaneous** thoughts, visions, feelings or impressions.

Here are some helpful clues you can use in discerning God’s voice.

1. God can speak to the mind ... it is usually a thought that intrudes upon the brain and is **markedly** different from what we are thinking about.
2. God can speak to the heart ... it is often a nudge that compels us to action (green light) or a restraint that warns us not to move forward (red light)
3. God speaks with **clarity**.
 - a. *His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. (John 10:4)*
 - b. God doesn’t speak in fuzzy generalities. If the message is muddled, we probably need to wait until the communication clarifies.
 - c. For a time, God may stir our hearts in a general sense that “something is up” and a change of direction is forthcoming. This holy restlessness causes us to seek God’s will and prepares our hearts for His message.
4. God’s voice is **specific**. “*This is the way, walk in it.*” (*Isaiah 30:21*)
5. God is not in a hurry.
 - a. Remember, we are to **walk** with God.
 - b. God may urge us along, but He doesn’t cause compulsiveness.
 - i. If we are intent on doing something “this minute, I’m not willing to wait,” unless it is an emergency, the voice we are listening to probably isn’t God’s.
 - ii. **GOD PROMPTS, BUT THE DEVIL PUSHES.**
 - c. Sometimes things happen quickly with God but that usually occurs after you have been waiting on the Lord.

6. God will **sometimes** confirm His message.
 - a. If you are unsure ask Him to confirm it.
7. God **never** contradicts His word.
 - a. While peace is a good indicator much of the time, it is not, if the underlying motive or action contradicts the Scriptures or leads us into sin.
 - b. If the message runs contrary to Scripture, it is not God's voice.
 - c. God will confirm His word but He will never contradict it.
8. God's voice **corrects** instead of accuses.
 - a. If the voice we are hearing is accusatory, it belongs to the devil, someone other than God or ourselves. Accusers shove us toward depression and destruction.
9. God doesn't **change** his mind.
 - a. If we are flip-flopping back and forth, we need to stop and wait upon the Lord.
 - b. Human tendency is to jump ahead of God, not being willing to wait until we are sure of His voice.

Key # 4 – Journaling, the writing out of our prayers and God's answers, provide a great new freedom in hearing God's voice. (*Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets.*) Throughout Scripture we see God's people writing out their prayers and His replies. They have also written out their thoughts (Psalms and Proverbs), what God told them to speak (the Prophets) and their visions (Revelation). When you write things out you can go back over it later to see if it lines up with Scripture.

Other Observations About God's Word

The purpose of a word from God is to **release** faith. (For healing, etc.) *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.* (Romans 10:17) If Jesus visited you and told you that you were going to be healed. What would you think? Would you be excited? Would you be waiting expectantly? Would you have faith?

The word of God can come in any of the following ways: 1) Automatic mouth, 2) Hear it, 3) See it, 4) Read it, 5) Feel it, 6) Say it, 7) Dream it, 8) Experience it (such as pain, etc), or 9) An impression (a thought).

Sometimes the word of God doesn't make sense. You might not understand it, but speak it out loud and see if it means anything to anyone present.

Faith is spelled **R.I.S.K.** Is it God or not? It's scary! If the word fails you will be humbled. Is that the humility that you have been asking God for?

Act on the Word of God!

An Exercise - Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term that means “divine reading.” It is a way or method of reading the Scriptures in such a manner that facilitates the reader in receiving a “specific word” from God. The practice was developed early in the church’s history with Origen first expressing its principles around 220 AD. The system consists of four parts: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. It may be practiced privately or in a small group setting.

There are four elements to be considered in preparing for this exercise:

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
2. Find a quiet place free of distractions.
3. Select a passage of Scripture from which you will read. This can be a continuation of where you are currently reading in the Bible, by chance, by someone else’s selection, etc.
4. Transition from what you have been doing by calming you mind and body. This can be done by taking a few slow, deep breaths and inviting the Lord to speak to you through His word.

Reading

1. Read the passage aloud slowly a couple of times.
 2. Be silent for one to two minutes.
 3. Is there a word or phrase that is meaningful to you?
 4. Repeat the word or phrase several times silently as if to memorize it.
- ❖ If in a group share it in turn. Do not elaborate simply state what it is.

Meditation

1. Read the passage again.
 2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
 3. Think about how the reading applies or touches your life today.
- ❖ If in a group share it in turn. Briefly state “I hear, I see, I feel ...”

Prayer

1. Talk with God about what he is showing you.
- ❖ If in a group pray quietly.

Contemplation

1. Read the passage again.
 2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
 3. Reflect on “I believe God wants me to _____
_____ today/this week/etc.”
- ❖ If in a group share in turn. At this point you can elaborate somewhat on what you believe God is telling you to do.