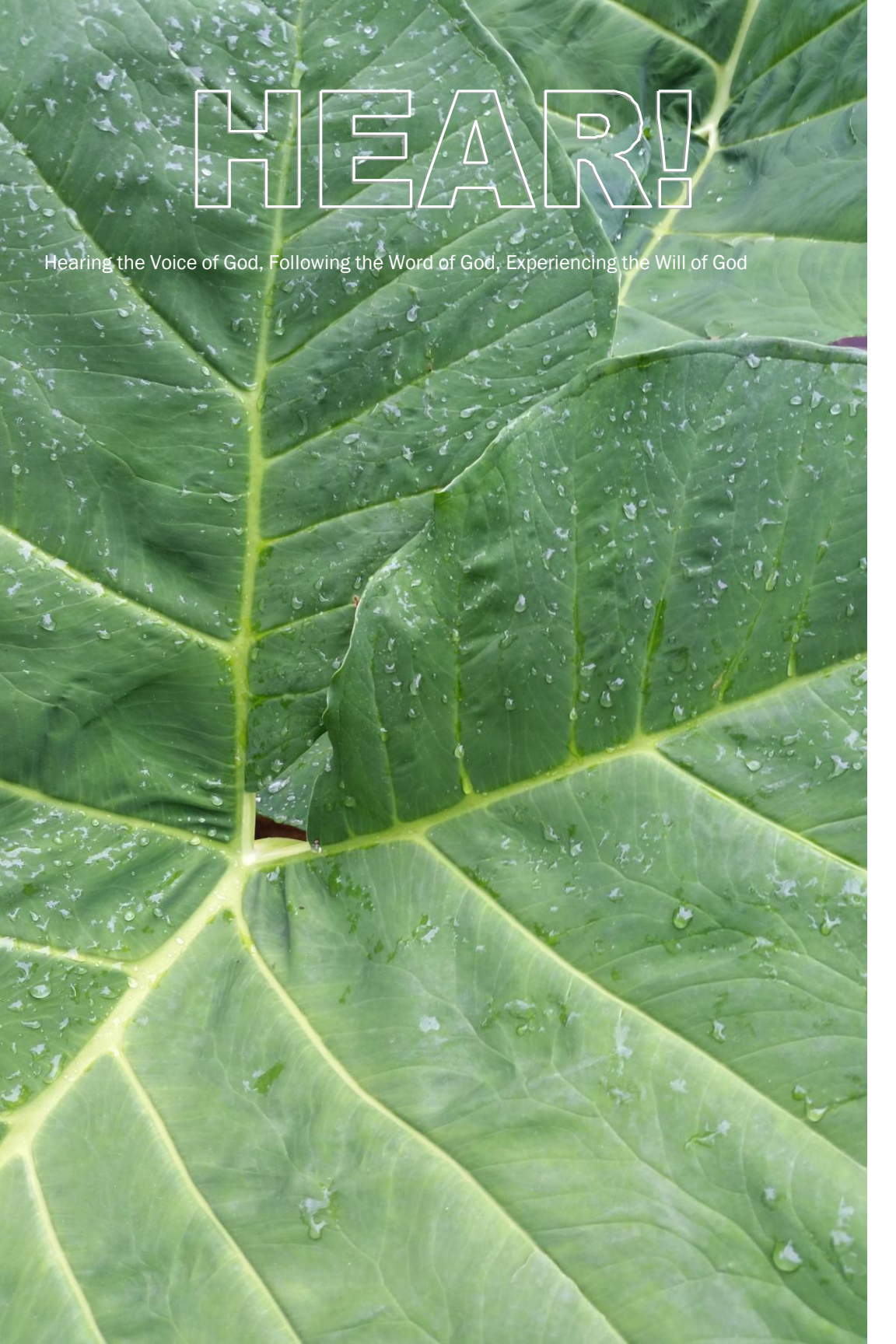


# HEAR!

Hearing the Voice of God, Following the Word of God, Experiencing the Will of God



What does it mean to hear God? We read of Him speaking to several people in Scripture. The first couple heard Him walking in the Garden, then, heard His clear voice, questioning their hiding from Him. God has spoken in many ways. Does He still speak today? What does it mean to know He has spoken?

Hearing God is not about weird voices and strange statements. It is not about telling people what to do—God told me to tell you so and so. It is about having a heart that knows God, that hears Him and obeys what He says, that recognizes Him and worships Him for Who He is—as God. It is about realizing that He is God and I am not.

At the beginning of his reign as king, God spoke to Solomon in a dream and said, “*Ask what you wish me to give you*” (1 Kings 3:5). What a statement! As a young man in his 20s, Solomon recounted the lovingkindness of the Lord toward his father David and now toward his son Solomon. He admitted his inexperience and need for wisdom, “*I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in*” (1 Kings 3:7). Then, he asked for “*an understanding heart*” (1 Kings 3:9). Literally, the Hebrew phrase is “*a hearing heart*,” a heart that hears God and hears people. Why? So that he could accurately judge the people, make right decisions, help people, help relationships, help the people be all God wanted them to be.

What did God think of this request? Solomon’s request for “*discernment to understand justice*” or literally, “*hearing*” to make just decisions was indeed very “*pleasing in His sight*,” so much so that God gave Solomon “*a wise and discerning heart*” (1 Kings 3:10, 12). God delights in His people humbly seeking Him. He wants us to walk and talk with Him and Him with us.

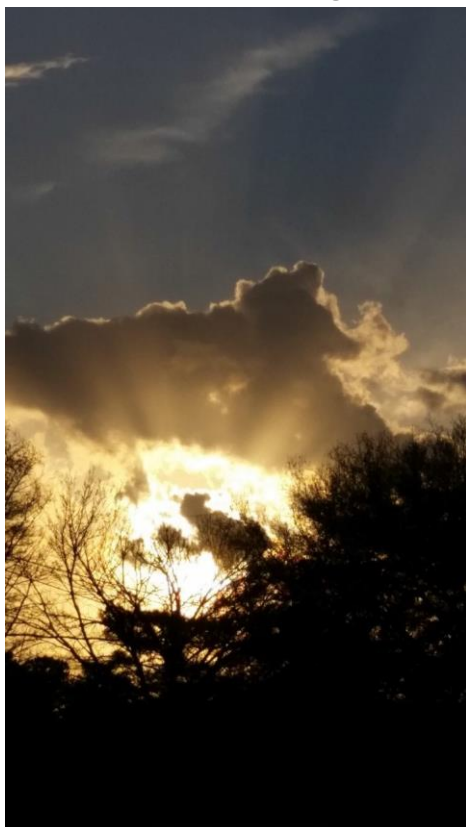
To hear God, we need a cleansed heart and an available, obedient heart, not an obstinate heart as we read of in Romans 10:21. Ron Dunn often spoke of discerning God’s will. He noted three clear factors we must deal with. 1) First, one’s *Desire* (assuming one is surrendered to God and His Will). 2) Second, one’s *Opportunity* (what is available to do or not do, where to go or not go, etc.). 3) Third, the element of ‘*No Red Flags*’ (Are there any “red flags” giving warning signals, a “Balaam’s donkey” stopping, blocking progress, even speaking (Numbers 22:23-35)? Stop, don’t go that way if there is any check of the Spirit, any lack of peace from the Spirit as the Divine Referee in life—Colossians 3:15). These three elements give practical counsel for hearing and responding to God.

*Hearing God* is about acknowledging God for who He is as God and worshiping Him. It is about activating faith, actions that reveal a right relationship seen in obeying Him, not about strange revelations.

Some make rash statements about “God told me...” but what they say does not line up with the clear revelation of the Word of God. Others declare God never speaks; we must simply do the best we can and hope for the best. Still others give testimony of a close walk with the Lord, of hearing Him give wise guidance for decisions and His good answers to prayer. What should we think or do in light of these varying testimonies? First, we need to think through some hindrances and helps to hearing God.

Hindrances and Helps to Hearing God—Many speak of the “promptings” of God or the urges of His Spirit, working in the mind, active in “the spirit,” the inner man or inner self often noted in Scripture. Is this valid? What can we learn of these truths?

Obedience to the promptings of God leads to joy and greater



sensitivity to the promptings of God. We must always be cautious about what we think, what we read or hear, and the thoughts we allow to linger in our minds. What is a prompting from God? What does it communicate? How do we know it is from God? How do we know it is not from our own deceived hearts or from a thought dart of the Evil One? We must know the Word of God and the Ways of God to clearly discern the Will of God... and to discern the message found in the promptings and leadings we believe to be of Him. Here are some Hindrances and some Helps in Hearing God.

## HINDRANCES TO HEARING GOD

1. Not believing God speaks—If a person does not believe God speaks, then he or she will ignore what God could be clearly speaking.
2. Not knowing How God speaks—How does God speak? *First*, God speaks by His Word and by His Spirit, always in agreement with one another, never out of line with the character or nature of God. Second, God speaks in line with His nature. Psalm 85:8 states, *“I will hear what God the LORD will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones...”* James 3:17 states that the *“wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable...”* The fruit of the Holy Spirit is *“peace”* (Galatians 5:22). God speaks in a peaceful way, not rashly nor harshly nor in a confusing way. He is never the author of confusion. First Corinthians 14:33 says very clearly, *“for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”*
3. Not knowing how Willing the Lord is to speak—Jesus said to the *“weary,” “Come to Me... take My yoke... learn from Me... for I am gentle and humble of heart”* (Matthew 11:28-30). He is open to speak, to lead anyone who will listen with a learner’s heart, ready to obey.
4. Lack of Surrender to the Lord. As a result then, not Responding when God speaks—When God speaks, He does so to help the relationship with Him. One’s relationship with the Lord is based on trust, full trust. That means surrender to Him and His will, trusting He always *knows* best and *does* best. Jesus said in John 7:17 that *“if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God...”* Romans 12:1-2 adds the essential element of worshipful surrender—God is God and is worthy to be worshiped and obeyed. In light of His many mercies outlined in Romans 1-11, surrender to Him is the most reasonable and spiritually wise response. Along with that is not allowing the world to squeeze us into its mold. Rather, based on who God is and what God has said, be *“transformed by the renewing of your mind”* so that one can know by experience *“what the will of God is.”* What is this will? One can personally know and experience *“that which is good [Greek—agathos, beneficial, helpful] and acceptable [Greek—euarestos, well pleasing, well fitting, very agreeable] and perfect [Greek—teleios, reaching the right goal, fulfilling the intended purpose].”*

When God speaks, when He clearly reveals His will and a person does not respond in trust, the relationship is hindered, the communication cannot go forward. Jesus said seven times *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

5. Not aware of counterfeit guidance—There are many supernatural beings around. The “*thief*,” the devil and demons seek to “*steal, and kill, and destroy*” as Jesus warned (John 10:10). The serpent in the Garden lied about God and about His Word. He gave false guidance and counterfeit directions that led to sin and disobedience, fear, division rather than oneness, hiding from God, and ultimately death (Genesis 3:1-19).

Paul sought to connect every heart with God, helping people hear God clearly. How? Part of his work included “*casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Those “*arguments*” are part of the walls of unbelief raised up to block people from truly hearing and knowing God as He is and as He speaks.

Paul spoke of “*every thought*” pointing to hearing, specifically hearing wrong thinking, instead of what God says. We are to hear God and obey. Jesus warned His disciples to “*take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*,” referring to words, teachings, and conversations infiltrating like leaven, undermining belief and trust in God, even bringing confusion about who God is and what God is saying and doing (Matthew 16:5-12). Be cautious about *what* you hear, *how* you hear, and *who* you hear it from, making sure you carefully evaluate it ever looking to the Word of God!

6. Deafness to God’s Voice because of disobedience to God’s Word and God’s will—the more one ignores or disobeys the Voice of God, the duller one’s spiritual hearing becomes. God warns in Hebrews 4:1-11 about disobedience, not trusting God and acting on what He has said, about failing to mix His Word with faith, about hardening the heart against Him.
7. Greed, stinginess, unwillingness to give, also known by the Hebraism an “*evil eye*,” results in spiritual darkness, the inability to see or understand spiritual reality. Jesus noted this as the problem in Matthew 6:22-23. He contrasted this with having a clear eye or a “*good eye*,” a generous demeanor and actions that lead to being full of light and insight.<sup>1</sup> Many do not see or hear or perceive God or God’s working because of the selfish or stingy set of the heart.

<sup>1</sup> See Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Proverbs 23:6 (“*a selfish man*,” literally, “an evil eye”); Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:22 (“*envy*,” literally “an evil eye”).

8. Pride—Pride says ‘I can handle life myself, I do not need help or guidance.’ God knows this is foolish and He resists the proud and their choices. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 declare “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” The Greek word translated “*is opposed*” pictures setting up in battle array to fight against. That is a losing battle for the proud person.
9. Undealt-with sin—When we do not deal with sin God’s way, we continue out of fellowship, out of the circle of clear communication. When we draw near with a repentant, humble heart, God forgives, cleanses, and restores that person.
10. Un-crucified self-agendas— Jesus calls each follower to “*deny himself,*” say “no” to self, to self-agendas, to self-will. He made it clear that each one must “*take up his cross daily,*” taking self and self-agendas to the place of execution, then “*follow Me,*” follow what I say, the way I want one to act or speak (Luke 9:23).

### HELPS TO HEARING GOD...

What can help us walk the right way? What can help us hear God? Here are some specific Helps to Hearing God...

1. Spend Time in the Word of God—How? Consider this list: Read, Research/Dig, Ponder/Meditate, Memorize, Sing, Speak, Write the Word of God, Write/Review your insights and the insights of others. This includes a daily “Quiet Time” in the Scriptures and in prayer, staying tuned to God’s voice daily.
2. Spend Time in Prayer—This includes speaking to God *and* listening to Him. Get to know His ‘still small voice’ like Elijah heard as the “*sound of a gentle blowing*” like a soft breeze (1 Kings 19:12). Listen carefully, thoughtfully to His Word.
3. Sometimes we need to spend time in Fasting with Prayer along with Time in the Word. Fasting is not a magic plan. It is a deliberate step at removing distractions and intensifying concentration. Most often fasting is from food, substituting that time for extra time with God. It could consist of ‘fasting’ from media, time off from a screen (computer, smart phone, tablet, television, etc.)—anything that could distract from hearing God. The key factor is concentration on the Lord, His Word, His will, and hearing from Him.



4. One help in hearing God is praying with others, especially *“with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart”* (2 Timothy 2:22). This refers to continuous *calling*, not hit or miss or only in rare seasons. It is a lifestyle of seeking the Lord, of time with Him, of *prayer* time with Him together with others. And it is not centered around someone’s agenda; it is from *“a pure heart,”* clear with God and clear with others, like those in 1 Timothy 2:8 who *“pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”* Each is walking with the Lord *“with holy hands,”* not soiled with sin, not dishonest or selfish or striving to get one’s own way.
  
5. Reading the Biographies of those who have walked with God helps us hear. We can see how they sought the Lord, how God spoke to them and how they responded. Here is an excellent example from the life of George Mueller (also spelled Muller). Read this testimony and ponder his daily habits and the spirit in which he sought to do the will of God.

George Mueller’s method for discerning the Will of God is practical and marked by the heartbeat of one who walked with God. His testimony in his own words is given by Basil Miller (*George Muller—Man of Faith and Miracles*, pp. 50-51) ...

Many asked Mr. Muller how he sought to know the will of God, in that nothing was undertaken, not even the smallest expenditure, without the feeling certain he was in God's will. In the following words he gave his answer.

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has not will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impressions. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through or in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
6. Thus through prayer to God, the study of the Word and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

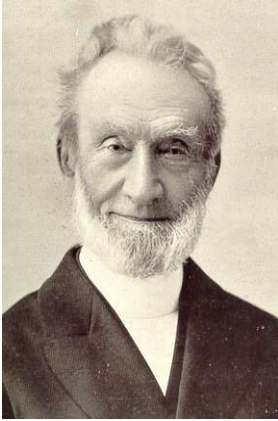
And did this plan work? one asks. Let Mr. Muller's testimony answer.

"I never remember," he wrote three years before his death, "in all my Christian course, a period now of sixty-nine years and four months, that I ever SINCERELY AND PATIENTLY sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, but I have been always directed rightly. But if honesty of heart and uprightness before God were lacking, or if I did not patiently wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred the counsel of my fellow men to the declarations of the Word of the living God, I made great mistakes."

[From George Muller—Man of Faith and Miracles, by Basil Miller, pp. 50-51.  
See also, Autobiography of George Muller, p. 196]



## On Meditation and Prayer



[In his *Autobiography*, George Mueller also speaks of how God used the Scriptures to strengthen and guide him in prayer, discovering that in meditating on the Word of God, God speaks, encourages, rebukes, and leads in prayer, guiding in prayers for himself and others. Here are his words.]

“I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. [Likely, today’s terminology would be deep “peace and joy,” having a clear conscience before the Lord and others and a sure sense of surrender and dependence on Him (Acts 24:16; Romans 12:1-3).] The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit. Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning.

Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the word of God and to meditate on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprovéd, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord’s blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.

The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference then between my former practice and my present one is this: Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events, I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, in which case I read the Word of God for food, or for refreshment, or for a revival and renewal of my inner man, before I gave myself to prayer. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being flourished by the truth being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

... It is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as everyone must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man? Not *prayer*, but *the Word of God*; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

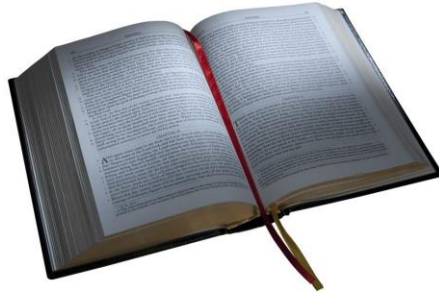
When we pray we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed, is, after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us. We may therefore profitably meditate, with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. There is thus far less to be feared from wandering of mind, than if we give ourselves to prayer, without having had previously time for meditation.

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptation of the day come upon one! [*Autobiography of George Muller*, (Westminster Literature Resources, 2003), pp. 152-153, 154]

## How Does God Speak?

Here are some ways we read of in Scripture. With each way God speaks there is a corresponding counterfeit way we sometimes read or hear about. This is How Our Enemies Confuse or Deceive (world system, “flesh,” and the devil)

### HOW GOD SPEAKS AND HOW COUNTERFEITS CONTRADICT



1. God speaks through the Word of God—We have mentioned this, specifically these actions: Read, Meditate, Memorize, Sing, Speak, Write the Word of God. Think through and pray through what you read.

What is the *counterfeit* to this? In Matthew 4:6, we read of the devil tempting Jesus through his misuse of and confusing of the Word of God just as he did in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). Jesus knew the Word and responded with a true understanding and application of the Word. We must depend on the Spirit of God to guide us and teach us as we walk daily. Another tactic used against God and His people is to doubt the Word. We read of that in Genesis 3, as the serpent cast doubt on God and His Word... “*has God said*”... even implying that God had lied, “*you surely shall not die*” (Genesis 3:1, 4). Another tactic in this battle arena is getting us to ignore the Word; just leave it out of our thinking, our decision making. Similar is the battle of forgetting the Word. Another danger is treating the Word for *information* only—Just the Facts without Faith. This is information without transformation, without obedient faith application (see Hebrews 3:12-13, 18-19; 4:2). A walk *with* God is not mere intellectual exercise or emotional stimulation; it is a walk of choices in line with His Word, His character, His nature, joining Him in His work. In Scripture, we read of those who walked with God. We can learn from them and others throughout the ages in Scripture.

2. God Can Speak Audibly. This is rare in Scripture, though it happened. Some today have testified that they heard God's voice in an audible way, but that is even rarer. God can do that; He is God. The key to our walk is paying attention to what we have each day—His Word, the work of the Spirit of God (teaching the Word, convicting of sin, correcting our walk, encouraging our walk with Him), and life as part of the Body of Christ—the *"one another"* factor is meant to build us up and encourage us in our walk. There are over 80 *"one another"* commands in Scripture. If we are walking faithfully in these areas, then, if God chooses to speak audibly, we know that something unique is happening—Never forget that what we 'hear' must agree with the Word of God, His character and His nature.

Counterfeit sounds. There are supernatural events occurring today, but that does not mean that any of those events are from God. The devil and demons can create sounds, but it is counterfeit noise, misleading uproars, and all sorts of confusion designed to deceive and ultimately destroy. Continue in the Word of God.

3. Dreams/Visions—In Scripture, God spoke from time to time in dreams and visions, communicating His will for that person (or people) for that time (Matthew 1:20-24; 2:12, 13-15). He can still do that, but, again, we need to remember the truths in #2 above—pay attention to God each day in the 'normal' paths of life in our spiritual journey, especially His written Word.

Counterfeit dreams/visions. There are many counterfeit dreams and visions; we can recognize those by the fact that they do not match the Word of God. Satan and his messengers pose as 'angels of light' while leading into greater darkness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). False teachers speak falsehoods, many based on their 'dreams' or 'visions' (Colossians 2:18-19; 2 Peter 2:1-22). We must be aware and cautious. A few years ago, I was told that bank tellers are not trained to spot counterfeit money by studying counterfeit money. They are trained by knowing real currency so well that a counterfeit can be spotted—it does not 'feel' right, something is 'wrong' here. Of course, there are chemical tests and other options today, but the reality is that a counterfeit can be shown to be a counterfeit. Does it match the Word of God and the character of God? If not, it does not matter how vivid the vision or dream—it's bogus.

Ephesians 6:11 mentions the “schemes,” “wiles,” or “methods” of the devil. These are a translation of the Greek word *methodeias*, referring to the devil’s schemes or methods of operation always designed to confuse, distress, deceive, tempt, and mislead. He is the “devil,” the translation of the Greek word *diabolos*, the one who throws through like a spear, the divider, the one who causes division through cunning and lying (see Genesis 3). We need to keep this in mind as we seek to follow the Lord and His leading.

4. Impressions/Promptings—While some speak of ‘promptings’ from the Lord, we must ever maintain caution in this area. Does God give impressions and promptings? Yes, indeed. He gives a sense of peace or unrest or uneasiness over a matter. There may be a check over some detail or a caution point. The best advice is to stop, evaluate, seek the Lord in prayer, seek wise counsel where needed, and move cautiously.

Misleading impressions. We need to remember that emotions are emotions. They are the ‘caboose’ that follows the ‘engine’ of choices, not the engine that drives or pushes choices. Emotions cannot always be trusted; they can come from any number of sources, including medical needs, physical weariness, and emotional burnout.

Charles Swindoll has given a good word of counsel—using the acrostic H.A.L.T.—Stop, Never make a major decision if you are H—Hungry, A—Angry, L—Lonely, or T—Tired. That’s wise advice, a good check-up. Recall Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kings 19:1-8). After a tremendous victory over the wicked prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he ran for his life, knowing that Queen Jezebel had threatened his death. He was physically and emotionally drained and wanted to die. Obviously, a misleading thought. In the wilderness, the Angel of the LORD met him and fed him; Elijah needed some good rest, food, and water. The Angel of the LORD gave him that twice and then Elijah continued his journey to Mount Horeb where God met him, spoke to him, and gave him his new assignments (1 Kings 19:9-18). *Caution:* remember that impressions or promptings *can* be thought darts of the enemy meant to deceive, discourage, or in some way sidetrack us (Ephesians 6:11, 16). They can be simply fleshly desires, deceitful to us and others. Caution and wisdom are the order of the day. If it pleases the “flesh,” the sinful desires, it is not from God, nor does it agree with His Word (and the ‘pleasure’ is short-lived—Hebrews 11:25-26).

5. God speaks through Others—We mentioned this, in part, in #2, concerning the “one another’s” in our lives. God works through the Body of Christ, especially the local fellowship of believers, those close to us, who can speak into our lives. Part of the “Others” He can use are the Authorities in our lives. This includes parents and family—it can be amazing the wisdom that can come from a dad or mom, an uncle, a grandmother or grandfather, even a brother or sister. The key is listening for and looking for the voice and hand of God. Authorities in other areas can also be used by God to speak into our lives. That includes those who are part of the church—pastors, teachers, etc. Pay attention to what one may say. Often, God is speaking. At work, a boss or supervisor can be used by God. Don’t discount what that person may say. The same is true of those at school or even in government. The Apostle Paul found God working through many, such as the Roman Centurion Julius on the Mediterranean voyage to Rome (Acts 27). David and his men discovered God using even antagonistic Philistines to direct him and his men back to Ziklag. There they discovered, and God led them, in a whole new set of circumstances that turned out very well for them, their families, and the nation of Israel (see 1 Samuel 29-30).

Counterfeits. There are those who would lead us astray, not necessarily intentionally, but because they are not following God themselves, nor do they know how to hear His voice. Those misleading ways can come from the world system with its worldly thinking. This includes ‘opinion polls’ in which people gather opinions seeking to push their agenda. Much PR is fallible. These ‘public relations’ talking points are spun a certain way and often loaded with lies, deceit, and misleading stories. A tongue-in-cheek statement from long ago warned of three kinds of lies—white lies, black lies, and statistics. That is the way of the world, including “public sentiment.” Just because many think a certain way does not mean that is the correct way (Proverbs 14: 12).

Another trap found within the world is listening to susceptible people—people who unwittingly yield to thought darts and enemy thinking. Psalm 19:7 promises that the testimony of the Lord can make “*wise the simple*,” the word “*simple*” painting a picture of someone who is open to anything (Proverbs 14:15). That is a foolish person, easily fooled and quick to make foolish statements and choices.

Another factory of counterfeit guidance is found in our own fleshly desires. This can include selfish ambition, jealousy, strife—me fighting to get my way, and various lusts. James 3:14-16 speaks of these fleshly attitudes and actions, declaring that “*this wisdom is not that which comes down from above,*” but is earth-bound, sensually rooted, even demonically directed. It is not of God, and He does not speak in this way.

6. God speaks through those speaking the Word of God, including sermons, teachings, testimonies, and songs. God works in His church, speaking specifically to hearts and lives. There are many so-called ‘coincidences’ in the way



God speaks that are actually ‘God-incidences,’ evidence of His very detailed care and concern. He knows what we need to hear and often He will use a simple comment or part of a sermon or Bible lesson to speak to a specific point in daily life or to a specific decision.

Counterfeit words. Recall the admonition from #3 above. False teachers and preachers and writers can say or write all kinds of words, with all kinds of promises, but be lying. Jude 15-16, 18-19 warns about the “*ungodly sinners*” who speak ungodly things against the Lord. They are “*grumblers,*” fault-finders, “*mockers,*” speaking arrogant words and flattery.

7. Husband/Wife/Parents in family decisions. This matches some of the truths mentioned under #5. Pay attention to one another in the home. God may use the husband to give leadership beyond his expertise, experience, or the expectations of others, because God speaks through authorities in various situations. Do not ignore the advice, the caution, or the wisdom of a wife. Abraham found that out in Genesis 21:9-13 in dealing with Hagar. That truth is ever to be balanced with something else Abraham experienced. A few years before, he listened to Sarai about fathering a child through Hagar, something that he should have taken to God first, but didn’t (Genesis 16). For today, ask, “Does this line up with the Word of God, the character and nature of God?”



8. Consistency is the Key in Learning to Hear God. God's messages always line up with His Word and His character. There are no true inconsistencies in the Word of God, only seeming inconsistencies. When one traces the facts carefully, everything lines up. This consistency is also part of the character of God. He does not change and He does not lie. He is right and truthful in everything He does and says. This cannot be stressed enough.

Inconsistencies. That which is not from God is not consistent, does not line up with His Word. We need to carefully search and think through the principles, examples, commands, exhortations, and teachings of the Word of God. It is our plumb line as Amos 7:7-9 shows. The plumb line of old was a weighted string pulled down by gravity that always showed if a wall was straight or crooked. The Word of God is like a "plumb line" or a "level" helping us make sure what we are building is not crooked or leaning, ready to fall or crumble.

9. God speaks peace. Psalm 85:8 makes note of this fact. If there is unrest, uncertainty, something not right, a 'check' in one's spirit, then back up. Pray. Read. Gather wise counsel (Proverbs 24:6).

Lack of Peace. As we seek to make decisions, we must be watchful. If there is a lack of peace—stop and ask why. What may be causing a lack of peace? Of course, there could be a false peace—stop and examine the situation. There could also be false guilt that is causing unrest. That is another call to stop and pray, to ask God for His "*wisdom from above*" that is first of all "*pure, then peaceable*" (James 3:17).



10. Unanimity. God speaks with unanimity of the involved, assigned parties in decision making. We find an example of this in the gathering in Acts 15. They did not start the gathering with ‘one mind,’ but as they talked, prayed, and searched the Scriptures, they came to one mind. Acts 15:25 speaks of “*having become of one mind.*” The mind of the Spirit is one and He gives unity in decision making (Acts 15:25, 28).

Decision making is not always easy, and can lead to strained relationships. The example of Paul and Barnabas disagreeing over taking John Mark on their second mission journey is a clear example (Acts 15:36-41). Who was right? Barnabas was concerned with John Mark and his growth. Paul was concerned that he would not be a fit for this journey. Paul chose Silas and apparently the local church encouraged them about the journey. Paul and Silas journeyed, “*being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord*” (Acts 15:40). The word translated “*committed*” is *paradidomi*, meaning to give over, to entrust. It is the same word used of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:26, referring to the surrender of their lives to the Lord Jesus for His name’s sake. In Acts 15:40, the church body surrendered Paul and Silas to the grace of the Lord, to His working and leading. It appears all were seeking to follow the Lord.

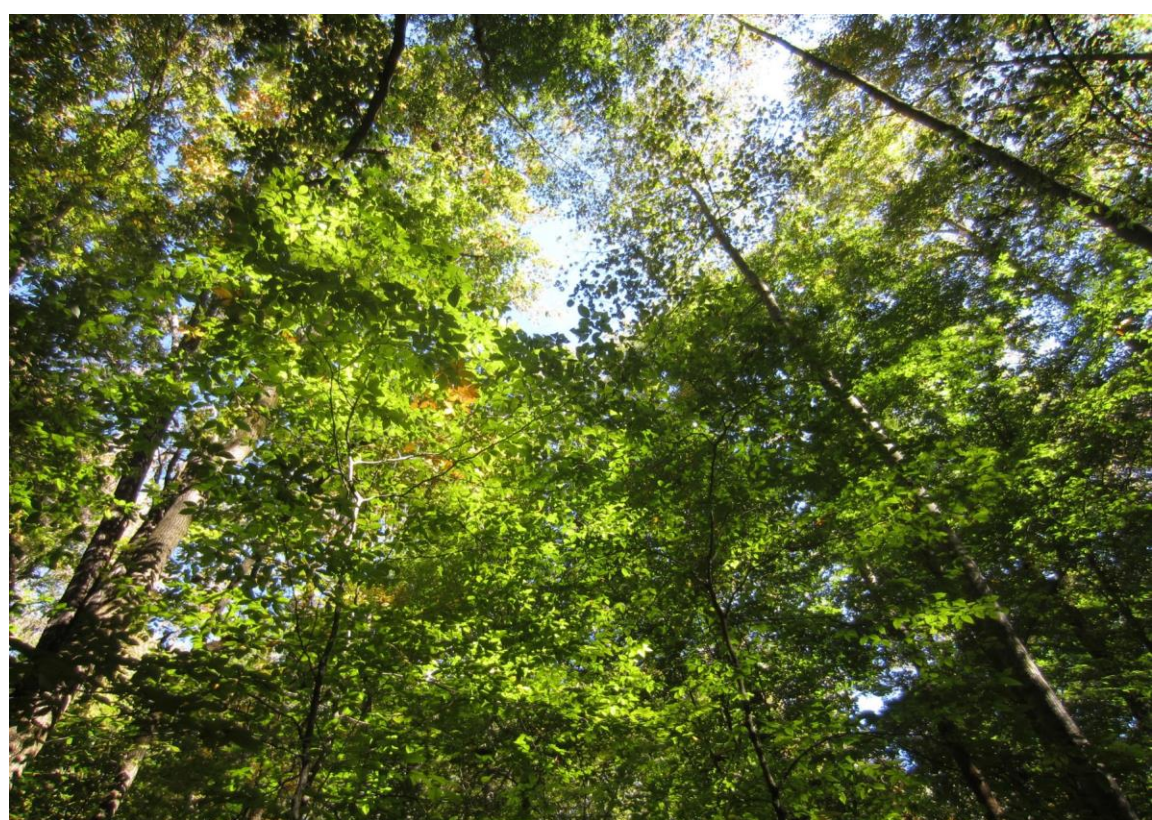
Disunity—One of the tools of the devil is disunity. His very name (Greek—*diabolos*) means “divider,” the one who brings division and strife. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul warned about giving Satan an advantage through being unforgiving. He then stated, “*for we are not ignorant of his schemes,*” [Greek *noema*, purpose, well thought out plan], one of which is to divide relationships by promoting continued unforgiveness and by spreading lies about God or others. As we follow the Holy Spirit, we avoid this and other fleshly works (Galatians 5:16-21). The Spirit is One with the Father and the Son and He gives unity. We should ever seek to preserve that unity and walk in oneness with Him and with one another, even in the decision making process (Ephesians 4:3).

11. God speaks through natural phenomena—God speaks in a variety of ways through natural phenomena. Psalm 19:1-6 pictures God speaking through the Creation, the heavens clearly declaring the majesty of God and His creative handiwork. God speaks through the weather. We read in Job 37:2-5 about the thunder declaring His power. Then, Job 37:6 speaks of snow and rain. In Job 37:12-13, we read of three purposes for weather—1) for maintenance on the earth, “*for His world,*” providing the essentials, 2) for “*correction*” (literally, “*the rod*”), directing weather as a measure of judgment to discipline people, and 3) “*for lovingkindness*” or mercy, God showing His compassion for people in various needs. We see that in the case of Ruth and Naomi in Ruth 1:6.

Disregarding what is seen. While God speaks even through weather, some will not acknowledge that. Some fail to see God’s work in the weather, even in the normal day-to-day matters. They refuse to thank Him or to acknowledge Him as God, though He is clearly at work in the very evident creation all around (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20-21). Some disregard the creation and the weather and see all as by ‘chance,’ untouched by God. Many do not understand or acknowledge the fallen nature of earth and the universe along with all its systems—stellar (sunspots, asteroids, meteors, etc.), atmospheric (winds, clouds, rains, droughts, storms, etc.), and surface/crust (earthquakes, tremors, mudslides, sinkholes, etc.). This ‘fallenness’ accounts for much of the phenomena we see, even the ongoing “*futility*” in which “*the whole creation groans*” (Romans 8:19-23).

12. God speaks through supernatural timing in natural phenomena—As we encounter various weather phenomena, weather related events, and other planet earth situations, it is important to note the timing of these matters. Certain famines, droughts, floods, fires, earthquakes, eclipses, etc. come with an exact timing that matches a message God seeks to get across. Does that mean all weather phenomena are a message? No. There is a message in all weather, all of creation; every second of every day declares the power and ability of our Creator as we read in Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:2-3; 11:3. However, at certain times, there is a specific message. We see that in Jonah 1:4, 8-16. God “*hurled a great wind on the sea*” and later “*appointed a great fish*” to deal with Jonah and his disobedience.

Disregarding and/or blind to the supernatural timing of natural phenomena— Several connections may exist between certain natural phenomena, but many either do not see or willfully ignore or disregard any possible connections. There is no room in their ‘theology’ for such a God or such occurrences. Some simply declare all to be random chance or human interference in the weather systems, with no God involved in any way. We know these events occur, but many fail to see the timing factor. That is where the message can become clearer if one is paying attention. In the time of Joel, the nation experienced extensive drought, intense wildfires, and a massive four-fold locust invasion (Joel 1:1-7, 12, 17-20). Through these phenomena, God got their attention, then sent Joel with a message to ‘connect the dots,’ to focus their attention, so they would pay attention and return to Him in repentance. It was primarily a message on the hope of restoration for then and the future (Joel 2:12-14, 18-19, 21-27).



## LET'S GET STARTED HEARING GOD... THE BEST WAY TO HEAR GOD

So, knowing these truths and testimonies of others in Scripture and in the history of the church, how are we to walk *hearing God* day by day? If someone wants to talk to you, he tries to get your attention, to speak face to face if possible. You must respond, perhaps move closer or face in that direction. The same is true in order to hear God.

From the Start—First, we must make sure our ears are clear—the ears of the heart—We need to direct attention to the Lord, to seek His Face, to hear Him clearly.

God has spoken clearly in Creation (Genesis 1-2; Romans 1:20), in each conscience (Romans 2:14-15), in the commands of God's law (Romans 2:12-13, 18), and most fully in Christ (Romans 3:21-28; Hebrews 1:1-3). With this being true, how can we be in tune more sharply, receive His signals more clearly, hear Him more fully—in all He wants to say?

Clearly hearing Him comes through His Word. When we truly "hear" what He is saying, we can also pray His Word—we can have an ongoing "Word-conversation" by the power and ability of the Holy Spirit as He works in us and with us. How?

Consider how people in Scripture heard God, talked with Him, and walked with Him. For example, in Abram's life, God first got his attention through his circumstances in Ur and Haran. God called him to leave there and travel to Canaan, giving him promises of God's blessing (Genesis 11:31; 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-4). Abram obeyed. In the land of Canaan, God appeared to him and Abram responded in prayer and worship (Genesis 12:7-9). Abram did what he knew to do and said what he knew to say. God kept teaching and training him and Abram learned more and more about listening and hearing God, talking and walking with Him. God does the same with us—it is a growth process.

In Genesis 15:1-6, God spoke to Abram, declaring He would be his shield and reward, his protection and provision. Abram could think back just a few days to when he had won the battle against the four kings and gave away the spoil of that victory (Genesis 14:8-24). Now, God assured him He would protect and provide for him.



Then, Abram brought up a greater concern—no son, thus no heir of his own. God assured him he would have a son as his heir. God spoke Abram’s language; He took him outside and told him to look at the stars—God’s creation, from nothing to something. God was saying, in essence, ‘I will do that for you.’ Abram believed God; he trusted Him and as Romans 4:17 states, “... *Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing*” (NLT). He believed God could bring something out of nothing in his life, life out of death, fruitfulness out of barrenness. God saw his faith and reckoned into Abram’s account His own righteousness. That communication continued. We read of it in Genesis 15, 16, 17, through to Genesis 22. In Genesis 22, God tested Abraham and gave him another promise—descendants as many as the sands of the seashore (Genesis 22:17).

Years later, when Abraham’s grandson Jacob faced a desperate circumstance, he prayed about this desperate situation (Genesis 32:9-12). He prayed based on the Word the Lord had promised him at Bethel 20 years before (Genesis 28:13-15), in Haran a few weeks before (Genesis 31:3; 32:9), and what He had promised Abraham years before (Genesis 22:17; 32:12). He prayed those promises and God answered that prayer (Genesis 33:1-11).

We see this pattern over and over again—God speaks on our level. We respond. He speaks more and reveals more. We respond in a closer, fuller way—we grow in knowing Him and hearing Him.

Another example. Serving in Babylon's government, Daniel became burdened about Jerusalem and the end of the Israelite captivity in Babylon. After reading the Lord's promises about the captivity in the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah, Daniel turned his attention to seek the Lord (Daniel 9:2-3). He read Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 and prayed Daniel 9:4-20 based on the word he had read in Jeremiah. God spoke and revealed more. Daniel recorded that in Daniel 9.

Over 80 years later, Nehemiah became greatly burdened over Jerusalem, especially after hearing the latest reports from his brother Hanani (Nehemiah 1:1-3). He began to pray. How did he pray? He prayed the Word of God from his heart. Read Nehemiah 1:5-11 and you will find evidence of several Old Testament writings.<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah had saturated his heart and mind with the Word of God, so that when he lifted his heart burdens to the Lord, out came the Word of God from the musings and meditations of his heart. He showed that in his praying throughout the record of Nehemiah.<sup>3</sup> God placed certain matters on his heart—he thought on that and He prayed that. He interacted with God and God answered with His wisdom and work.



<sup>2</sup> See for example, Daniel 9:4-5, 17, Exodus 34:6, 1 Kings 8:28-29, 2 Chronicles 6:40, Leviticus 26:33, 39, Deuteronomy 4:25-27, 29-31; 28:15, 63-67; 30:2-5.

<sup>3</sup> See Nehemiah 2:4, 12; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:14.

What about Jesus? Isaiah 50:4 gives a prophecy about the coming Messiah, specifically of His daily “Quiet Time” and prayer time with the Lord. *“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”* Jesus proved obedient to all the Father taught Him and all He commanded Him, including His death on the Cross (Isaiah 50:5-7; Philippians 2:5-11).

From His childhood, Jesus had an ongoing conversation with His Father. We read evidence of this in His Temple conversations with the Jewish leaders at age twelve (Luke 2:41-50). He knew His Father, the things of His Father, the Word of His Father (the Scriptures), and obviously meditated deeply on that Word.

Jesus also prayed the Word of God. That was His ‘prayer vocabulary.’ For example, in Matthew 11:25-26, Jesus prayed in the light of passages such as Exodus 20:11, Psalm 8, and Nehemiah 9. As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, His prayer came from the Word of God, from His interaction with the Word. There, He heard from His Father and He responded to His Father. Hebrews 10:5-9 contains one of those prayer interactions. In Hebrews 10:5, Jesus prayed,

*“Sacrifice and offering You have not desired,  
but a body You have prepared for Me;  
in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You  
have taken no pleasure.  
Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (in the roll of  
the book it is written of Me) to do Your will,  
O God.’”*

That is a quote from Psalm 40:6-8 and it expresses the heart of Jesus and the heart of the Father.





On the cross, Jesus prayed Psalm 22:1 and Psalm 31:5. His heart and mind were saturated with the Word of God. Think about this—Jesus never said anything wrong, no deceitful words, no lies, no complaining, nothing in error. His words were “*gracious*” and “*are spirit and are life,*” always true (John 8:31-47). Yet, as pure as His words were, when Jesus prayed, He used the words of Scripture. What does that say about His view of Scripture? The highest. What does that say about His view of prayer? He knew the Scripture allowed Him to speak clearly the language of Heaven, the heart and mind and will of His Father. What was His view of hearing His Father? He knew His Father would speak to Him through Scripture.

In the early church, the first disciples also used the Scriptures in prayer. We find a clear example of this in the prayer gathering in Acts 4:24-31, quoting from Exodus 20, Nehemiah 9, and Psalm 2, because they were saturated with the Scriptures. We can do the same as we read, hear God, pray to Him, and walk with Him.

<sup>4</sup> See 1 Peter 2:22-23; Luke 4:22; John 6:63, 68; 14:6.

## SO WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we hear God more clearly day by day?*

First, Talk to the Lord *first* every day. Have a Jesus-focused attitude.

Second, Listen everyday. Think through *this statement*: we must stop long enough, to listen closely enough, to hear clearly enough, to obey fully enough, to do the will of God surely enough. Seek to have a God-initiated day.

Third, Read and Heed the Word of God. More time and concentration in the Word equals more clear hearing and understanding the heart of God.

Fourth, if life is as some say—10% what happens to us and 90% attitude—then, make sure you are Jesus focused, Word fixed, and Spirit filled for the day and all it brings.

Fifth, Start Now. Pick a passage or book and read it. Read it again. Ask God to speak. Listen. Look for connections. His heart will always agree with His Word and His Word always expresses His heart. Remember this: to know more and more of the fullness of God's heart, one must know more and more of His Word—"the whole purpose of God," Paul called it (Acts 20:27). Watch out for easy 'cut and paste' short-cuts, no jumping from favorite flavor to favorite flavor. It is not a pick-and-choose buffet. It takes time to know the Lord more fully, like knowing the ocean. I grew up on the Gulf Coast and have vacationed in California, seen the Pacific Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, and have lived several years close to the Atlantic Ocean, but I would never say I fully know the ocean. So it is with knowing God. It takes time and talking and listening and meditating and praying to learn what He wants to teach us, what He wants to show us, what He wants to share through us with others around us.

## HERE'S A STARTING POINT...

1. Read Psalms, Proverbs, one of the Gospels. Read the passage or book again. Read it again. Pause and think.
2. Pray for anyone God brings to mind. That Scripture may be just the right medicine that person needs in prayer, or it may be that it's just the right medicine for you!
3. Obey anything the Lord shows you as you read—the Lord may point out some specifics for your life.
4. Repeat. Rejoice. Remember what God has said. Be refreshed. Refresh others as the Lord opens the doors to speak what He has shown you. Be like the *“well-watered garden”* of Isaiah 58:11 or like *“a shade from the heat”* as the Lord is in Isaiah 25:4 (see also Isaiah 32:2). Be like refreshing *“cold water to a weary soul”* as in Proverbs 25:25.
5. Hear God and be changed as you walk and talk with Him!



“...Sustained the weary  
one with a word...”



Isaiah 50:4



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