

LISTENING TO GOD

EXPERIENCE A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD BY LEARNING TO HEAR HIS VOICE

Lesson 3 – The Primary Ways God Speaks Today

I believe there are three main ways God speaks to us today.

Through His Word

Through His Holy Spirit

Through other believers in Jesus

The person who desires to hear from God and wants to put himself into the best position to hear from God will pursue His message through these 3 methods. Through these means God routinely, daily, and consistently speaks to all people who seek Him.

Listening To God Through His Word

Psalm 119:11 – *I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

Psalm 119:105 – *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

The Bible is the Word of God and is God's foremost way today of communicating with us.

God's Word is for all people because it speaks to the basic human condition. The Bible addresses every emotion, human relationship dynamic, problem of the heart, aspect of the psyche, temptation or desire, heartache or joy, and issue of faith hope or love.

We find teachings that show us how the Holy Spirit enables us to live a life that is fully pleasing to God the Father, a life that goes beyond mere law because it is based on the spirit of God's law, not the letter of the law.

The Bible covers it all! Whenever we face difficulties, experience heartaches, or have questions, we should go to the scriptures.

There God will speak to us directly, personally, intimately, and effectively.

How does this work in a practical way? We must pray and seek God's guidance about decisions. We should ask boldly for God to speak to us through His Word and give us wisdom.

Joshua 1:7-8 – *Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. ⁸ Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.*

According to these verses, what steps are required of us if we are to find help from God's Word?

Why does the Lord suggest that strength and courage are required for Joshua to follow God's Word?

In response to your prayer the Lord often will direct your mind to a particular passage of scripture that you have encountered in your daily reading of the Bible. He will bring to your remembrance His truth on the matter.

As you pray and read, trust the Holy Spirit to quicken your spirit to His truth.

You may feel this as a warmth inside, or you may feel an absoluteness about a particular verse. Sometimes the words on the page of your bible may seem to stand out to you as if they are written in bold headlines. Sometimes you may not be able to get away from a particular passage. It comes repeatedly to your mind, and you just can't seem to shake it from your memory.

Do not limit your search of God's Word to times of crisis or need. Read His Word daily. It is as you read daily that God directs you, challenges you, warns you, comforts you, and assures you. Daily reading is like preventive spiritual health care. How much better it is to divert a problem or to address a matter before it truly becomes an issue. In your daily reading God refines you bit by bit, always transforming your thoughts and responses into those that are more like Jesus.

You store God's Word in your memory, almost as if you are making daily deposits in a bank, so the Holy Spirit can bring God's Word to your mind. Don't fail to read God's Word daily. Go to it as if it is eternal nourishment for your eternal soul, Jesus said, "***Seek, and you will find***" Matt. 7:7.

James 1:5-6 – If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

Why does the Lord require that we have faith when we ask for wisdom?

Why do doubts prevent us from gaining His wisdom?

Listening To God Through His Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament when men such as David inquired of the Lord, the question was almost always put in such a way that the answer yes or no. I believe this is the foremost way that the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We can never ask too many times of the Holy Spirit, "should I do this- yes or no?" or "should I say this- yes or no?"

We will sense in our spirits His word of reply to us. Generally it will be a sense of enthusiasm with joy and freedom or it will be a sense of foreboding, danger, caution, or a need to be quiet.

I find it much easier to receive the direction of the Holy Spirit by asking for yes or no counsel than to say in general terms "What do you want me to do?"

Very specifically, the Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit guides us and gives us God's advice in these ways:

1. The Holy Spirit reminds us of what God has said to us and done for us in the past. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him- in other words, remind His disciples of all that Jesus said and did and of the appropriateness for their lives.
2. The Holy Spirit gives us words to say. Jesus described for His disciples what would happen at the "end of the age." Then He encouraged them by explaining that the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say in moments of crisis or questioning. We should pray for the Holy Spirit to give us the words when we face difficult moments in which we don't know what to say. We can trust God to provide words for us just as surely as we can trust God to meet our other needs.
3. The Holy Spirit gives us direction about where to go. The apostle Paul said the Holy Spirit spoke to him when he was on his way to Asia, forbidding him to go there(Acts 16:6-7). We can trust the Holy Spirit to point us in the right direction.

4. The Holy Spirit guides our prayers.

Paul taught the Romans that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27 – *And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in word. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.*

When we don't know how to pray, we should ask the Holy Spirit to pray for us and through us to the Father. That's how we can know that we are always praying in God's will.

As you pray about a specific matter, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer. You may be surprised at the things the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, things you had never thought about before.

Listening To God Through Other Believers

God uses people to speak to you. Some may be total strangers, others may be dear friends or members of your immediate family. He also uses pastors and teachers.

God gives you comfort and counsel through the words of other believers, and at times He uses people to give you words of admonition or warning. You need to be open to these words also. Sometimes others can see far more clearly the mistakes you are about to make or have made.

As you open yourself up to hear God's word from other people, you must make certain that:

- The word given to you is in total alignment with God's written word.
- The person has no ulterior personal motive. Make certain that the person who gives you counsel doesn't want something from you and isn't trying to manipulate you for his own purposes.
- The word does not include something that might harm another person. God doesn't cause one of His children to be blessed or to prosper at the expense of another. He doesn't move a person into a situation that will cause another person pain, loss, or suffering. If someone advises you to take action that will damage another person, their reputation, relationships, or spiritual growth-don't take that advice. **IT IS NOT godly counsel!**
- The word is for your ultimate and eternal good. God does not deal in short-term gains with long-term disasters. He always speaks to you in a way that prepares you for eternity with Him.

We must recognize that virtually all of us came to believe in Jesus because somebody told us about Jesus. The best thing that any of us can do is tell others what Jesus did for them on the cross.

Read Acts 3:1-8

Why did Peter not give money to the beggar?

What did he give him?

We must look for God to confirm His Word. He may cause you to hear a sermon or a bible lesson that is right in line with what He has said to you in His Word. He may bring a total stranger across your path to speak a word that seems amazingly on target with last Sunday's sermon. He may use a friend to speak to you or direct you to a verse of scripture. These messages to you are part of God's assurance plan that He is the One who is speaking and that He wants you to get the message without question or doubt.

Have you ever been so overcome with a situation that you didn't even know what to pray?