

Hearing from God

Although God has and can speak to us in an audible voice, “hearing from God” happens in a variety of ways and beautiful expressions. Every day the Holy Spirit lives with us and is within us, leading us and making us more like Jesus (John 14, Romans 8). The Lord is continuously at work in our lives and desires an abiding relationship with us. Hearing Him means looking upward to God and giving Him our ear and attention. This happens in the context of a *relationship*. He is our Heavenly Father, and we obey and submit to Him, not the other way around. When we talk with Him we should come humbly, not assuming that what we want to talk about is the most important thing to Him at that moment. God’s priorities trump ours.

Our culture seeks instant answers, avoids being still, and looks for peace through control. But often to hear from God we must be patient, cultivate spaces in our heart and schedule for silence, and surrender our wellbeing and anxieties to a God with a different perspective and timeline than us. That being said, hearing from God is not solely an act of self-willed discipline. The God of the Universe is speaking to us and calling us all into the adventure of His Kingdom.

How God speaks

There are many ways God speaks to His children. Some of the primary ways are:

- **The Bible:** the authoritative Word of God. Apart from Jesus’s presence on Earth in the flesh, the Bible is the most reliable way we can know and hear from God. Often as we read the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will highlight certain passages that He is speaking to us in our present circumstance.
- **The Holy Spirit:** Through the Holy Spirit’s presence within us, God speaks to us and leads us. Often the Spirit’s leading will be a quiet sense within us.
- **Through Spirit-led brothers and sisters in Christ:** As we talk with and have relationships with other Believers, often God will speak to us through their words and actions.
- **The Gifts of the Spirit:** Each member of the Body of Believers has been given a gift from the Spirit to build up the Church (1 Cor. 12, Romans 12). As we exercise these gifts within our community, God speaks to and leads His people.
- **And others:** In Scripture we also see God speak audibly and inaudibly, through dreams and visions, through angels, through creation, and through circumstances.

Often when the Lord is speaking to us, His will becomes clear through speaking to us multiple times and in a variety of ways. If we desire to hear from God, living and learning the Discipleship Pathway aids us greatly. Spending time in dialoguing (two-way) prayer with God, reading Scripture, and engaging with Christian community are essential. Unrepented sin, unforgiveness, and disunity can harden our hearts to God’s voice. Be encouraged: as we practice listening and grow in our relationship with God, we grow in discerning what His voice sounds like.

Exercising wisdom and caution

A general rule of thumb in discerning whether what we are hearing is from God is testing the alignment between the Spirit of God, the People of God, and the Word of God. God’s voice will not contradict Scripture (John 16). If what we are hearing is questioned by other Believers, proceeding should be done with caution. God will often confirm what He is speaking through multiple instances.

Even when we have confidence we are hearing from God, we should always exercise humility and caution. We are human and fallible. We should test what we hear, especially with the help of other Believers (1 Thess. 5:19-21). It is good practice not to say, “I heard from God...God told me...” but rather in our hearts and language to be tentative, “I think God may be saying...It seems He is saying,” etc.