



Knowing and Hearing the Voice of God is *the Basic Right* of Every Believer

One day while I was teaching, fear of pride came in; pride in the fact that I could hear from God. He said to me, "You can't be proud of hearing your Father's voice. It is your right as My child."

It is impossible to effectively function as a Christian without recognizing God's voice. It's natural and simple. It is current - not only did He speak in the past, He speaks today. When we enter into relationship with God as our Father, we can expect Him to speak to us as a good, earthly father relates to his child. I don't just speak to my oldest daughter and tell her to tell the other siblings. I speak to each one of my children according to their personalities and needs.

*. . . the sheep listen to His voice.
He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out . . .
and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice.* John 10:3-4

*My sheep listen to My voice;
I know them, and they follow Me.* John 10:27

Hearing is with the natural ear, but listening is with a heart of love, and a willingness to be obedient.

He who belongs to God hears what God says . . . John 8:47

For the Lord . . . takes the upright into His confidence. Prov 3:32

One of the first things a new follower of Jesus should be taught is how to recognize God's voice, and how to communicate with our Father in heaven. Prayer is communication - talking, hearing, and listening.

*The Lord confides in those who fear Him;
He makes His covenant known to them.* Psalm 25:14

*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and His ears are attentive to their prayer . . .* 1 Peter 3:12

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God spoke and was heard. Adam, Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Ananias, Peter, and Paul are just a few who heard God's voice. With every covenant from Genesis to Revelation, God spoke - and was heard. **God has not changed - have we?**

God communicated with men and women who walked and talked with Him. He gave them detailed instructions. In Acts 9:10-12, God tells Ananias to . . . *'go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'* Ananias and all the others, were people who waited on God.

We often miss God's maximum purpose in our lives because we fail to seek Him in relation to things we think are unimportant. If our main concept of God and ourselves, is Master and servant, we will only expect God to give orders on what we would consider to be important issues. One main reason God made us in His image and likeness is that we would be able to interact with Him. He wants us to have the fear of the Lord in our lives to the point where we obey Him because of who He is, regardless of what He tells us to do. We can trust Him totally. He confides in those He trusts - and in those who trust in Him.

The Lord confides in those who fear Him. Psalm 25:14a; see also Psalm 25:8-13

*We know that God does not listen to sinners.
He listens to the godly man who does His will.* John 9:31

The Holy Spirit is very specific . . .

The Holy Spirit takes the things of God and makes them realities in our lives. He translates us from the realm of head knowledge into revelation.

*I want you to know, brothers and sisters,
that the gospel I preached is not of human origin.
I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it;
rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.* Galatians 1:11-12

All through the book of Acts we read, 'God said to them,' 'the Lord said,' 'the Holy Spirit said,' 'the angel said,' - all practical, detailed and very clear instructions. Saul, later called Paul, got to know God's voice as he was learning to depend on His leading. Although a new believer, he was already clearly being led by Him.

*A person's steps are directed by the Lord.
How then can anyone understand his own way?* Prov 20:24

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.* Psalm 32:8

The three things God wanted for Paul (and for us) are:

1. to know His will
2. to hear His voice
3. to have an accurate picture of Jesus - who He really is

How can we pray and bear fruit if we are not praying according to God's will? And how can we know His will if we do not know His voice?

God speaks everywhere to His people. It is exciting. It is every day. It is not just us speaking to God. People of all religions speak to their gods, but our God desires to speak to us (Isaiah 30:21; Matt 10:27). Jesus always went to His Father about everything (John 8:26-29). Should we do less?

God's desire is for you to know and listen to His voice, or you will never be able to walk closely with God in obedience and faith. There will always be something lacking in your Christian life.

What do you do when faced with a decision?

You can be influenced by . . .

- people's opinions (2 Cor 10:5)
 - your own thoughts, desires and feelings (Prov 3:5-6)
 - circumstances
 - whispers of the enemy (Eph 6:10-20; James 4:7)
- . . . *or you can listen to God.*

Learn to make decisions by letting God make your decisions.

Some Christians know the importance of obeying the teaching of Scriptures but know little of obedience to Jesus through day-to-day guidance and the Holy Spirit.

The strongest Christians of all denominations over the centuries have been men and women who have spent an hour or more each day waiting on God in prayer. And praying short prayers on and off through the rest of the day. As a result, these Christians become receptive to the voice of the Spirit. God wants us to practice hearing His voice so He can have relationship with us.

God is not only infinite but personal. True guidance means getting closer to the Guide. Guidance is not complicated; it is actually hard **not** to hear Him if you really want to please and obey Him.

*In his heart a man plans his course,
but the Lord determines his steps.* Prov 16:9; see also Prov 3:5-6

For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even to the end. Psalm 48:14

The Lord will guide you continually (Exodus 15:13; Psalm 32:8; Prov 20:24; Is 48:17; Is 58:11; Jer 10:23)

If you don't have communication, you don't have personal relationship. It is not position, educational abilities or accomplishments that impress God; it is relationship with Him. He is preparing a Bride for His Son.

Moses valued his intimacy with God more than any blessing . . .

"If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." Exodus 33:15

The Lord had said, *"My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest."* (Exodus 33:13-18)

In His presence, you don't just hear truth, you absorb it. But do not seek to recognize God's voice more easily, just so you can find solutions to problems. God wants you to know His will and give you solutions. More importantly, He wants you to deepen the intensity of your personal relationship with Him. The more you know God in a personal way, the more you will be able to recognize His Spirit's voice.

One day I was walking along a path asking the Lord, "How can I help people hear Your voice?" and I sensed Him say, "It is like listening to the birds; when you stop and listen and get 'tuned in' to them, you can hear them." If there is a lot of noise it is hard to hear, but you can, if you listen.

In difficult and confusing situations, we need to learn to quieten ourselves before we respond. Early in the morning, it's very easy to hear the birds. But as traffic starts, you have to listen more carefully. It's possible, but more difficult. That's why we need to learn to quiet ourselves so we can hear from Him.

In Singapore, I was speaking in a room that had no open windows. One of the closed windows was near the roof. I was processing with the Spirit about whether to share the story of the birds because I knew that the attendees wouldn't be able to personally experience listening to the birds at that time. Suddenly, a bird started to bang on the window with its beak, and I knew God was asking me to share the story. Birds hear the voice of God too!

This story says it even more clearly . . .

A Native American and his friend were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square. It was during the noon hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening. Suddenly, the Native American said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!" "No, I'm sure of it," the Native said, "I heard a cricket." The Native American listened carefully for a moment. He walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, and beneath the branches. And sure enough, he located a small cricket! His friend was utterly amazed. "That's incredible," said his friend. "You must have superhuman hearing!" "No," said the Native, "My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for." "But that can't be!" said his friend. "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." "Yes, it's true," came the reply. "It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you what I mean." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within twenty feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?" asked the Native. "It all depends on what's important to you." (Author Unknown)

Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. Psalm 105:4

*Come, all you who are thirsty . . . Listen, listen to Me . . .
Give ear and come to Me; hear Me, that your soul may live . . .
Seek the Lord . . . call on Him . . .
For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways . . .
As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways
and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Isaiah 55:1-9

Service, evangelism, programs and productivity are important, but they are never goals in themselves. They are only important to God if they come out of communion with Him, listening to Him, His instructions, and His ideas. Our first priority is to have intimacy with Him, and out of that intimacy, ministry will flow. Peter did not marry me to do his wash, cook, etc.; he could hire a maid for that. He married me for intimacy, and out of a love relationship, I just naturally serve.

Wounding can come from not listening to God. Misunderstandings can also come from not listening. When we are listening to learn from God, it will help us to listen carefully to others so we can share with them what is on His heart. We can hear from God through them, and also learn about them.

If we do not believe God's Word, we can be like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that said, "**We *had* hoped . . .**" (Lk 24:13-26). On our 'road to Emmaus,' we lose hope if we do not listen and believe. It is the journey that counts.

Revelation and understanding from God come when we listen (Eph 1:17-20).

Unity comes when we listen to God together at the foot of the cross - corporately - in humility, repentance and love, with hearts right before Him. We are encountering a 'great battle' and we need the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17.

Corporate humility brings corporate unity which, in turn, brings corporate authority.

I led a 'Listening to God' seminar for churches in Victoria, BC. On the Sunday I was asked to speak at a church. Before the service started, an older woman with a walker got up and said, "This past weekend many people confessed Jesus as their Lord and I didn't. I want to **now** - Jesus is my Lord" (Rom 10:9).

The service continued with praise and worship and, after two songs, the worship leader stopped and said, "I have never asked the Lord what songs He wanted us to sing. I want to repent and ask the church's forgiveness" (A tremendous amount of disunity comes into the church over what kind of worship and praise we have. We care more about what we sing than Who we came to worship).

Later the associate pastor got up to share communion, and he said, "I've never asked the Lord how He wanted communion served and today I did - I've always done it the way I was taught in seminary."

Now the Spirit of God was the One leading the church and by the end over 3/4 of the church were on their knees recommitting their lives to Jesus. Jesus wants to lead His church by His Spirit and according to His Word.

Listening to God is a lifestyle.

- . . . *This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!* (Matt 17:5)
- *Listen . . . He who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you . . .* (Isaiah 44:1-2)
- Because God's people refused to listen to God, He did not answer when they prayed (Zech 7:8-14)
- Warning to those who carry out plans that are not God's plans (Isaiah 30:1-3)
- Warning again to those who are not listening and have false securities - foreign gods & idols (Psalm 81:8-16 & Jer 7:1-29)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
(Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22)

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
(Matt 11:15; Matt 13:9,43; Mark 4:23; Luke 8:8; Luke 14:35)

The greatest battle is between the religious spirit and the Kingdom. If we do not listen to the Spirit, we live by the law. Living by the law can produce condemnation, depression, discouragement and heaviness. We can be led by the Spirit (freedom) or be driven by the law and people (legalism). When we live by the Spirit we naturally fulfill the law.

We become bonded to the Lord by listening; we hear His heart and see through his eyes (dimly at first). Hearing is with the natural ear, but listening is with the heart.

When I walk into my husband's office and I'm talking to him and he's reading the newspaper, I'll say, "Peter listen to me." He'll say, "I hear you." I'll say, "No, put down the paper and *listen*."

Listening is not only hearing, but obeying, or applying truth (James 1:22-27).

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

God has given us good minds and He expects us to use them. But they must be submitted to God's Spirit and be willing to embrace His will. When we submit our minds to Him, He gives us wisdom in how to use the knowledge we have obtained. For example, I was talking to a key leader of education in Tonga. She was training teachers. I asked her what she was teaching them and she said, "How to hear from God - so they will know what technique to use for each student in helping them to learn."

The prophet Amos once warned that the day would come when a famine would afflict God's people, *not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord* (Amos 8:11-12).

For generations the ability and desire to listen to God have waned. But the tide has turned and people are hungry to hear from God, 'thirsting for the stillness of His presence.'

You have said, "Seek My face (inquire for and require My presence as your vital need). My heart says to you, "Your face, (Your presence), Lord, will I seek, inquire for, and require (of necessity and on the authority of Your Word)". Psalm 27:8 Amplified Bible

When we listen to God, the life and standards of Jesus become our patterns for life. It helps us see what matters in life so we can distinguish the important from the unimportant.

God is going to reveal His secrets to those who fear Him (Psalm 25:14; Prov 3:32b) and we must remember that nothing is impossible for God. He is removing the veil when we listen to and reflect on Him.

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:16-18

Intimacy with God will remove the veil. We cannot reflect something we do not see. We become one with the Lord and then we can reflect Him.

When we hear His voice, we are purified and changed. People can be 'religious' but far from the Spirit of God. Religion begins, and life ends, when people stop hearing the voice of God. Many church movements, denominations and organizations began simply when people were hungry for God. But over time, numbers, success and human reasoning replaced the hunger for God and people became more satisfied with God's blessing than His presence and His voice.

*But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning,
your **minds** may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 2 Cor 11:3*

The Bible is the basis for what we believe. Everything written in it is true. God continues to speak by His Spirit. Almost all confusion about hearing the voice of God comes from trusting in our own understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding . . . Prov 3:5-6

Intimate relationship comes through trust, love and listening. God wants Spirit-to-spirit communication with us; then we can have spirit-to-spirit communication with one another. We can be totally honest with Him - we can express our hurts, our anger, our fears and then quieten ourselves and listen. He is just, loving and kind, even though we cannot understand at the time. He takes our pain and uses it for our good (Rom 8:28).

For Jesus to take control we must lose control. Our destiny is to be the body of Christ, not the head. We were created to receive directions from Him - in a living, and loving relationship with Him. He desires to be our Lord, and King. We are His heirs (Rom 8:14-17).

Do you want to be known as a person who has been with Jesus?

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men,
they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13*

Do you want to be known as a friend of God?

You are My friends if you do what I command. John 15:14; see also Job 16:19-21; Prov 18:24; John 15:9-16

Friendship with Jesus comes from obeying Him. Revelation of what the Father is doing is given to His friends (John 15:15). He is a friend to sinners. But sinners are not His friends until their hearts are changed. Friendship is not one sided, it is mutual. I can show friendship to you, but unless you respond, we cannot be friends. True friends want to know what they can do to please each other.

*The Lord would speak to Moses face to face
as a man speaks with his friend. Exodus 33:11*

Of Moses the Lord said, ". . .

He is faithful in all My house, with him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles . . ." Num 12:7,8

Abraham was a man of faith. He was known as God's friend, and it was by faith that he walked in obedience (2 Chron 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23).

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place . . ., obeyed and went,
even though he did not know where he was going . . .
because he considered Him faithful who made the promise.
... Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice because he trusted God and His promises.
(Read Heb 11:8-19)*

My heart's desire is to be known by God, and by man, as 'His friend.' I pray that I will be faithful as a friend.

I was invited to speak in a church. When the pastor got up to introduce me, he shared what I do, where I've been, etc. I said to the Lord, "I don't want to be known as a woman who does 'this and that'. I'm not impressed with where I've been or who I've spoken to" (I used to be!!). The tears were running down my cheeks and the Holy Spirit said in that quiet voice, "You no longer have to be known as a teacher, etc., but you can be known as God's friend." When I stood up I looked at these precious people and wept. I said, "I no longer have to be known as a teacher, leader, and mother. I can be known as God's friend. Is there anyone here who would like to be known as God's friend? It will cost all that you are and have."

I know what it is to leave a beautiful home, family, and friends, to be obedient to God. But I've never had a gun aimed at my head and asked to renounce Jesus. I asked, "Is there anyone here willing to leave all - even willing to lay down your own life to be known as His friend?"

After that, I sensed the Spirit say, "Don't speak anymore. Your sermon is done." Over half the church were on their faces, some trying to get to the altar.

So many, I believe, are willing to be God's friends, but they don't know how to recognize God's voice, or they never knew they could listen except through the written Word. Many go on for years in their own reasoning, running their own lives.

*There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death. Prov 14:12*

Do you want to be known as a person who is led by the Spirit?

Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Rom 8:14

*So I say, live by the Spirit . . .
if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law ...
Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Gal 5:16-18,25*

Do you want to be known as a bride who the Father can trust with his Son? Then listen to what the Spirit is saying! (Rev 19:5-9; Rev 21:2; Rev 22:17)

APPLICATION

'Love' means wanting the highest good for you. Jesus loves us as much as the Father loves Him. See John 15:9. He continually listens to His Father.

Do you believe God wants to talk to you because He loves you?

Listening to God is a lifestyle. How are you including the Spirit of God in your life?