

# How to Hear the Voice of God

## The different ways God talks to us

### 1. By reading the Word – the Bible

The Bible is the 'Logos', the inspired word of God, recorded for our benefit, and everything else – any other way we hear from God, inclusive of any prophetic word - must be judged against it.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

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

### 2. The inner voice of God

While the 'Logos' is the written Word of God, the 'Rhema' is the immediate word of God spoken to us, sometimes audibly, but mostly in our hearts or minds - on rare occasion it might even be heard.

John 10:4 *After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.*

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

Acts 16:6-7 *Next Paul and Silas travelled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.*

Acts 20:22-23 *And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead.*

### 3. The prophetic word of God

As we have seen above, God wants everyone to hear His voice, in whatever way He speaks to us. Likewise we can say that everyone can, at least potentially, prophesy. The gift of prophesy a gift, and is also one of the 5-fold functions listed in Ephesians 4:11-12. God uses the prophets as His special spokespeople, but also wants us to be able to prophesy to each other.

Amos 3:7 *Indeed, the Sovereign Lord never does anything until he reveals his plans to his servants the prophets.*

Acts 19:6 *Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.*

Acts 21:10-11 *Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'"*

Acts 13:1-2 *Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them."*

1 Corinthians 14:1 *Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities (gifts) the Spirit gives - especially the ability to prophesy.*

1 Corinthians 14:5 *I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.*

#### **4. Dreams and Visions**

Throughout the Old Testament we read the how God spoke to and through various people, and especially through the prophets. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all who were present and they were baptised in the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of the prophesy of Joel 2:28, and Peter told the amazed crowd: Act 2:17 *'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.*

We can see a clear example of this in Acts 10:1-8 where a Roman army officer named Cornelius, had a vision in which he saw an angel of God who spoke to him, giving him instruction to send for Peter. Right after this, in Acts 10:9-33, we read that Peter, when he went to pray, fell into a trance and had a vision of a sheet filled with unclean animals, reptiles and birds, and heard a voice (from Heaven) telling him to kill and eat them, and then that three men were looking for him, and that he should not hesitate to go with them.

#### **How to begin to hear the voice of God**

There are many, both 'new' and 'old' Christians, who do not believe that they can hear from God. The reason for this is typically that they have never been told that this is not only possible, but that God's desire is for them to do so. Are there any conditions attached to hearing, or any obstacles that typically prevent our hearing? Let us look at some of these.

##### **No-one told us**

The reason why we may never have heard, or heard much from the Lord, may simply be a lack of teaching – no-one ever told us that it is possible for *everyone* to hear from the Lord. Or it may sometimes be that the hardships that we have suffered, whatever the cause, may have led us to have an incorrect understanding of the character of the God, and a resultant attitude that is not fully based on love and trust. We need to understand and believe that the Lord *is* good, that He *has* good plans for us - in this life time too. Let's look at some scriptures in this regard, and start to believe that the Lord is good, that He has good plans for us, that He has forgiven us all our sins, and that He is not the author of the evil in our lives and or in our circumstances.

##### **Believe, and have faith**

Do you believe that you can hear from God? The Word says so, and we have to believe it to receive it. Faith, the belief and trust that God will do what he has promised, has been called 'the currency of heaven'. Matthew 9:29 illustrates this principle: *"..Because of your faith, it will happen."* John 10:16 *I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.*

##### **Seek God with all your heart**

Be determined – don't be half-hearted. Believe the promises, and stand on them, until they are received. A verse from Jeremiah illustrates this point: Jeremiah 29:13 *If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.*

Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

John 3:16-17 *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

John 10:10 *The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

##### **Unconfessed sin and unforgiveness**

Any unconfessed sin or any unforgiveness may serve as a blockage to your relationship with God. Psalm 66:18 *If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

Proverbs 1:23 NIV *Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.*

Psalms 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

John 14:21 *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."*

So, too, an attitude of bitterness, unforgiveness of others for some perceived harm – for the way we have been or feel we have been treated by them, or even unforgiveness of ourselves leading to a constant feeling of unworthiness, or of resentment, envy or jealousy when we feel we should have been promoted or honoured, can form a 'blockage' in our relationship with God.

We really need to understand that any unforgiveness *only* hurts ourselves (it stunts our character and future good relationships, and not the other person) and it obstructs our relationship with the Lord. Just look at 1 Peter 3:7 "Husbands, (honour your wives) ... so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Is that not interesting? – the attitude of our hearts towards our wives may hinder our prayers! To expand on this, our relationships are important to God; to our marriage partners, ex marriage partners, parents, children, friends, bosses, workers, business associates etc. Let us determine to get rid of all hindrances, and to enjoy hearing from our heavenly Father. Colossians 3:13 *Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

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

## **My Testimony**

Years ago when I reached a really low point in my life, feeling lost and abandoned by everyone, and without any hope or faith for the future, and not being able to hear a single word from the Lord, I sat down and thought about my situation and my faith, and what the Lord had previously said and done for me, and came to this conclusion: I either had to believe that the Lord is good, and to live accordingly, or to give up on the whole show, because then truly there would be no hope or point in even living. This is what I decided and wrote down:

### **I have decided:**

- To accept and believe that the Lord is good, and *has* good plans and intentions for me, even if they are not always obvious or clear, or I do not understand them.
- To love the Lord, even when I do not understand and the circumstances do not seem too bright, and hence to praise the Lord on all occasions and in all circumstances.
- To spend more time in prayer and especially intercession (for His purposes), and in reading the word etc. generally.
- To be obedient to His word in all ways, (and if I fail, to get up and try again.)
- To step out in faith, and risk looking foolish, if the Lord does not come through for me in the way that I expected.

And from then onwards, starting just a few days later at a prophetic training meeting, I began hearing from the Lord again, and have been able to ever since.

### **Being led by the Spirit of God.**

*"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it ... so whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."* (John 12:49-50).

*"...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me."* (John 14:28).

*"...but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me..."* (John 14:31). We can all be consciously led by the Holy Spirit, and we can also be led by His inner voice, without necessarily realising it at the time.

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