

## Challenges in Hearing God

### **Review - Nature of Gods Voice** - The Litmus Test

1. His words will never violate but easily align with Scripture.
2. They will affirm the names and roles of the Holy Spirit – to Help, Encourage, Comfort, Teach, Guide, Strengthen, Empower, Liberate, Reveal truth. Life Giver, Gift Giver.
3. They will reflect the character of the Spirit - loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle...(Galatians 5:22).
4. God's thoughts will be spontaneous and ultimately positive, usually in the first person.
5. As a believer, He will never condemn or shame you. He will never push you away! His words may rebuke or bring conviction that will produce a longing for restoration.

### **Further indicators:**

- God's voice within you will not eradicate your personality or manner of speech. He is honoring the unique vessel you are. It may sound like you – your flavor.
- His words are light, gentle (1Kings 19:11-12), and easily cut off by imposing our own thoughts or by trying too hard to hear Him.
- His voice will come from within where the Spirit of God dwells (John 7:38).
- God's words can come as strong thoughts, an impression, a picture, or a scripture that stands out. But is will be personal and tailored to us.

## **Preparing Your Heart to Hear God**

Meeting God through listening prayer and journaling will probably be the most powerful tool for you to explore the heart of God and your relationship with Him.

- **Position your heart:** (Matt. 6:6). Ask Him to help you quiet your heart to receive all He has.
- **Focus:** Ask Him to help you focus.
- **Worship:** Praise Him for His desire to speak to you.  
We enter His gates with thanksgiving and expectancy (Psalm 100:4).
- **Surrender** your thoughts and desires so you can receive His.  
*I really want to hear what You have to say, not what I want to hear* - John Eldredge
- **Distractions:** Write down any distractions that you may need to attend to later.  
Turn off your phone. No email or texting
- **Resist** the enemy in Jesus” and he must flee (James 4:7).  
In His name, silence any voices not from Him.  
Ask for the covering of the blood of Jesus.
- **Ask:** Simple questions, out loud if possible. I can help your heart engage.
- **Unpack what you get** – ask more questions, until helpful.
- **Listening Journal** – record the spontaneous flow without analyzing.

**As you yield your heart to Him, the spontaneous flow that comes from within you will usually be God speaking to you (Jn.7:37,38).**

**In the beginning, you may share your Listening Journal with a mentor or discipler for feedback and to make sure it easily lines up with Scripture.**

## **Hindrances to hearing God**

### Lack of expectancy that God will speak

#### Distractions

- not taking thoughts captive but allowing distractions to rule
- excessive media, undisciplined mind
- keeping busy, no inner stillness, not 'closing door' (Matthew 6:6).

#### Idols

- holding onto preferences
- wanting our idol before God (Psalm 106:14-15).
- not open to receiving whatever He has.

#### Intellectual Pride

- refusal to be childlike and surrender control
- depending/leaning on my own understanding (Proverbs 3:5)
- excessive focus on doctrinal argument.

#### Lack of obedience

- refusal to obey and respond to what I do hear.

#### Fear of deception

- making a mistake and deluding myself
- not trusting God to help me in my weakness. John 7:17; 14:16; 1John 2:27
- test the spirits (I John 4:1) – ask for confirmation from Him.

### **Other Hindrances**

#### Unbelief, Negative Expectation

- Hebrews 3:12 - unbelieving heart; Hebrews 4:7 - hardened heart.
- lies about God – He can't be trusted - fear of condemnation
- lies about self – I'm not worthy. I can't hear Him. He is disappointed in me

#### Bitterness and Unforgiveness

- refusal to forgive those who have wounded us.

#### Rebellion

- refusal to acknowledge and repent of sin.

#### Impure motives

- listening to correct others, to prove a point, or to defend choices.

## Journaling

**Ask God** - and record the spontaneous flow without editing.

Don't think about what you are hearing at this point - just write what comes. Later, if you have questions about what you wrote, you can talk about it with someone you trust.

*"In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice;  
In the morning I will prepare [a prayer and a sacrifice] for You  
and watch and wait [for You to speak to my heart]" (Psalm 5:3 Amplified).*

**Addressing Problems in Hearing:** (refer to Hindrances and Filters lists)

***Jesus, what things have I chosen that have hindered me from hearing You?***

***What do You want to say about any filters I have used in listening to You?***

***Jesus, how do You want to help me overcome?***

Receive anything that is encouraging and life-giving by thanking Him for what He said and rejoicing in the truth (loud enough to hear yourself).

## Small Group Sharing (3 or 4)

Look back over what God has spoken and share any meaningful or fresh insights with the small group.

Report back to whole Lifegroup

## Quiet Time Enrichment: Listening Journal

"My heart has heard You say, "Come and talk with Me."  
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming." Ps.27:8.  
"Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good.  
And delight yourself in abundance." Is. 55:2b.

We do not see ourselves clearly, so we need to ask God.

**Father, when I am discouraged about my choices that keep me from receiving what You say to me, what insight do You that will help me turn my heart to You?**

**Why do I chose those things? What do You have to say to me about that?**  
(Remember He never condemns.)

**How can you encourage me to listen to You with more confidence?**

Receive anything that is encouraging and life-giving by thanking Him and rejoicing in the truth.

## Going Deeper

Father, in what areas do I find it hard to trust You?

What do You want to tell me about Yourself that will help me trust You more?

- Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.

Father, how do You want to encourage me right now?

What do I need to know about who I am to You?

What do You want to tell me about myself that I need to know right now?

- Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.

## RESOURCE

### Guidelines and Pitfalls in Journaling

Meeting God through listening prayer and journaling will probably be the most powerful tool for you to explore the heart of God and your relationship with Him.

In the early stages of learning to listen to God you should bring your journaling to a mentor whenever there is any question about the content being scriptural or in line with God's character.

It is often more helpful to start by asking God questions for encouragement. If we begin by asking questions that are emotionally loaded, then it may not be so easy for us to hear clearly what He has to say. As we build confidence in His heart and in hearing His voice, we may be led to ask deeper questions.

**Avoid predictive journaling!** In asking the deeper questions we can make the mistake of moving to predictive questions about the future. Moving from "should I ask this person to marry me?" to "will I marry this person?" He may say, "Yes, go ahead and ask" but the person has free will and can refuse.

Or the big one, "will this person be healed?"

We cannot try and use God like a fortune teller.

Witchcraft seeks knowledge of the future for our own personal ends and benefit.

God may at times choose to tell us something of our future regarding His promises to us or His plans for us. But when we press for more detail we will often get, "trust Me."

**If we keep pressing Him** we can open the door to the enemy and become deceived by a lying spirit or invent an answer according to our own fleshly desires.

We must release our preferences to His care and let Him give them back to us if He chooses.

In this life we are always in process as God seeks to shape us into the image of Christ.

To journal about what He wants to do in our hearts in the midst of struggles and challenges can be some of the deepest places of meeting God!

With God, what He gains in us in the process is often the goal.

We grow in intimacy with Him by coming back again and again to receive from Him what He desires to give to our hearts as the process unfolds - confidence in His character, purifying our motives, reassurance, comfort, insight.