

Devotion #4 -Letting God Speak

Read: John 10:14-18

April 2021

Shortly after we moved to our new house, I was driving home one night in the fog. I was going on what were then unfamiliar country roads in the dark. As such, I was not always aware of exactly where I was. Fortunately, I had put my new address into the map app on my phone so I could listen and follow the directions as to where I needed to turn and in which direction I needed to travel.

When we listen to the directions on a phone app, we have to listen and follow the directions we receive, and they guide us to where we need to go. Similarly, as we listen to the Lord in prayer, He guides and directs us in the best route.

But how do we hear God's voice when we pray?

Jesus promises that if we belong to Him, then we will hear and know His voice.

"When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." (John 10:4, NIV)

At the time of Jesus, shepherds would be with their sheep so much that the sheep would get to know their shepherd well and would be able to recognize his voice. When the shepherd called the sheep, they would respond. The sheep would ignore anyone else who would call them. Similarly, as we spend time in prayer, we will become familiar with the voice of Jesus and recognize when He is speaking to us. We learn to recognize His voice and respond to Him.

The scriptures show us many different ways in which the Lord speaks to His people:

Scripture

God speaks through Scripture. "God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path" (Psalm 119:105). As we wait on the Lord and listen, He may bring a passage of Scripture to mind, giving us guidance about how to pray.

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Images

It has been said, "a picture is worth a thousand words." The Lord may give us a picture to pray into. This is one of the ways that the Lord speaks to the prophet Jeremiah: The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?"
"I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. (Jeremiah 1:11, NIV)

Thoughts

The Lord may speak to our minds in a thought which suddenly pops into our head. Philip, in Acts 8, had the idea to go and stay close to a particular chariot. When he did, he found an Ethiopian reading from the Scriptures and led him to Christ. The Lord places thoughts into our minds to guide us. It can be a single word or a phrase or stance which will speak into our present situation.

Visions and Dreams

The Lord may give us a glimpse of reality as He sees it through a vision, just as He did with Peter in Acts 10, or the Holy Spirit may provide us with a dream as He did with Joseph and Daniel.

An Audible Voice

As a boy, Samuel heard the Lord speak directly to him, but at that time he did not recognize the Lord's voice. As he grew in his relationship with the Lord, he was able to identify what the Lord was saying.

Nature, Music and the Arts

God's glory is proclaimed by the creation that is all around us. The Lord will speak through the wonder of the creation and the creative mediums of art and music. The Lord may bring a song to mind. This is especially true for songs that use Scripture.



Rest Stop

- How have you experienced the Lord speaking to you in prayer?
- Is there a particular way that you hear His voice?

However the Lord speaks, we need to make sure that we discern what we hear to make sure it is not just our thoughts or the thoughts of the enemy. These four discernment questions can help evaluate what we are hearing:

- 1. Does it give glory to Jesus Christ in the present and the future? (John 16:13-14)
- 2. Is it consistent with the intentions and character of God as revealed in Scripture? (2Timothy 3:16–17)
- 3. Do other Holy Spirit-filled believers have a confirming witness? (1 Cor. 14:29)

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4. Is there confirmation in objectively verifiable events or facts? (Deut. 18:21-22)

If we can say "Yes" to all of these questions, we can be confident that we are hearing from the Lord. Sometimes we have to wait and even walk out in faith for a while before seeing the answer to the last question.

This may require some time and practice learning to quiet down our minds so that

with direction and guidance.

we can hear from the Lord - but as we do, we will hear His voice and He will provide us



Rest Stop

- Share an experience of how the Holy Spirit has guided you.
- How did you know it was the Holy Spirit?
- What happened when you followed the guidance?



The Scenic Route

(optional)

Take five minutes at the beginning of your prayer time to listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to say about how to pray for a particular situation. Open that time of listening with a prayer asking the Lord to speak to you.

Wait in the quiet, listening for the Lord. He may speak in a picture, a word, a Scripture or one of the other ways mentioned in the devotional. Make a note of what you hear or see.

If you are in a group, you can share what you heard and listen to other people to find common threads. Or, if you are on your own, you can just record what you hear in a journal.

Then use the four discernment questions to evaluate what you have heard.

If you can say yes to them, then move into praying according to how the Holy Spirit has led you.

Reflect upon how your prayer time changed when you made space to listen to the Lord.

Keep in Touch

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