



Can You Hear Me Now?

Text: Various

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1. What is your experience with hearing from God? It's ok, if this is new, or not something you have explored before; we are all learning together. As you read through the study guide below, which of the ways that God speaks to His people, have you experienced? If He has spoken to you, share that with the group.
2. What do you think is the primary barrier for most people regarding hearing from God? For you?
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 - a. How does this passage describe how the Bible we have in our hands now came to be?
 - b. And though God can speak through whatever means He chooses, what implications should this passage have on those times when we seem to "hear from God" through little intuitions, a word spoken by someone else, or through even supernatural means?
4. Read John 14:16-17,26; 16:13. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in hearing from God?

Are you ready to practice hearing from God? It's all a learning experience. As a group, complete the "Hearing God" exercises found in the following small group study guide and follow up discussion.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide - Hearing God

We begin our small group lessons with the concept that we can hear from God, and that He intends to reveal His truth to us. This is a requirement for listening prayer, and it must be as true in practicality as it is in theory.

This lesson is designed to increase faith in one's ability to ask God a question and hear His answer. When we have confidence in listening to God we are better equipped to act as a witness for others as they hear God.

Instruction

Communication is a key to building and maintaining relationship. Without the ability to hear from God a person is relegated to a relationship with the idea of God, a concept of doctrine, or a code of ethics. Sadly, this describes even people that profess to be Christians.

God does want to speak to us, and hearing from Him happens when we listen.

One of my favorite examples of hearing God comes from the first chapter of Jeremiah. The young man is in the presence of God and we are given access to the conversation. God had appointed him to be a prophet to the nations, then as if to build his confidence there is a test.

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see an almond branch." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it." - Jeremiah 1:11-12

The word of the LORD came in a question and a vision. The LORD then confirmed that He is watching over His word. The LORD gives the word and supplies its meaning because His word is truth. We have observed that people tend to hear the Lord through their primary learning style: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and insight. It is a good idea when starting out to pay attention along those lines, but realize that God may switch things up to suit His purpose.

Here are some examples of how God reveals truth to people.

Auditory

Voice of God

The audible voice of God spoke to Saul on the Road to Damascus. Saul clearly understood the words, in his language, and received the message. Others thought it had thundered. The sound occurred in the physical realm and was distinguishable to the intended hearer.

Words of God

Elijah heard the words of God in a "low whisper." It was God's spoken word in a personal message to him. It may not have been audible in the physical realm, but the words were distinct and clear. God can "speak" directly into a person's spirit and soul.

Scripture

The Bible is the word of God, and the Holy Spirit continues to speak to us by inspiring the words. An example is when you ask God a question and suddenly a memory verse pops into your head. Another example is when you have asked and when you turn to your Bible a verse seems to jump off the page.

Trusted Advisor

The word of God can come through a trusted advisor. For example, a pastor, elder, teacher, or spiritually mature friend may say something that you recognize as specifically important to you at that time. This can happen in real time, such as through a conversation or recorded message. It can also happen historically, for instance recalling a statement or comment by a Sunday School teacher from long ago.

Prophet

God may speak to you through the voice of His trusted messenger. God seems to use prophets when His intended audience is unable or unwilling to hear directly, or when He wants to confirm

His word in the physical realm. Depending on your background, you may have heard this referred to as a prophecy or a word of knowledge.

Visual

Pictures or Scenes

A man grew up in a chaotic home and felt his parents did not have time for him. He felt marginalized and believed he was insignificant. When we asked God to reveal truth he saw Jesus welcome the little children, put His hands on them and bless them. He identified with the children and understood that Jesus was welcoming and blessing him in the same way.

Visions

Visions are similar to pictures and scenes but may include movement and the passage of time. Often a vision contains elements that are highlighted or stylized for emphasis. Peter's vision of animals in a sheet coming down from heaven is an example.

Dreams

Sometimes our mind is open to a message from God when the rational and logical defenses are down. He can reveal truth through dreams which are like observations or memories without the normal constraints. For instance, He appeared to Joseph (Mary's husband) in a dream, and revealed truth to Joseph (Jacob's son) through Pharaoh's dreams. However, not all dreams are messages from God. Sometimes they are simply bits and pieces of information that slip out of nonconscious mind maintenance.

Memories

We see this a lot in prayer appointments. When we ask God to reveal the origin of an emotion or belief, it is common that He brings a memory to someone's mind. One of our favorite things to hear is: "I haven't thought of this in years." It's a signal that God brought it back to mind specifically to answer a prayer.

Kinesthetic

Sensation or Feeling

Kinesthetic or tactile people may hear from God through a sensation, such as warmth or tingling. One man described being wrapped in a comforter and held on Jesus' lap. It was a very strong sensation with powerful meaning to him. Feelings can come through emotional response, such as peace or joy. These sensations or feelings can be worth more than a thousand words.

Body Memory

Sometimes God speaks through a physical sensation that is recalled from the person's history. A memory can be stored in the organs of the body and brought to the present by the touch of God. For instance, a woman gasping for breath was healed from a traumatic experience when God renewed her mind in the midst of the memory. She knew exactly where God wanted to take her when she had that body memory.

Strong Emotion

A strong emotion, especially one with a sudden onset, can be an answer from God. It may evoke a memory, belief, or value that God wishes to renew or confirm. For instance, a feeling of extreme shame or embarrassment may speak volumes about a relationship or situation that God would like to heal. On the other hand, a sudden rush of compassion might be a confirmation of a spiritual gift.

Inspiration

Sudden Recall

One form of inspiration happens when God reveals a truth that you have known all along. The answer may have been lost in your mind or blocked by other thoughts, but suddenly it is brought back into the forefront of your thinking. The applicability of the truth is often quickly apparent in the situation.

Insight

Insight can be described as an "Aha Moment." It is like remembering something I never knew before. The truth newly arrives in the mind and is accepted like an old friend. It is as if I had known it all along. These are some of the descriptive statements we have heard about this type of inspiration. I also describe it as knowing something is true even though it was not arrived at logically or through reasoning.

Epiphany

An epiphany is an inspiration that comes like a flash of light, an idea born from God. It tends to be profound, and may be accompanied by a voice, vision, or feeling.

Hearing from God happens when we listen, and there are some very practical things we can do to increase our ability to hear and understand.

Jesus said: "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father. In that day you will ask in My name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God." - John 16:25-27.

The time has come. Jesus is speaking plainly. He describes a loving relationship, and this can only happen when there is clear communication. Dialog: two-way transfer of information. We need not only to speak, but to listen. It takes practice, and we get better at it as we learn.

Exercise: Hearing God

This first exercise is for each individual to ask God a question and listen for an answer. Use the table below to record your experience. You will be invited to share the results, but not compelled to do so. Allow ten minutes for this exercise.

Take a few moments to quiet your soul and wait on the Lord. When you are ready, ask Him a question. It can be a question you have had on your mind for a long time, or it may be a simple one that comes to you

as you prepare. Write down the question in the first box of the following table, and then present it to the Lord as a silent prayer.

Pay attention to what changes as you pray and shortly after you have finished asking. Jot down your impressions in the middle box, remembering that they may be auditory, visual, kinesthetic, or inspiration. Listen to the Holy Spirit as He gives testimony to your spirit about the meaning of those impressions.

Make notes to yourself in the third box regarding the answer you heard from God.

Question:
Impressions:
Meaning:

Allow anyone to share with the group the question asked and the meaning of the answer. This is a time of testimony about the faithfulness of God to answer when we call out to Him.

Take a few minutes to discuss the exercise as a group. Use the following questions, or come up with your own:

- What were you feeling as you began the exercise?
- What experience have you had with this kind of prayer in the past?
- How difficult was it to put your request into words?
- What happened when you presented the question to God?
- How did you address distracting thoughts, if any?
- What are some ways to overcome fear and misconceptions about listening prayer?

Now you are ready to repeat this exercise. You may ask the same question as before, or you may have a new question. Use the following table in the same way as you did before.

Question:
Impressions:
Meaning:

Sharing: Hearing God

Answer these questions together in discussion format:

- What was your most surprising revelation?
- What are some things you can do when you don't seem to get an answer?
- How can you encourage someone that doesn't expect to hear from God?

Caring: Hearing God

Spend some time in prayer for those that have a need, either as a group or in clusters. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and listen carefully to His voice.

<http://mastersmindministry.org/downloads/Lesson%201%20%20Hearing%20God%20Instruction%20and%20Exercises.pdf>