

# Hearing God's Voice

**READ JOHN 10:4–5 • JOHN 10:27**

*<sup>4</sup>“When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”*

**JOHN 10:4–5**

*“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

**JOHN 10:27**

All of today’s devotional is an exercise designed to help you grow in your ability to hear God’s voice. Although God’s written Word is the primary way He communicates truth to us, today I want to concentrate on hearing God through impressions, visions, dreams, and the internal voice of the Holy Spirit.

I have chosen to picture the process of learning to hear God’s voice through the metaphor of a mobile phone. Unlike earthly cellular companies that promise us limitless coverage and perfect reception but rarely deliver it, God has the ability to transmit the heavenly signal of His voice to us no matter where we are on the planet. If this is the case, why do we have so much trouble hearing God’s voice? After all, He says, *“My sheep (Christians) hear my voice.”*

Before I answer this question, take your mobile phone out and turn it off. Whether you have an iPhone, a Samsung, or another brand, it will work ne for this exercise. Here is something important to remember: other than an exercise like this, I have found mobile phones to be one of the

greatest distractions Christians face in their attempts to hear God's voice.

**Press the power button**—No matter how great your phone is, you cannot receive or make calls until the power is on. It is no different with humans. Unless your power is “on,” regular communication with God is almost impossible. Spiritually speaking, our power is turned on through our conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit. At conversion, our human spirit is reunited with the Holy Spirit, and we receive a new nature. Although this re-establishes our communication with God, being baptized in the Holy Spirit empowers us to hear God even more clearly.

**Turn your ringer on vibrate**—Have you ever wondered what God's “ringtone” feels like? I have discovered that many times when He is trying to “call” us, He uses feelings, burdens, and impressions. They are actually the most elementary way that God communicates with us. All of us have either heard or used expressions like, “I felt God's presence,” or, “God was really here today.” These expressions are examples of this type of communication.

Sadly, many of us never leave this elementary form of experiencing God. We are satisfied with simply *feeling* His presence when we could actually be *talking* to Him. After all, if God has gone to the trouble of coming to visit us, He probably has something to say. In fact, He has probably been saying a lot of things, but we simply don't recognize them. As a spirit being, God rarely communicates audibly. The fact that all of us can fail to recognize God's voice is described in Job 33:

<sup>14</sup>*For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it.* <sup>15</sup>*In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep*

*falls on men as they slumber in their beds.*

**JOB 33:14-15**

**Take your phone off vibrate**—In light of this verse, it is critical that we learn how to both *see* and *hear* what God is saying to us. Now, take your phone off vibrate. Sometimes, God will just call your name when He wants to talk to you. Other times, He might simply give you a set of instructions. Therefore, learning to recognize God's voice is critical, whether you are just answering His calls or having an intimate conversation with Him. Although God can speak audibly, He usually speaks to us through the internal voice of our conscious mind.

In 1 Kings 19:12, this form of divine communication is referred to as a *gentle whisper*. This internal voice of the Holy Spirit is probably the very thing the Apostle Paul is referring to in Romans 8:16 when he says, *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children*. Other than the written Word of God, this is the primary way God communicates with His children.

In order to help you understand how these forms of communication work, let me use an example from how I taught my own children to hear the Lord. As a parent, it did not take me long to realize that if I did not teach my children how to hear the Lord's voice, sooner or later they would stop talking to Him. After all, talking to a person or a being who never talks back doesn't feel any different than talking to a wall.

When teaching my children to hear the Lord's voice and see visions, I would ask my children to say their names out loud. Then I would ask them to imagine their names being spoken. I would explain that the internal voice they heard when they imagined their names was very similar to how God's voice sounded. Once they

had grasped the concept, I taught them every night before they fell asleep to ask God what was on His mind.

While they were in that place of reflective calm that normally precedes falling asleep, they would simply focus on the Lord and wait for Him to speak. Through this process, all four of my biological children learned how to hear the voice of their beloved Savior and friend. It's no different for you. No matter how old you are, if you will come to God in faith like a trusting child, He will speak to you *as a man speaks to his friend* (Exodus 33:11, NKJV).

Another way God communicates with us is through images and pictures. Although some visions can seem almost real, they are typically images and pictures on the screen of a person's imagination. Unlike imagining something, however, the person does not conjure them up; instead, God initiates them. As for dreams, they are simply divine visions. Some examples of these are when Paul saw the vision of Ananias coming to minister to him (Acts 9:12) and Joseph was warned by God in a dream (Matthew 2:13).

**Signal problems**—Within the cellular world, signal strength can be affected by proximity to a cell tower, obstructions such as buildings or trees, destructive interference from other communication towers, or the condition of the cell phone. First of all, just as cellular reception is affected by proximity to cell towers, so your ability to hear God clearly is directly related to your proximity to His person and His people (the church). Remember, hearing God is not just a *skill*; it is a *relationship*. Therefore, the more quality time you spend with God, the better you will hear Him.

The word quality here is important; without discipline and focus, your time with God might be wasted. When I say discipline, I am

not just describing the classical spiritual disciplines. I am talking about the discipline it takes to deal with all the attractions and distractions of our media-driven world. Once we have discipline, we will be free to focus on God through His Word, worship, and waiting on Him.

Our proximity to God's people is also vital. Without discipleship, mentoring, fellowship, equipping, and accountability provided through a healthy local church, we would not have the foundations necessary to develop an authentic, sustainable relationship with God. In addition, the heavenly signal of God's voice is greatly increased through corporate worship, making it easier to hear His voice as you wait on Him with music playing softly and others focusing on Him as well.

Even as the internal condition and quality of a cell phone can determine call quality, so the condition of our souls is vital to the whole process of hearing God. These are some of the factors that influence our ability to hear God: stress, fatigue, physical sickness, exhaustion, distraction, or busyness. You cannot forget that your spiritual life is deeply impacted by how you are doing physically, emotionally, and intellectually. It can also be damaged if you have injured your conscience through unconfessed sin.

If none of these factors are involved, it could just be destructive interference. Just as cellular communications can be affected by other electronic signals, so the enemy—*the prince of the power of the air*—does everything in his power to impair our ability to hear God's voice.

*... in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. EPHESIANS 2:2 (NKJV)*

Unlike the sense of defilement created by sin, demonic resistance normally comes in the form of a wave or a wall. As a wave, it is typically an over-whelming sense of accusation, defilement, fear, despair, or weakness. As a wall, it feels like an impenetrable barrier. We discussed how to deal with demonic resistance on Day 4, “The Sword of the Spirit.”

## APPLY

**It’s time to talk**—Since our “power” is on now, let’s ask Him to call us.

- Simply quiet your soul and take a deep breath. Tell Him you love Him and

you would like to talk with Him. Can you hear His whisper?

- Take your time. Spend two or three minutes simply waiting. You may feel Him before you hear Him.
- If you are feeling His “ring,” simply say, “What do you want to say to me, Lord?”
- Write down what you are hearing. If you are having trouble, you may be having a signal problem.

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## PRAY

**Let’s practice one more time.**

- Quiet your soul, and begin to worship in tongues.

- After a moment, ask God to speak to you: be more specific this time. Ask the Lord how you should pray for your pastor and his or her family.
- Maybe He has something to say to you about the area of resistance you have been targeting.
- As you finish this exercise, pray for your church and the region of the world that you have chosen for today (page 27).

Now we have come to the end of our worldwide prayer and fasting for 2017. The spiritual skills you have been developing have the potential to release life-changing power into your life. You may want to wait a week or two and then go through all we days again (devotions, not necessarily fasting). In the end, these devotionals (and the exercises that accompany them) are about more than refining your spiritual skills. They are about responding to your Savior's invitation to know Him and to make Him known. I am praying for you to have your greatest year in Christ yet!

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