

(Excerpt from Loren Cunningham and Janice Rogers, *Is That Really You, God?: Hearing the Voice of God*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2001. pp 161-163))

If you know the Lord, you have already heard His voice - it is that inner leading that brought you to Him in the first place. Jesus always checked with His Father (John 8:26-29) and so should we; hearing the voice of the heavenly Father is a basic right of every child of God. In this book we have tried to describe a few of many ways of fine tuning this experience. The discoveries are never just theory. They come out of our own adventures:

Don't make guidance complicated. It's actually hard not to hear God if you really want to please and obey Him! If you stay humble, He promises to guide you (Prov. 16:9).

Here are three simple steps that have helped us to hear Cod's voice:

Submit to His lordship. Ask Him to help you silence your own thoughts, desires, and the opinions of others, which may be filling your mind (II Cor. 10:5). Even though you have been given a good mind to use, right now you want to hear the thoughts of the Lord, who has the best mind (Prov. 3:5-6).

Resist the enemy, in case he is trying to deceive you at this moment. Use the authority which Jesus Christ has given you to silence the voice of the enemy (James 4:7; Eph. 6:10-20).

Expect an answer. After asking the question that is on your mind, wait for Him to answer. Expect your loving heavenly Father to speak to you. He will (John 10:27; Ps. 69:13; Ex. 33:11).

Allow God to speak to you in the way He chooses. Don't try to dictate to Him concerning the guidance methods you prefer. He is Lord - you are His servant (1 Sam. 3:9). So listen with a yielded heart; there is a direct link between yieldedness and hearing. He may choose to speak to you: Through His Word: This could come in your daily reading, or He could guide you to a particular verse (Ps. 119:105). Through an audible voice (Ex. 3:4). Through dreams (Matt. 2) and visions (Isa. 6:1, Rev. 1:12-17). But probably the most common of all means is through the quiet inner voice (Isa. 30:21).

Confess any unforgiven sin. A clean heart is necessary if you want to hear God (Ps. 66:18).

Use The Axehead Principle - a term coined from the story in II Kings 6. If you seem to have lost your way, go back to the last time you knew the sharp, cutting edge of God's voice. Then obey. The key question is: Have you obeyed the last thing God told you to do?

Get your own leading. God will use others to confirm your guidance, but you should also hear from Him directly. It can be dangerous to rely on others to get the word of the Lord for you (I Kings 13).

Don't talk about your guidance until God gives you permission to do so. Sometimes this happens immediately; at other times, there is a delay. The main purpose of waiting is to avoid four pitfalls of guidance: (A) pride, because God has spoken something to you; (B) presumption, by speaking before you have full understanding; (C) missing God's timing and method; (D) bringing confusion to others; they, too, need prepared hearts (Luke 9:36; Ecc. 3:7; Mark 5:19).

Use the Wise Men Principle. Just as the Three Wise Men individually followed the star and in doing so, were all led to the same Christ, so God will often use two or more spiritually sensitive people to confirm what He is telling you (II Cor. 13:1).

Beware of counterfeits. Have you ever heard of a counterfeit dollar bill? Yes, of course. But have you ever heard of a counterfeit paper bag? No. The reason is, only things of value are worth counterfeiting.

Satan has a counterfeit for everything of God that is possible for him to copy (Acts 8:9-11; Ex. 7:22). Counterfeit guidance comes, for example, through Ouija boards, seances, fortunetelling, and astrology (Lev. 20:6; 19:26; II Kings 21:6). The guidance of the Holy Spirit leads you closer to Jesus and into true freedom. Satan's guidance leads you away from God into bondage.

One key test for true guidance: Does your leading follow principles of the Bible? The Holy Spirit never contradicts the Word of God.

Opposition of man is sometimes guidance from God (Acts 21:10-14). In our own story, we recognized much later that what seemed like blockage from our denomination was in fact God leading us into a broader scope of ministry. The important thing here, again, is yieldedness to the Lord (Dan. 6:6-23; Acts 4:18-21). Rebellion is never of God, but sometimes He asks you to step away from your elders in a way that is not rebellion, but part of His plan. Trust that He will show your heart the difference.

Every follower of Jesus has a unique ministry (I Cor. 12; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). The more you seek to hear God's voice in detail, the more effective you will be in your own calling. Guidance is not a game - it is serious business where we learn what God wants us to do in ministry and how He wants us to do it. The will of God is doing and saying the right thing in the right place, with the right people, at the right time, and in the right sequence, under the right leadership, using the right method, with the right attitude of heart.

Practice hearing God's voice and it becomes easier. It's like picking up the phone and recognizing the voice of your best friend ... you know his voice because you have heard it so much. Compare young Samuel with the older man Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4-7; 8:7-10; 12:11-18).

Relationship is the most important reason for hearing the voice of the Lord. God is not only infinite, but personal. If you don't have communication, you don't have a personal relationship with Him. True guidance, as Darlene pointed out, is getting closer to the Guide. We grow to know the Lord better as He speaks to us and, as we listen to Him and obey, we make His heart glad (Ex. 33:11; Matt. 7:24-27).