

LISTENING TO & DISCERNING GOD'S VOICE

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"We are a very busy, wordy and heady faith tradition. Yet we are desperate to find ways to open ourselves to our God who is, in the end, beyond all of our human constructs and human agendas. With all of our emphasis on theology and Word, cognition and service – and as important as these are – we are starved for mystery, to know this God as One who is totally Other and to experience reverence in his presence. We are starved for intimacy, to see and feel and know God in the very cells of our being. We are starved for rest, to know God beyond what we can do for him. We are starved for quiet, to hear the sound of sheer silence that is the presence of God himself."

Invitation to Solitude and Silence, Ruth Haley Barton

FOUR KEYS TO DISCERNING GOD'S VOICE:

Key #1: PURSUING A LOVE RELATIONSHIP _____ WITH GOD
Matthew 22:37-39; 1 Corinthians 13:13

Our failure to hear God has its deepest roots in a failure to understand, accept and grow into a conversational relationship with God."

Hearing God, Dallas Willard

Key#2: BECOMING STILL, SILENT & PRESENT _____
Psalm 46:10; Mark 1:35

"If we are to witness of Christ in today's market places, where there are constant demands on our whole person, we need silence. If we are always available, not only physically, but by empathy, sympathy, friendship, understanding and boundless love, we need silence. To be able to give joyous, unflagging hospitality, not only of house and food, but of mind, heart, body and soul, we need silence."

Catherine de Heuck Doherty

Key #3: OPENING _____

Ephesians 1:17-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; Psalm 139:23-24

1. Ask God to “ _____ ENLIGHTEN _____ he eyes of your heart.” (Ephesians 1:18)
 - Exercise: Lectio Divina on Ephesians 1:17-18
2. Ask God _____ DAILY _____, “Is there anything you want to show me, say to me?”

A heart that is _____ HUMBLE _____, open and teachable is better able to hear God’s voice.

“Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he ran to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ But Eli said, ‘I did not call; go back and lie down.’ So he went and lay down. Again the Lord called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ ‘My son,’ Eli said, ‘I did not call; go back and lie down.’ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time. And then Eli realized the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, ‘Go and lie down, and if he calls you say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’”

1 Samuel 3:4-10

Key #4: _____ TUNING IN _____ TO GOD’S VOICE

*“The Spirit, not content to flit around on the surface, dives into the depths of God, and brings out what God planned all along. Who ever knows what you’re thinking and planning except you yourself? **The same with God—except that he not only knows what he’s thinking, but he lets us in on it.** God offers a full report on the gifts of life and salvation that he is giving us. We don’t have to rely on the world’s guesses and opinions. We didn’t learn this by reading books or going to school; we learned it from God, who taught us person-to-person through Jesus, and we’re passing it on to you in the same firsthand, personal way. The unspiritual self, just as it is by nature, can’t receive the gifts of God’s Spirit. There’s no capacity for them. They seem like so much silliness. **Spirit can be known only by spirit—God’s Spirit and our spirits in open communion.** Spiritually alive, we have access to everything God’s Spirit is doing, and can’t be judged by unspiritual critics. Isaiah’s question, “Is there anyone around who knows God’s Spirit, anyone who knows what he is doing?” has been answered: Christ knows, and we have Christ’s Spirit.”*

1 Corinthians 2:10-16 (The Message)

Perhaps the rough distinction is this; the voice of the subconscious argues with you, tries to convince you; but the inner voice of god does not argue, does not try to convince you. It just speaks and it is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God.”

E. Stanley Jones

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S VOICE:

- It has a certain CLARITY (Matthew 7:28-29)
 - It usually comes in the form of WORDS, thoughts, pictures and ideas rather than analytical or reasoned thoughts.
 - God's voice is often IMPACTFUL, confident and authoritative
- It has a certain CHARACTER (James 3:17)
 - God's voice is steady, CALM, wise and clear
 - God's voice can be penetrating and revealing but never CONDEMNING. (Romans 8:1)
 - God's voice DRAWS us compassionately and peacefully. He never DRIVES us compulsively.
 - It is motivated by love
- It has a certain CONTENT (John 16:13)
 - It is consistent with the WRITTEN WORD of God.
 - It is consistent with the CLOSE followers of Christ (ask them **before** you make the decision!)
 - It brings honor and glory to GOD

CAUTIONS:

- If a leading requires you to make a major, life-changing decision in a very short period of time, question it.
- If a leading requires you to go deeply in debt or place someone else in a position of awkwardness, compromise or danger, question it.
- If a leading requires you to shatter family relationships or important friendships, question it.
- If a leading ever causes you to believe you are exempt from suffering and failure, question it.