

LIFE QUESTIONS



Hearing God's Voice

Elim Church, Clapham

No one is able to have an intimate and meaningful relationship with God, unless they are able to follow Him. To do this it is necessary to hear Him speak. In John 10 Jesus says a number of significant things on this subject. In the latter part of verse 3 He says, "... the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." Notice there is no ambiguity in what Jesus says, for it is only by listening to His voice that a person is able to follow Him as He desires.

As you listen to God you learn things about yourself as well as Him. It also means that you don't have to go through life aimlessly, not knowing which way to go or what to do. Jesus points out that by listening to Him, you are less likely to be led astray by following something or someone else (v.5), for it's only as you listen to Him that you are truly able to follow Him (v.4).

This subject of hearing God's voice is repeatedly found in the scriptures, thereby showing its Importance for you to heed. However, there are those who are of the opinion that it is not necessary to hear God speaking, because they have the Bible to read. This is true to some extent, but the Pharisees made a major mistake which Jesus pointed out to them. They had allowed their views, opinions and traditions to nullify the power of God's word in their lives (Mk 7:13), their thinking and attitudes were frequently getting in the way of what Jesus wanted them to grasp. This is highlighted in John 5, where Jesus points out to them that their understanding of the scriptures were drawing them away from the eternal life they desired. They could not accept that Jesus and His teachings were the key to their searching (38-40), as their beliefs frequently got in the way. They needed to grasp that the scriptures are not an end in themselves, as they point to someone greater – God Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit! If they had taken the time and effort to listen to Jesus, they could have saved themselves a lot of heartaches and mistakes.

The majority of people know what it's like to talk to God in prayer, but many believers find listening to God a bit more of a challenge. God never intended it to be this way, He wanted you to have a meaningful and intimate relationship with Him by regularly communing with Him, learning from Him and drawing upon His knowledge and wisdom. The problem is not on His side for He is always speaking good and wholesome things, for that is His nature! Therefore, if you have difficulty hearing His voice, the problem has to rest with you! No matter what the situation you may face, ten thousand words from a friend or colleague will not have the same impact as one word from Him. This one word can make all the difference, turning things around and giving you a completely different perspective on the situation.

Time and again throughout the scriptures, God speaks in a gentle whisper. A whisper is something that is not easy to hear if there is a lot going on around you, as it is so easy to misunderstand what is being said.

Being too busy, or preoccupied with other things also makes it more of a challenge to hear God speak. The Psalmist gives a clue when he says, "Be still and know that I am God!" (Psa 46:10). David is not exhorting you to be stationary, for you can be still, whilst your heart and mind are in a whirl with all manner of fears, worries and anxieties. Together these will drown out the gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit, making it hard for you to hear Him speak!

The other key thing to note, is that whenever God speaks, He always speaks to your spirit. If you are not accustomed to God speaking to you, maybe it is because you are expecting to hear the audible voice of God. The problem exists because there is no other way of describing how God will commune with you, other than using words you are familiar with. However, when God speaks, your thoughts come into play, as you begin to analyse what you have heard. It is not unusual if you begin to think that your thoughts are your own and not the Lord who is trying to get through to you.

Knowing God and His Word is a good way of helping you to recognise when He is speaking to you. For instance, God will never point the finger, criticise or condemn you, rather He will speak lovingly, encouragingly, and in a constructive and helpful way to you, as He seeks to draw you closer to Him.

If you want to hear God speaking to you, you need to first believe that He wants to talk to you. Secondly, ask the Holy Spirit with faith, to help you recognise when He is speaking and what He is saying so that you can follow Him more closely. Lastly, be open, expect Him to speak, by asking Him a simple question like, 'Lord could you tell me what you really think of me?' When He begins speaking, don't be surprised, or question the wonderful things He will say to you!

Enjoy listening to your wonderful Heavenly Father!