

2022 Discipleship Series:

Discerning the Voice of the Lord

Have you ever had a prompting to give someone a call or send them a note of encouragement? If you followed through with that nudge, did you find out later that it really impacted the other person? Or have you ever been reading a passage in the Bible and it seemed like words were jumping off the page just for you?

Most of us have experienced one or both of these situations at least once, but did you recognize that as God's voice—God speaking to you? You may have had someone's name come into your mind as you were praying or felt a nudge to pray for someone in the course of your day. That is God speaking to you.

Just this morning, my daily Bible reading included the following verse:

"If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways."

Psalm 81:13

When we discussed the topic of prayer earlier in this series, it was noted that there is a listening component of prayer. If we want to flourish in God's King-

dom, we must learn to discern the voice of God. It is not a skill that comes naturally to most, but it is a skill that can be learned.

My own journey with learning to discern the voice of the Lord began out of desperation. I was struggling with depression to the point of despair when God sent a woman into my life who counseled me, "Kathy, you need to get on your face and ask God what to do."

That was the best advice I have ever received in my life! I was so desperate for help that I took her advice and literally got down on the floor with my face to the carpet and cried out to God for help. First, I cried and told God all my troubles—as if He didn't already know! Then I got quiet and listened. Nothing.

I could barely take a few seconds of silence before I had to get up. Psalm 46:10 comes to mind.

"Be still, and know that I am God."

I had a lot of trouble being still because whenever I got still the voic-

Be still and
know that I
am God.

Psalm 46:10



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Discerning the Voice of the Lord

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es in my head got very loud. Thoughts like, “You’ll never be able to hear God.” “You’re a terrible wife.” “You’re a lousy mother.” I could go on, but you get the point.

I did not give up though. Each day I came before the Lord humbly on my face and cried out to Him. I told Him what was on my heart and then I listened as long as I could before getting up. It took more than a few days before I actually heard anything, but as I continued to listen, the Lord began to speak to me and tell me what to do.

You may wonder, “How did you know it was God speaking?”

That's easy. He gave me very practical things to do to be free from depression. If I had been able to figure that out myself I would not have needed the Lord. I also reasoned that the enemy wasn't going to give me the wisdom I needed to be free from depression.

So. There was some faith involved. First, I had to believe that when I did what my friend told me to do that God would speak to me. Where do you find that kind of faith? Well, I began a search in the Word. What does the Word of God say about listening to the Lord?

There were two Scriptures that

stood out to me.

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

John 10:27

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26

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

John 10:27

As a teacher, I am always glad to answer the questions of my students, so I reasoned that it would be impossible for the Holy Spirit to teach me all things or remind me of Jesus' words if He didn't speak to me. I asked the Lord, “If it is possible for me to know Your voice like this verse says, will you teach me how to listen?”

He did. It took a while for me to learn to be still long enough to hear, but I did learn, and now I can hear the Lord no matter what

I am doing—even in the midst of a noisy crowd.. Like those sheep, I recognize His voice.

He taught me to take every thought captive unto Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and to hold every thought going through my brain up to the standard of Philippians 4:8.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Sadly, it didn't take long for me to realize that **none** of the thoughts going through my mind lined up with that standard! I had to ask the Lord to help me to think better. He did.

Here is what I have learned about discerning God's voice:

- You have to want to listen with the intent to obey.
- You have to take the time to learn and discern.
- You have to practice – a lot!
- Every word from the Lord will align with Scripture and brings peace not

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Do You Hear What I Hear?

by Julie Dibble

“A song, a song high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea
With a voice as big as the sea”

Can you see the scene? Adorned Christmas trees, instrumental music filling the silent gaps as you enter the sanctuary. The blessed familiarity of this tune lulls you into His arms as you rest knowing you have heard Him call you close.

Truly, there may be certain times of the year we sense God’s presence more powerfully than others. Yet, He is Immanuel, God with us, always and forever.

In this world, there are a thousand and one voices coming at us via the internet, tv, radio and other people. If you are like me, I get overwhelmed as I strive to pay attention to the multitude of messages. If we are not careful, we become stuck. Cycles of self-criticism and blame of others ensue, given our predicament.

Do you hear what I hear?

His Word says He instructs me while I sleep:

**“I will praise the LORD,
who counsels me; even
at night my heart in-
structs me” (Psalm
16:7).**

But before I close my eyes, it helps me to seek Him, even in a whisper to tell my Father I want to hear from

Him as I slumber, that I trust
He will do as His Word says.

Then, in the waking moments of a shiny, new day, what if we say to our Lord *“speak for Your servant is listening?”*

Listening, or rather, hearing the voice of God is hardly ever what we conjure in our own minds. Sometimes we just want Him to answer a question burning a hole in our hearts. Other times, we are so overwhelmed, that we beg Him to send neon lights to show us the Way.

Do you hear what I hear?

**“Hear my voice
when I call, Lord,
be merciful to me
and answer me.
My heart says of
you, “Seek His
face!” Your face,
Lord, I will seek”
(Psalm 27:7-8)**

David was unashamed to minister to himself, reminding himself to seek the Lord wholeheartedly, to long for Him. May we too be this unashamed in our encouraging ourselves in the Lord, for it is His will that we put Him above all other things in our lives.

As we pursue a relationship

with the Lord and lean in close to hear His leading, we may not hear audible words or receive the bump over the head to shake us awake to His way.

Do you hear what I hear?

We will be drawn near to the One who abides in His daughters. We will be hushed into peace because His presence is all-encompassing. We will be dropped to our spiritual knees and repent for all the times we missed His whispers, His commands, His wisdom.

Believe your God wants to speak to you.

Remember Hagar? She was an Egyptian slave, probably very far from God due to her unbelief and the devil’s hold upon her life. Hagar fled after being mistreated by Sarai.

In the heat of the day, she thirsted, but most likely did not know to call on the Holy Lord of all.

There, He spoke to her, called her by name, inquired where she had been and where she was going.

If our gracious God sought to know Hagar, He wants to know you. Your comings and goings, your heart’s holes and scars, your conversational needs, not with the world, but with Him.

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“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

Let us pray:

Oh, Gracious and Sovereign Lord,

How we love You! How we thank You! We always need to be reminded of Your precious Word. We go astray without even realizing it. But You, Lord, are faithful to forgive us and draw us near to Your arms over and over. Help us remember to seek Your face while You may be found. Help us to be still in times of chaos, remembering You have not left. Teach us to listen to You, whether it be through Scripture or other means You use to communicate with us directly and personally. We lift Your name to heaven, for You are the Most High God. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Julie Dibble is a servant of her Lord Jesus Christ. Together with her husband Jason, they have two sons, Braedon 17 and Jackson 15, and one rescued pup named Rocko. Julie preaches, writes, hikes, and prays for God to use her daily in this broken world. Currently, she is on staff at Newberrytown Church of God as Director of Outreach and Evangelism.



Is that You, God?

by Heidi Looney

I have a secret. Now, this probably isn't what you'd expect from a women's discipleship blog, but...I can be notoriously bad at discerning God's direction and voice. I used to joke that instead of a gentle tap, God would have to hit me over the head with a 2x4 for me to get the message. I often seek out signs when I should just lean on faith. I try to be logical when I need to lead with love. I am stubborn when I need to step aside and follow the path of grace. I really have difficulty discerning God's voice at times. However, over the years, I've learned a few things that have helped in those difficult moments when God is speaking and I'm just not prone to listening.

I've learned that God will often speak in my language.

God is our Father and creator. He knows me – and you – well enough to communicate with you best. Often, I find God speaking to me where I naturally find my strengths. As I said before, I tend to be logical. I'll make a list to evaluate a situation, and not surprisingly, God will show up in

the middle of crossing off the pros and cons. It may come in a different format than I expect, like a revelation as I'm making that list, but God knows how and will often work through my own processes to speak to me. This isn't always the case, but to this day it still surprises me when He chooses to meet me where I am.

*For God is not a
God of
disorder but of
peace...*

1 Corinthians 14:33

Discerning God's voice is not just about the answer, but about the conversation.

During trying times, I can get laser-focused on an answer. I just want God to show me the way in a situation or what next step to take. In some cases, I can whine and demand an immediate answer, as if God is a magic 8 ball just telling me what to do next. In the difficult times of discernment, I've found that the conversation with Him to be just as important (if not more important), than the answer itself. Sometimes He leads me on a path of deeper fellowship, meaning, or understanding.

Those conversations can even soothe and bring peace when I find out I don't need to move or take the next step at all. Sometimes the

only way to get to the point can be through conversations with God as I'm seeking a specific answer.

Discerning God's voice is ultimately about peace.

This has been the most recent lesson I've learned, but incredibly helpful to my walk. When God speaks on a matter, and we follow His instruction, we will have peace. It may not be easy or fun to do. I've been through several situations where I've followed His voice and Spirit, and even though they were difficult, they brought peace. Once I could honestly see the situations as they were, the path God had laid out, and knew that I followed it; no matter the consequences, peace always came. 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us that "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace..." And that God of peace is the one who is speaking into our lives.

The noise of the world can make discerning God's voice difficult. But it's His voice that leads us in our everyday lives. Through hearing Him in our most basic forms of communication, we can see Him often in our daily life. When we know that the conversations during discernment are just as important as the answer, we can find ourselves growing closer to Him. Finally, when we discern God's voice and follow His wisdom, we will have peace no matter what.



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confusion.

· God is able and willing to help you. His Holy Spirit within you makes it possible to hear.

Do you have to get on your face to hear? Probably not, but I learned that a position of humility helped me to be receptive.

Those who seek the Lord will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29). Seek Him in the Word and He will speak to You there. Take time to be still when you pray and He will speak to you there. As I go about my day, I ask the Lord many questions in my mind and He answers with Heavenly wisdom. (Why do ask God questions in my mind and not out loud? The enemy cannot read your mind. Only God knows your thoughts. This allows you to keep your conversation with the Lord personal without interference from the enemy. He does not want you to learn to discern the voice of the Lord, so he will put obstacles in your way. That is nothing to be afraid of, but you must be aware of it, so his schemes don't keep you from drawing closer to the Lord.)

It may take a while. You may

make mistakes. You may need a lot of practice to become proficient, but it will be worth it. You will find your relationship with the Lord will deepen significantly as you learn to discern His voice.

Lord, teach us to listen when You speak to us. Help us to be willing to learn so that we will always know Your voice and never follow the voice of the deceiver again.

Going Deeper:

Read Psalm 29.

Do a Word Study in Scripture about listening to God, God's Voice, etc.

Journey to Trust by Robyn Dykstra pages 14-15 has a lesson about listening to God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUCNvmVxPLI>

<https://busyblessedwomen.com/listening-to-the-voice-of-god/>

Living Boldly for Christ,

Kathy Foor

CGWM Director





Director: Kathy Foor
cgwmdirector@gmail.com

Assistant Director: Heather Boss
cgwmassistantdirector@gmail.com

Secretary: Kimberly Daly
cgwmsecretary@gmail.com

Treasurer: Nancy Scott
cgwmtreasurer@gmail.com

Website:
<https://www.cggcwomen.org/>

Facebook:
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(CGWM)

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If you or your women's group have not been a part of Thank Offering in the past and would like to, all you need to do is get a container and start thanking God for the many blessings he gives you each day. Look for our reminders to send in your offerings in April. We are better together! Thank Offering barrels may be obtained by contacting Kathy Foor or ordering online at [Berlin Packaging](http://BerlinPackaging.com).

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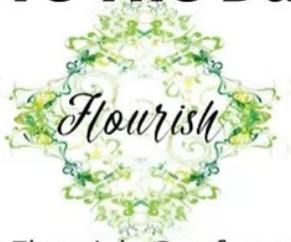
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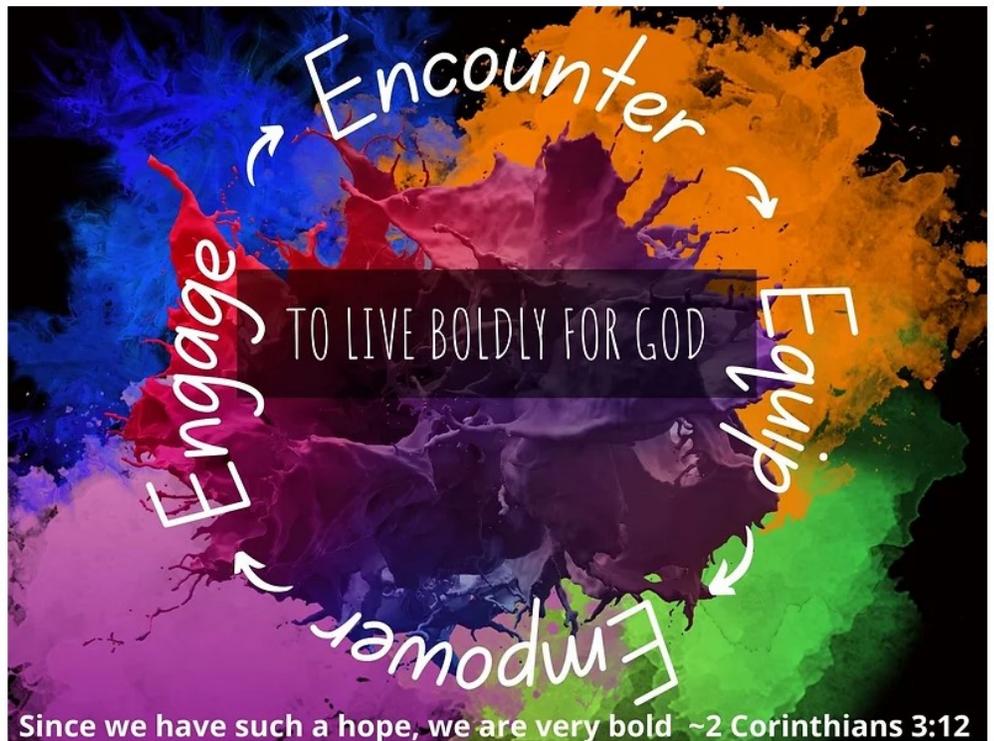
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Since we have such a hope, we are very bold ~2 Corinthians 3:12