



# HOW TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE

My people will recognise my  
voice and follow me.  
(JESUS, FROM JOHN 10:27)

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Hi,

I'll never forget the first time I heard God's voice. It was surreal to experience the Creator of the Universe speaking to me so personally and specifically. Hearing the voice of the Spirit is the privilege of every person who chooses to follow Jesus. It makes our relationship with God more real, transforms us from the inside out and calls us into God's mission.

That's why I'm excited to welcome you on the journey of learning to hear God's voice more clearly. I know the difference it makes and along with my team, am committed to helping you along the way.

God's heart is to reveal Godself to all those who seek him. In this short Guide are four steps that will help you experience God's voice for yourself. Our prayer is that you will recognise Holy Spirit's voice more clearly each day and in doing so, you'll find the courage to follow.

*Tania*



## FOUR STEPS

01 JOIN THE CONVERSATION

02 HEAR THE SOUND

03 RECOGNISE THE VOICE

04 RESPOND IN FAITH



STEP 01

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION



God's desire for conversation shouldn't be surprising given God's heart for relationship: we can't truly know someone without two-way communication.

I've heard it said that when we talk *to God*, we're praying, but when God talks *to us*, we're crazy. Personally, I think it's crazier for us to pray *without* expecting God to speak back!

Hearing God's voice begins with the expectation that God *can* and *will* speak to us. The Scriptures reveal that God has always been a talker (1 Kings 19:12). God does nothing without first speaking it (Amos 3:7). From the book of Genesis through to the book of Revelation, we see God speaking to people about all manner of topics. The Bible is a book of God conversations! The desire for conversation shouldn't be surprising given God's heart for relationship. We can never truly know a person without two-way communication.

At first, we see the Creator God speaking to humanity in open and loving connection (Gen. 3:8). Sadly, humanity's decision to rebel created a barrier between God and his people. But this didn't stop God's longing to communicate. During the time of the Old Testament, God spoke largely through *prophets*. These were men and women who were specially appointed to hear God's voice (mostly in dreams and visions, Num. 12:6) and pass the messages on as *prophecy* (Num. 11:24a). However, this setup wasn't ideal - you could only hear God consistently via the prophets. Back then they looked forward to a time when everyone could hear from God for *themselves* (Jer. 31:34).

When did that time come? When Jesus came, everything changed. God sent Jesus to reveal God's message "in the flesh" (John 1:14). While the prophets spoke *the words of God*, Jesus came as *The Word of God* (Heb. 1:1-2a). That means God's communication was expressed not only in the words *Jesus said*, but in the *actions he performed* - God's message of acceptance as Jesus welcomed the outcast, God's power as Jesus healed the leper and God's provision as Jesus fed the hungry. God's ultimate message of love was expressed through Jesus' death and resurrection where he destroyed the barrier of sin and opened the way for us all to enjoy unbroken communion with God.

Then when Jesus left the earth, God spoke through the Holy Spirit. The "word of God" was no longer limited to those who shared Jesus' table and walked Jerusalem's streets, but was now always available to everyone wherever they went. Just as the Old Testament prophets heard from God in dreams and visions and could speak out God's messages as prophecy (Acts 2:16,17), now *everyone* could - young and old, male and female - can hear God's voice for themselves (Acts 2:39)!

Want to hear God's voice? It begins with the understanding that there's a God who loves us and wants to speak to us. All we need to do is introduce ourselves. Ask God a question. *Join the conversation.*

### READ

1 Kings 19:12, Amos 3:7, Genesis 3:8  
Numbers 12:6, Numbers 11:24a, Jeremiah 31:34  
John 1:14, Hebrews 1:1-2a  
Acts 2:16, 17, Acts 2:39

## STEP 02

# HEAR THE SOUND



The Spirit speaks as the continuing voice of Jesus. It's a spiritual voice that we learn to recognise as we come to know what God is like in Jesus.



What does God sound like? Does God speak with a loud booming voice or a quiet mystical whisper? Does God have an accent?

It must have been easy for the early disciples to hear God's voice. Everything Jesus said and did was a direct word from God! Yet Jesus himself said hearing the Spirit would be *better* than a personal audience with him - largely because the Spirit is with us wherever we go (John 16:7). The Spirit speaks as the continuing voice of Jesus. It's a spiritual voice that we learn to recognise as we come to know what God is like in Jesus.

Hearing the Spirit is not a skill for those who've been a Christian the longest or studied the Bible the most. Jesus said that *those* who seek him will find him. Those who have "ears to hear" will hear (Mark 4:9). It's all about posturing our hearts or as the Apostle Paul described it, seeing with the "*eyes of our heart*" (Eph. 1:17,18a).

That means we need to ask God to speak and set our hearts to listen (Hab. 2:1a). When I wake up in the morning; *God what do you have to say to me?* At church on Sunday; *Lord, speak to me.* As I drive to work; *Lord what's on your heart today?*

To hear God's voice, we also need to know the kinds of things God says. Jesus said the Spirit would first *remind* us of all that he had taught (John 14:26) - truths like the character of God, how to know God and how God works on the earth. These truths are now reliably recorded for us in Scripture. So, whenever we read the Bible or hear it taught, we should pray for Holy Spirit to speak. But Jesus has more to say than what he covered in three years of ministry on earth. So, the Spirit speaks to us about *things to come* (John 16:13) - applying the truths of Jesus to our everyday situations.

Like any good communicator, God speaks in a variety of ways that draw on all our senses. Often people hear from God in ways that are related to their personality - God creatively tailors his message to how we best receive it. God's communications come in three forms:

### 1. Spirit Words

Firstly, the Spirit speaks in *words* that come on the stage of our minds. They sound like our own thoughts, but they are not our thoughts.

Sometimes people experience an "audible" or "out loud" voice, but this seems to be rare and reserved for crisis situations. Even then, those who've experienced it say it wouldn't have necessarily been heard by those nearby (E.g., Acts 22:9).

### 2. Spirit Pictures

The Spirit also speaks in pictures - *dreams* when we're sleeping or *visions* when we're awake (Acts 2:17b). Spirit pictures are a powerful and effective form of communication - after all, a "picture tells a thousand words!" Perhaps that's why God communicates visually so often in Scripture. Sometimes the picture is symbolic and needs interpretation - so newness is a baby, freedom is an eagle and anger is a dagger. At other times, the scene may be literal.

### 3. Spirit Senses

God's messages also come via our senses. Feelings of love, peace, joy, freedom, conviction or new understanding may invade our senses, setting us free, impressing us to do good and surrounding us with comfort (e.g. Mark 2:8). (On the other hand, feelings of guilt, shame, fear or condemnation are never a part of God's communications).

Sometimes God uses people to deliver a message as 'prophecy'. The beauty of this gift is that it can act as confirmation for what we've already heard from God.

God can use *anything* to speak - all of creation speaks his truth (Ps. 19:1-2). In whatever way God speaks, we know that God is a masterful communicator who is able to get his message across. The sounds of God are recognisable when we're listening and ready to follow.

#### READ

John 16:7, Mark 4:9, Ephesians 1:17-18a, Habakkuk 2:1a  
John 14:26, John 16:13  
Daniel 7:15, Acts 22:9  
Acts 2:17b  
Mark 2:8  
Psalm 19:1-2



STEP 03

# RECOGNISE THE VOICE



In order to get it right, we need to know that we can get it wrong.

By far the trickiest part of having a God-conversation is learning to recognise God's voice among the others we hear. I say *learning* because this is not a cut and dried process. Like any relationship, discerning Holy Spirit messages takes time and becomes easier as we get to know God more.

The challenge comes because while God's revelation is pure, we are not. Like water flowing through a rusty pipe, our experiences, mindsets and desires can all contaminate what we hear (1 Cor. 13:12). We end up seeing what we want to see and hearing what we want to hear. That means, the first thing we need to know in order to get it right is that we can get it wrong.

The good news is that Jesus said his people *would recognise* his voice and in recognising, they would be able to follow (John 10:27). God wants to be heard even more than we want to hear!

To help us recognise the Spirit, God has provided us with a testing process. Every vision we see or sense we experience needs to be *tested* (1 John 4:1). One of the most famous God conversations in the early church gives us the model (Acts 10). Here are three test questions to use:

## 1. Would Jesus Say This?

The most important question of any revelation is: *Would God say this?* That is, does it align with God's character and nature? Since Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God (Heb. 1:1-2), everything Holy Spirit says will be in line with what Jesus has said and done. So, the question becomes, *would Jesus say this?* Is it in line with his teachings and actions?

## 2. Is Someone Else Saying This?

One of the greatest blessings of the New Covenant is that the Holy Spirit can speak to more than one person. It's no longer the lone prophet calling out "in the wilderness" (Is. 40:3). That means, when we're unclear, God can confirm the message through another person. In other words, God speaks twice!

God spoke twice in the early church when he wanted to show his heart for the non-Jewish people (Gentiles). God brought Peter and Cornelius together and they realised God was speaking the same message (Acts 10; Acts 15:28). That's why it's so important to be in healthy relationship with our church community. There's safety in numbers!

### 3. Are Spiritual Signs Following This?

God's words are full of life and power. That means, when God speaks, spiritual signs will follow. Signs are supernatural, tangible indicators of God's message. Peter and Cornelius experienced them when God spoke about the Gentiles (Acts 11:15). Jesus too spoke with 'signs following' (Acts 2:22b). When he wanted to show that he was 'bread of life' sent from God, he multiplied five loaves of bread and fed over five thousand people (John 6:26).

This is what signs do. It's very different to sitting at a red traffic light and saying; "God if this is you, let the light go green in the next five seconds!" There's a supernatural display of what God has just said that can't be humanly manipulated. Spiritual signs may also include peace and hope in a time of turmoil, the revelation of previously unknown information, healing, salvation and miracles. Everything the Spirit says will produce the same fruit of Jesus' ministry (Gal. 5:22,23).

Yes, it's possible to get it wrong when it comes to hearing God's voice, but God has provided us with tests to help us get it right. All we need to do is use them!

#### READ

1 Corinthians 13:12

1 John 4:1

Hebrews 1:1-2

Isaiah 40:3, Acts 10, Acts 15:28

Acts 11:15, Acts 2:22b, John 6:26, Galatians 5:22,23

STEP 04

# RESPOND IN FAITH



Hearing the Spirit is easier  
when we're willing to do  
what the Spirit says.

When I first started listening for God's voice, I made a promise; "God, speak to me and if you make it clear, I will do whatever you say." It was said with a significant degree of trepidation; *What if God said something I didn't want to hear?* Only time would tell.

I soon learned that having a God-conversation was not just about getting an answer to my questions. While God wants to help us in the daily happenings of our lives, we must remember that the Spirit speaks to continue the ministry and mission of Jesus. That mean God's voice will work to transform us so that we can fulfil our purpose on earth and bring God's kingdom of love, joy and peace to everyone around.

Ultimately hearing God's voice will lead us to follow Jesus by taking up our cross (Luke 9:23). The Spirit speaks to crucify our sin and selfishness – to forgive when we don't want to, give when we want to take and be kind to those who treat us poorly. It isn't always easy. But on the other side of the cross is a *resurrection*. Jesus said that when we "lose our life," we actually find it (Luke 9:24). We will know what it means to *truly live*. We will become like the One we are called to follow as well as the one we were created to be. As Paul said, we'll be transformed into "God's image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). And it's *then* that we'll be able to fully partner with God's plans.

This is why it's so important to respond to God's voice. In faith we say "yes" to whatever God says. God's words are spirit and life. They have the power to create, build and set free. Jesus said we cannot live without them (John 6:63). When we submit to the Spirit, we will see miracles in our own lives and in the lives of others. We will see more of God and we will come to know God more personally than we could ever imagine (John 14:21).

Whenever God speaks, it will only ever be for our good. We will know more of God's love and power. Following the Spirit may be challenging at times, but it will always be worth it.

## READ

Luke 9:23,24, 2 Corinthians 3:18, John 6:63, John 14:21

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I know them and they follow me.”  
(Jesus, from John 10:27)



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