

4 Ways to Hear From God for Yourself

There is one key skill that each of us needs to develop if we want to multiply disciples.

I was spending time with the Lord one morning, watching two squirrels play a game of tag in the oak tree outside my window, when, out of the blue, a thought came to mind.

“You are to walk Oltorf.”

Oltorf is a street about a 20-minute drive from our house. I didn’t know anyone who lived there, and I had no reason to ever go there.

The end of that story was a church built out of the harvest in a low-income housing project on Oltorf.

As I mentioned in the last post, the job of the disciples in Luke 10 was to listen to Jesus and do what he said. If we want to see multiplying disciples and churches, then we need to learn to do the same.

But how do you hear God?

The first thing to understand is that God wants to communicate with us. Following Jesus as a system of rules and traditions is merely religion. Jesus wants to have a vital, living, vibrant relationship with each one of us. Living that way becomes an adventure! In John 10, Jesus tells his disciples that His sheep hear/recognize His voice.

I could be in a room with 100 people all speaking at once, but I would instantly recognize Tony’s voice—and not just because he has a British accent. I recognize his voice because I delight to spend time with him. There’s no one on earth whom I would rather be with. It’s the same with Jesus. As we develop

intimacy with him, we recognize his voice amid the myriad of thoughts going through our minds.

Perhaps the best pattern I know of listening to God comes from Mark Virkler. I first read his book *Dialogue with God* probably 30 years ago, and it's formed the basis of how I hear the Lord ever since. He describes a four step pattern:

1. Free yourself from distractions
2. Focus on Jesus
3. Listen for a flow of spontaneous thoughts
4. Write them down.

For me, the "flow of spontaneous thoughts" often comes as an idea, apparently out of nowhere, like the idea that I should walk Oltorf. I'll find myself thinking, "Where did *that* come from?"

Sometimes I see a picture, often very fleeting, but that encapsulates an idea that God then elaborates on. For example, one time in a gathering I had a picture of ball moss (a kind of moss that attacks trees in Texas and eventually kills them.) The Lord spoke to the group through that picture that we should get rid of distractions and things that are seemingly small and inconsequential but that were choking our spiritual lives.

Sometimes God speaks through a word of Scripture. In our business, for example, we've several times found ourselves guided in how to pray by a story or book from the Bible.

Occasionally God communicates through dreams or prophecy.

At this stage you don't try to judge what you've written down. Later, you can weigh what you wrote against Scripture. I try and do this several times a week. Mostly, what I write down is scriptural and encouraging but nothing out of the ordinary. But sometimes God speaks incredibly clearly and specifically.

When we've learned to hear His voice in times set aside for doing that, then we can hear His quiet whisper:

"Go sit down next to that person on the bench over there."

"Prayer walk this apartment complex."

"This is the people group you will be working with."

"This coffee shop is to be the place where you hang out."

"That person needs prayer—her husband has just left her. Go start a conversation with her."

Listening to God, recognizing his voice so that we can respond in obedience is the main, key skill we need if we are to multiply disciples and plant churches.

*Adapted from **Felicity Dale's** blog, **Simply Church**. Felicity is the author of numerous books including **The Black Swan Effect** and **Simply Church**. She is an advocate for women in the church and trains people to start simple, organic house churches around the world.*