

5 Real-Life Steps to Hear Holy Spirit's Voice Daily

God must often feel like shouting, "Can you hear me now?"

People ask me quite often how to hear from God. You and I sometimes wish God would write on the wall with a burning finger (as in Dan. 5:5), or speak in an audible voice from heaven (as with Jesus in Matt. 17:5).

God does not usually add His voice to a cacophony of sound—in our heads, our churches, or our lifestyle. The many messages we allow into our minds and lives from anywhere and everywhere else make it harder to differentiate God's voice from all the others. God speaks most frequently in a "still small voice." (1 Kin. 19:12).

There are many books, podcasts and other resources detailing how God speaks. He speaks through His Word, through other believers, through providence, to our hearts through the Holy Spirit and more. Instead, I'd like to talk about how to hear from God in a very practical way. What does it look like? How do you hear from God when you face a difficult decision or an overwhelming challenge?

My Biggest God-Moment

Well, it was certainly one of the biggest.

Al and I were getting to know each other. Actually, we were in love. Things were moving pretty fast, and we were thinking about spending the rest of our lives together. I expected him soon to ask me to marry him. The emotions were running high, and it felt good.

But there were reasons some people would say, looking on, that our getting married would be unwise. Among them were Al's age

(13 years older than I), health and a few others. I knew if it truly was God bringing us together, He would take us through any challenges that might arise. But if it was just our feelings, and God wasn't behind it, getting married would only end in misery for both of us.

I needed to hear from God in the biggest possible way. So I got alone and put all distractions aside. And I prayed this way.

Lord, I know what I want and what my feelings say. But I need to hear from You about this possible marriage. I acknowledge my feelings before You, and now I lay both my desires and my fears aside as best as I can do as a human being. I need to know what You have to say more than anything else.

I let the tears flow until I could be quiet. I consciously put my own thoughts and feelings aside and took time to listen, really listen.

No, I didn't hear an audible voice from heaven or see writing on the wall. But I received an extremely clear peace in my spirit about the next course of action. I repeated this process several times, and each time, the answer was the same.

And my marriage to Al was the biggest earthly blessing I ever experienced, even with the suffering that came with his health challenges.

Keys to Hearing God's Voice

Hearing from God is not magic, but there are specific keys that will help you hear what He wants you to know regardless of what issue you're wrestling with. Here are five:

1. Prepare your heart and mind.

When I went before God to seek His will about getting married, I had already been studying and praying a lot. I had read books on marriage, researched theological sources on some

specifics of our situation, listened to radio programs, read the Song of Solomon (and other Scriptures) repeatedly, checked Al's background and talked with a few people I trusted. I knew the facts.

Asking to hear God's voice without doing "due diligence" doesn't give Him much to work with. Of course God can—and sometimes does—intervene whenever He chooses, but He expects us to use the resources we have available. This kind of study is not in place of prayer; it provides the ingredients God can use to be clear when He does speak.

2. Enter God's presence.

Now get alone with God. Remember, He will not often add His voice to a cacophony of sound. Go into your closet, to a quiet chapel, or to a quiet place in nature. Put aside distractions of every kind. Get focused. Play some calming worship music if you wish. For this moment, it's important to consciously focus on God to the exclusion of everything else.

In silence is not the only time God speaks, but you can hear His voice so much better when you put distractions aside.

3. Acknowledge your thoughts and emotions.

Being honest about your thoughts and emotions disarms some of their power to confuse. Being honest with yourself helps you distinguish when God does speak. Being honest with God clears the way even further. It's exceptionally difficult to put your own feelings aside if you have not acknowledged them.

If you worry that this kind of honesty isn't alright with God, read some of the psalms. David and others brought their deepest fears, greatest joys and biggest problems to God. They talked about them openly—in part for the purpose of being able to lay them down. That's what you do with "stuff:" bring it into God's presence and leave it there.

4. Lay your own thoughts and emotions aside.

Verbally and consciously set aside your own thoughts and feelings. You probably won't do this perfectly, but being intentional about this helps you become aware of the difference between your own thoughts and what God is trying to say. Tell God you're doing this; He will honor your commitment.

Take time to let your emotional "junk" flow out in God's presence if you need to. Sometimes the anger, fear, anxiety or overwhelm filling your heart is too loud for you to hear anything else. Let it out, and then set it aside.

5. Be quiet and listen.

Quit talking! Quit making noise. Once you've cried or screamed enough, get still. Just be. Don't keep remonstrating with God or keep trying to tell Him what He already knows. Don't keep asking for things or begging for Him to speak. That would be like having a conversation with your best friend where you keep yelling "Tell me, tell me, tell me!" but never shut up long enough to listen.

Look for the peace. "Let the peace of God ... rule in your hearts" Paul said (Col. 3:15). God may say something very specific to you; be willing to hear it. Or He may open a new idea to your mind. When you contemplate or picture in your mind the things God is trying to say, there will be a wonderful sense of peace in your heart. What decision would you make from that place? Circumstances may not change, but you will have a knowing from the Holy Spirit that "This is the way; walk in it" (Is. 30:21b).

Finally, remember that God wants to speak to you. You can hear Him now!

I hope you'll take the time and effort to learn how to hear God's voice for yourself.

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board certified OB-Gyn physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life that Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .