

5 Ways to Know if It's God's Voice

It can be hard to differentiate between the voice of God and our own thoughts. Here are five key tests to help you recognize which is which.

1) Test the origin (1 John 4:1). Thoughts from our own minds are progressive, with one thought leading to the next, however tangentially. Thoughts from the spirit world are spontaneous. The Hebrew word for true prophecy is *naba*, which literally means "to bubble up," whereas false prophecy is *ziyd*, meaning "to boil up." True words from the Lord will bubble up from our innermost being; we don't need to cook them up ourselves.

2) Compare it to biblical principles. God will never say something to you personally that is contrary to His universal revelation as expressed in the Scriptures. If the Bible clearly states that something is a sin, no amount of journaling can make it right. Much of what you journal about will not be specifically addressed in the Bible, however, so an understanding of biblical principles is also needed.

3) Compare it to the names and character of God as revealed in the Bible. Anything God says to you will be in harmony with His essential nature. Journaling will help you get to know God personally, but knowing what the Bible says about Him will help you discern what words are from Him. Make sure the tenor of your journaling lines up with the character of God as described in the Names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4) Test the fruit (Matt. 7:15-20). What effect does what you are hearing have on your soul and your spirit? Words from the Lord will quicken your faith and increase your love, peace and joy. They will stimulate a sense of humility within you as you become more aware of who God is and who you are. On the other

hand, any words you receive that elicit fear or doubt, that bring you into confusion or anxiety or that stroke your ego (especially if you hear something that is “just for you alone—no one else is worthy”) must be immediately rebuked and rejected as lies of the enemy.

5) Share it with your spiritual counselors (Prov. 11:14). We are members of the body of Christ. We weren’t designed or called to walk alone. Nothing will increase your faith in your ability to hear from God like having it confirmed by two or three other people! Share what you’ve heard with your spouse, your parents, your friends, your elder, your group leader or even your grown children. They don’t need to be perfect or super-spiritual to be your sounding board; they just need to love you, be committed to being available to you, have a solid biblical orientation and, most important, they must also willingly and easily receive counsel. Avoid the authoritarian who insists that because of their standing in the church or with God, they no longer need to listen to others. Find two or three people and let them confirm that you are hearing from God.