

A Crucial Ingredient You Need for a Power-Packed Prayer Life

When was the last time you've personally heard from God? I don't mean in a vague, distant way; I mean personally. Do you hear the Lord speak to you? This should be commonplace both in our lives in Christ as well as when we pray. Listening to the Lord is completely linked with having an effective prayer life. Without it, we're not praying as we should.

Listening for the Lord's Leading

I learned an important principle many years ago that's guided me throughout most of my Christian life. *Not every good deed is God-led.* Let me put it this way: Just because something is good to do doesn't mean it's the will of God for you. I've learned not to assume doing or giving something is the best choice unless I've sought the Lord for direction.

I remember a man who attended our church many years ago. He was single and had a very good job. The amazing thing was that the time came when he lacked sufficient funds to pay his basic bills! He finally came to my husband and shared how he was giving all his money to homeless men, one in particular. How could that be wrong? Now, giving money to the poor is a great act. But in this case it was not God-driven.

This is where hearing from the Lord plays an important role in our Christian lives. Without truly listening to God, our prayers are ineffective. We need to take steps under the direction of His sovereign leading. That takes committing our ways to the Lord and listening to Him for guidance. This is walking by the power of the Spirit. When we don't walk under the leading of the Spirit of God, we're walking by the flesh. When we're not praying with the intention of listening and

following the voice of God, we're praying in the flesh. It's that simple! I don't care how good an option may seem, when we act according to our own understanding, it's not God-blessed. Because of this, we need to cry out to the Lord for clarity and guidance and listen intently for His leading.

Faith plays an important role here. Is God who He says He is? Is His Word real? "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." I take these words from John 10:27 literally. I listen for His voice, then I follow His leading. He's not going to expect me to follow when I can't hear Him. I know that in spite of the fact that I'm a pretty dumb sheep at times, God is able to convey His will to me in a way that I'll recognize. I place my trust in Him, not in my limitations, and stand in assurance that His grace is working in my life.

Surrender

When I'm seeking direction, the first thing I do is surrender. That may sound simple, but it's the most important part of hearing from the Lord. I remember that when other kids would taunt me as a child, I would put my hands over my ears and yell, "I can't hear you!" I get that picture of us sometimes when we're asking God for direction. We have to give God full control, with the attitude of, "Whatever you say, Lord, I will do!" We need to trust that as Philippians 2:13 promises, "For God is the One working in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure."

Wait

After I've surrendered, I wait. Trusting is the key here! I've talked to some who are seeking God's direction with a "we'll see" kind of attitude. It's like they're waiting with their arms crossed saying, "I'll see how much I can trust Him!" It's as if God has to somehow prove He's in control. Where's the faith in that?

How long do I wait? Until I receive an answer. If deadlines come, I let them pass. I heard a great teaching about this

from Charles Stanley many years ago. He stressed that we should never let deadlines determine our decisions. If God hasn't revealed clearly what to do, keep waiting till He does. He'll show us at just the right time!

Listen and Expect

And finally, I listen and expect. As I study the Bible, I open my heart to any direction He may lead me. I'm sensitive to His voice. My ears are tuned to Him and my heart is open to His leading. Can you see the freedom this brings? I have joy in the waiting because I know I'm where I should be for this time. If and when He wants me to move, He'll make it clear.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without wavering. For he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed with the wind. Let not that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).

I love God and I know He loves me more than I can ever imagine. My security is in the fact that God never has and never will let me down! At the right time, He will make the way clear. My role is to wait and listen. When fear or the dread of "what if" enters my heart, I stand against it. God is in control. He is sovereign. He knows my limitations. I know He wants the best for me and my desire is to serve Him, so I stand in faith and peace. Trust me in this; God's will is not a hidden treasure. He will make it clear at just the right moment.

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