

This May Be Why You're Struggling to Hear God's Voice

Many people don't hear more from the Lord because they don't spend enough time in prayer and Bible reading.

They just don't spend enough time with God! Think about it: How is it you recognize a person's voice? It's not from studying about her; it's from spending time with her. Isn't that true? We recognize God's voice by taking the time to get to know Him more. It's as simple as that!

This doesn't seem to be a very popular line of thinking today. In days gone by, it was a common teaching for Christians to spend a daily time in prayer and Bible study with the Lord. It even had little nicknames like "quiet time," "QT" or "devo time." Today, though, it's almost not politically correct to discuss this. The emphasis is on flexibility. Maybe some Christians think spending a daily time with God is too legalistic. I'm not sure why, but I do know that Christians spend much less time with God every day than they did in years gone by. Of course we're having a hard time recognizing God's voice. It's being muffled by our own busy lives.

God loves being with us. I remember a song by Larnelle Harris called *I Miss My Time with You*. It's written from the perspective of how God misses us when we're too busy to be with Him. It's true. After all, He's our "Abba Father." He loves us like a daddy would.

Way too many Christians try to fit a time with God into their day, if they spend time with Him at all. The better option is to fit our day around our time with God! Try making choices based on that. You may need to cut back on some activities. Draw a timeline of your day. What can be penciled out? Where

does the majority of your time go? Maybe you need to turn the TV off and go to bed earlier at night so you can get up and pray before you go about your day. You may need to invest in a good alarm clock and learn to set it. One choice I've made is not to turn my computer on before I've spent time with the Lord. Without a doubt something draws my attention away from God and before I know it, time is gone!

I've always had my prayer time in the early morning hours. I'm one of those crazy people who actually enjoys getting up really early. I love getting up before anyone in my house and even my neighborhood! I realize not everyone is like me, but I can assure you there is a time for you. You need only to discover it. When something's a priority we will go out of our way to do whatever it takes to accomplish it. Let's make our times with God that priority.

People don't hear from God because they don't recognize His voice.

You've probably heard this old story. It had been raining for many days, and a man was stuck on a roof. As the waters rose, the man faithfully prayed for God to save him. As the flood levels began to rise, a rowboat, then a speedboat, and then a helicopter all came to save him. He refused help from all and drowned. Standing before the Lord, he asked why God hadn't answered his prayer for safety. God gave him a puzzled look and replied, "I sent you two boats and a helicopter. What more did you expect?"

What are we listening for? What do we expect God to sound like? Some of us want writing on the wall, or a ground-shaking thunderbolt. God has never chosen to speak to me like this. He can if He wants to; after all, He is God. But I have never, personally, heard Him speak this way.

It amazes me how often Christians, women in particular, have a hard time hearing the voice of God, yet are more than open to

listening to messages of defeatism, failure and poor self-worth that come from within. They have listened to these messages for so long that they no longer recognize them as lies. For some of us, these are leftover inner recordings of negative messages we've been told by our parents throughout our lives. For others, a negative thought may have been embraced from a traumatic emotional event.

Whatever the reason, these self-condemning themes constantly play over and over again in our minds and are often lived out as truth. I wonder how long a person would remain friends with someone who continually spoke unkind, condemning words. My guess is not long. Yet we continue to listen to these lies from within. The commandment tells us to love others as we love ourselves. Some of us need to begin loving and accepting ourselves more and stop listening to these childhood prerecorded messages. Maybe the voice of God is being shouted out by the condemning thoughts from within.

One thing to consider is that God tends to speak within our personalities and particular gifts of the spirit. He has made us diverse and those differences are what make the body of Christ so blessed. He never expects us to mimic each other. For some, He might choose to speak through Scripture. That tends to be the way my husband usually hears from God. For others, a timely prophetic word comes into play. For people like me, that inner voice becomes the spoken tool, often during, but not exclusively, in my prayer times. He will speak to us in His way according to who He is and what He wants us to know. Don't worry: He will speak. The question is, are you listening?

Barbara Ho is the author of *Ultimate Connection: Eight Principles That Will Transform Your Prayer Life* (PrayerShop). She is also a marriage and premarital counselor, and a very active pastor's wife. After ministering in a vibrant, multi-ethnic church in Queens, New York, for 25 years, her husband, Daniel, and Barb became church-planters in Houston, Texas. The

Hos are also very active in ministering in orphanages in Ukraine. Barb and Danny have two married sons.