

HEARING *from* GOD

One of the most amazing benefits of being a child of God is that we have the ability to actually hear and discern His voice. If you are a Christian, it is your birthright gift! In John 10:27, Jesus says, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” So Jesus had an expectation that we would listen to His voice. However, many of us never get quiet enough to hear Him! It’s important that we regularly quiet ourselves and fix our hearts on Him (Heb. 12:2).

God can speak to you in many different ways. It might come as a thought, a memory, a picture, or a verse from the Bible that pops into your mind. When we refer to hearing from the Lord, that does not necessarily mean that you hear an audible voice. It is a way of referring to the Lord showing you something and you receiving what He is communicating to you. At Mercy, we teach the residents that there are four main ways the Lord speaks, or communicates, with us.

The first is what we refer to as His still, small voice. Often this is referred to as our conscience, or that voice in our head that redirects or challenges us when we are struggling with making a poor decision. That still, small voice is the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts.

The second way the Lord may speak is through an impression. These are thoughts that come to mind that we do not intentionally think on our own. These thoughts seem to fall quietly as we become aware of them. Some examples of this may be an inclination to do something for someone that we did not think of on our own or a memory coming to mind that we have not thought about in a long time.

Another way the Lord speaks is through themes that are confirmed over and over again. Sons and daughters who receive from the Lord in this way will begin to recognize the Lord speaking a specific theme to them—such as forgiveness—and will see it in many ways and places. For example, in one morning an individual would overhear a conversation about this theme and then see a billboard with this theme across it. Then he or she would receive a flier in the mail and then read two Bible verses on forgiveness! The theme would seem to be everywhere, because the Lord is not afraid to repeat Himself or confirm what He is speaking when one of His children is willing to be open and aware.

Lastly, the Lord can speak to us through pictures, sometimes referred to as visions or dreams. This area can often sound a bit weird or even spooky, but is a legitimate and significant way God uses to speak to His children. This way of receiving from the Lord is often found in sons and daughters who are creative and imaginative. They see pictures easily and may receive dreams from the Lord while they sleep as well. These pictures may not always make sense right away, but the Lord is faithful to reveal what He is speaking through prayer.

It's important that we understand our uniqueness as sons and daughters of God when we begin to discern the ways that the Lord speaks to us. Any parent of more than one child would agree that each of their children is unique in the way they are designed, the way they communicate and learn, and the way they connect with them as parents. It is the same thing for us as daughters and sons of God. He has made us uniquely, and therefore the way we will connect with Him and hear from Him will be unique.

Some good questions to ask yourself when discerning how you most readily receive from the Lord would be: In what ways do you most easily connect with the Lord? Is it during Bible reading, in worship, or out in nature? Are you someone who sees pictures when you are communicating to someone, or do you see words? Have you ever had a thought come to mind and wondered if it was from the Lord? Perhaps an impression? What did He speak to you or show you during that moment?

You may wonder how you are supposed to know if you have heard from the Lord. There are a couple of key ways that can help you to know more clearly whether or not you have heard or received something from Him:

It is confirmed in the Word and by God's character. If what God speaks to you does not line up with truth from the Bible or God's nature (He is good, holy, just, pure, etc.), you can throw it out! It's important to remember that when the Lord communicates with us, His voice always brings hope, life, and love.

It is confirmed by the fruit it produces. Does the word you think you are hearing from God produce inside of you the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)? Or does it produce fear, discouragement, and confusion? If what you are hearing is from the Lord, the fruit will always be good fruit from the Spirit.

We encourage you to write down the things you hear and ask Him to confirm to you whether or not those things were from Him. This may come from experiencing a sense of peace when you read back over what you have written. It is also helpful to seek out the wisdom and perspective of godly Christian leaders in your life when you are learning the ways you receive from the Lord and growing in your confidence in this area of your personal relationship with Him.

questions

FOR GOD

Choose one question daily from the list below. If you are prayer journaling, write it at the top of the page, ask it in prayer and then begin writing out what the Lord begins to show you. It could be a scripture, a word, a picture, a song lyric, a sentence or a paragraph. Once you feel that you have received what He had to show you, thank Him for communicating with you and continue the conversation!

What are some things that you like about me, Lord?

How do you see me when you look at me, Lord?

If we could take a vacation together where would we go and why?

Of all my shoes, Father, which are your favorites?

When you look into the future of my life, what is something you are excited about for me?

Is there any particular lie that I am still believing that you would like to have me break in prayer today, Lord? What is your truth that you want me to receive?

What words of encouragement do you have for me today, Lord? Is there any encouragement that you would like for me to give to someone else? Who?

Zephaniah 3:17 says you sing over me, Lord. What song are you singing over me today?