

# HEARING FROM GOD

One amazing benefit of being a child of God is that we can each hear from God and discern His voice. In John 10:4, Jesus says: “My sheep know my voice.” If you are a Christian, this gift is your birthright. You were created to hear from God!

The idea of God speaking to you may seem foreign or unfamiliar. But God speaking to His children is not a weird, super-spiritual thing. If you’ve experienced something weird related to hearing from God, it probably wasn’t Him; most likely, it was a *person* making it weird.

Historically the work of the Holy Spirit has been regarded with much hesitancy and skepticism in the Church, especially as it pertains to God speaking through His Spirit. This skepticism is a tactic of the enemy, because if the enemy can separate us from the work of the Spirit, He will disconnect us from our power source. If hearing from God is something you feel unsure about, we encourage you to open your heart and mind to the possibility that God wants to connect with you personally, and that He wants you to feel confident about discerning His voice.

**God is relational.** He desires to connect and communicate with us. All relationships develop and grow through communication – through back-and-forth conversation. You may have been taught that prayer is a “conversation with God.” If that is true, there should be moments when we talk and moments when we get quiet and listen. It’s important to regularly quiet ourselves, wait, and listen in order to hear Him (Heb. 12:2).

God’s voice does many things, but here are two important ones to note:

- **God’s voice creates.**

The book of Genesis tells us that God spoke the universe into existence, and He is still creating as He speaks to us today. We all need God to create some things in our hearts and minds, and there are things He desires to call into existence in our lives! (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

- **God’s voice reveals.**

In Jeremiah 33:3, God says, “Call to me, and I will answer you. I’ll tell you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own.” We need God to show us things and reveal things to us that we could never figure out on our own!

We believe God’s primary means of communication with us is through the written Word, the Bible. This is our ultimate standard of Truth. The Word of God is living, active, and powerful. However, Scripture isn’t the *only* way God communicates with us! God speaks in many ways. His words to you might come as a thought, memory, picture, or verse from Scripture that pops into your mind. Hearing from the Lord does not necessarily mean hearing an audible voice with your ears. Instead, the Lord—through His Holy Spirit—may simply show you something, and you receive what He communicates.

Here are a few other ways God may speak to you:

- **A still, small voice**

This is often referred to as our conscience or the voice in our head that redirects or challenges us. That still, small voice can be the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts. In 1 Kings 19, God's voice is heard, and the passage says His voice wasn't in the earthquake or the fire; it was in a still, small voice. Some translations describe this as the sound of a gentle wind, a calm breeze, or the sound of breathing. We often look for a "writing-in-the-sky moment," but if we're only looking for something big or loud, we can easily miss God's still, small voice.

- **Impressions**

These are thoughts we do not intentionally think on our own. These thoughts come quietly to our minds, and we become aware of them. Some examples of this are an inclination to do something for someone or a forgotten memory that comes to mind for no apparent reason.

- **Pictures (These may include visions or dreams.)**

Mental pictures are one way God speaks to many of His children. You may see a picture in your mind or receive dreams from the Lord while you sleep. These pictures or dreams may not always make sense right away, but we can ask the Lord if these are messages from Him, and we can ask what they mean. Over time God is faithful to reveal what He is communicating.

- **Worship/Music**

God often speaks to us as we sing or as we listen to others sing or play music.

- **Other People**

God often uses other people to speak wisdom, encouragement, and challenge into our lives.

- **Confirmation**

The Lord often speaks in themes that are confirmed repeatedly. This happens as you see or hear the same thing in many places and situations. For example, if the Lord is trying to speak to you about forgiveness, you may overhear a conversation about forgiveness one morning, see a billboard with a related message later that day, then receive a flier in the mail about a sermon series at your church on forgiveness! The Lord will often repeat what He is speaking to make a message very clear.

We experience our uniqueness as sons and daughters of God when we begin to discern how the Lord speaks to us. Any parent of more than one child would agree that each of their children is unique in how they communicate, learn, and connect with them as parents. It is the same for us as sons and daughters of God; each of us is a unique creation, so it makes sense that we don't all hear from God in exactly the same way.

**In what ways do you most naturally connect with the Lord (e.g. Bible reading, worship, spending time in nature)?**

**When you are communicating with someone, do you typically see pictures in your mind, or do you hear words?**

**Have you ever had a thought come to your mind or received an impression or picture and wondered if it was from the Lord? Describe your experience.**

**When was the last time you experienced the Lord revealing something to you? In what form did the message come? What did He speak to you or show you?**

You may be wondering, “How do I know if I have heard from the Lord?” Below are a few ways to discern whether you have heard or received something from Him.

The voice of the Lord always...

- **Lines up with Scripture**

If what you receive does not align with the Word of God, it is not from Him. His voice and His Word always line up.

- **Lines up with His character**

James 3:17 says the wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. God’s voice aligns with the fruit of His Spirit. It is peaceful, loving, and kind. It is not stressful or hurried. God will never bully you. Scripture says that those who saw Jesus had seen the Father. Consider the character of the Jesus you know from Scripture; the voice of God carries that same nature and character. You might ask the question: “Does this sound like something Jesus would say?”

- **Brings life, never shame or condemnation**

God’s voice is not accusatory. Even when He convicts and corrects, He does so with love, grace, and care.

Remember, you have a real enemy who wants to steal and destroy your ability to hear God. That’s why it is not uncommon to feel like something is blocking you from hearing God.

Common blocks to hearing from God include...

- **Your family of origin**

Personal experience can sometimes make it difficult to recognize God as a loving Father. If you struggle to connect with God as a good Father who welcomes you, delights in you, and wants to commune with you, you may feel blocked in your ability to hear from Him. If you didn't receive the responsiveness, attunement, and engagement you needed from your earthly parents, it may create a block when you try to receive those things from your heavenly Father.

*(If this idea resonates with you, we encourage you to go on a journey to experience God as a good Father and grow in understanding your place as a beloved son or daughter. Mercy's resource "[Connecting with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit](#)" at [MercyMultiplied.com/Free-Resources](#) will guide you through some reflection exercises on this topic. Another great resource is [Finding Father by A.J. Jones](#) - [alynandaj.com/store](#).)*

- **Expectation**

You may expect to hear from God in one way while He communicates with you in another. Open your heart and mind to all the ways God may be speaking to you!

- **Anxiety or doubt**

You may struggle with feeling anxious about whether God will speak to you or if you'll be able to hear Him. Anxiety can lead to doubt that tempts us to quit before we've started. If we sit down to hear from God but don't feel like we receive some word immediately, we may assume we can't hear Him. Relax and trust that God is speaking. You may need to carve out time to sit quietly and listen for a while! And be encouraged that He desires to speak to you even more than you desire to hear from Him.

- **Confusion**

You may also wonder if the message you are hearing is really from God or if it's just your own thoughts. You might believe that if you are not 100% *certain*, then what you are hearing *cannot* be God. However, the only way to answer the question "How do I know whether this is from God?" is through experience and practice. It's a process. As you listen over time, you grow in your ability to hear from Him.

As we grow in our relationship with God and mature in faith, our thoughts will increasingly line up with His thoughts. Ultimately, what we receive from God will pass through our thoughts. So even if they *are* our thoughts (or feel that way), we can receive them if they align with Scripture and with God's character!

- **Unforgiveness or bitterness**

This can be a significant block for people. This may include anger or resentment toward God because of expectations you placed on Him that He didn't meet. Or it could be unforgiveness you are holding toward another person. Either way, bitterness and unforgiveness can be a significant block when you are trying to hear from God.

- **Unconfessed sin**

If there are parts of your life hidden in darkness, they are in the enemy's territory – the territory of one who wants to steal, kill, and destroy. Therefore, unconfessed sin will create a block in your ability to hear from God.

If you sense something blocking you from hearing God, it's important to identify what the block is and where it's coming from. While the list above doesn't contain every potential block, these are some of the most common ones. However, if you feel something blocking your connection with God and you're not sure what it is, He is fully aware of what is keeping you from hearing Him clearly. Why not just ask Him! God desires to walk in close communion with His sons and daughters, so He will be faithful to reveal the obstacle.

**If you are struggling to hear from God, do any of these roadblocks connect with you? If so, which ones? If not, ask the Lord to show you what is preventing you from receiving from Him. Journal your thoughts and/or write what He shows you below.**

**Ask: "God, what do You want to do with this roadblock? What are You giving me in exchange for what this block represents?" Write what He shows you below.**

If you want to grow in your ability to hear from God, we encourage you to start with a simple practice:

1. Get a pen and a piece of paper.
2. Ask God a question. (Write it down.)
3. Leave space for Him to speak. Don't overthink, "Is that God, or is it me?" at this point. Simply see what wells up in your heart and mind for the next few minutes. It may be words, an image, or anything we discussed earlier.
4. Write or draw everything you are seeing, hearing, or thinking.
5. Once you finished, go over everything and ask God to confirm what was (or was not) from Him. Line it up with Scripture, the character of God, and the fruit of the Spirit. You may even want to share what you have written or drawn with trusted and discerning friends or mentors.

We are human, which means it is possible for us to misinterpret or "mishear" God. In his book *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard wrote: "Communication always occurs in a context where infallibility is out of the question." While we can continually grow in discerning God's voice, we must always be open-handed with what we receive from Him.

We encourage you to regularly practice sitting with the Lord, asking Him a question, and journaling what you receive. On the following page you will find a list of questions you can use for this exercise. As you make this a regular rhythm in your life, you will notice your ear becoming more and more attuned to the Holy Spirit.

# GOD QUESTIONS

- What are some things that you like about me, Lord?
- Jesus, when You see me, what do You think about me?
- God, would You tell me what You are like?
- Who am I to You, Father?
- If I were a tool in a toolbox, which one am I most like, and why?
- When You look into the future of my life, what is something You are excited about for me?
- God, do You love me? Do You like me? Why?
- What color would best represent me today, Lord?
- Zephaniah 3:17 says, “You sing over me, Lord.” What song are You singing over me today?
- Do You have a gift for me today?
- Jesus, what gift can I offer You today?
- What gift can I offer others today?
- What words of encouragement do You have for me today, Lord?
- Is there any encouragement You would like me to give to someone else? Who?
- What’s on Your heart, God?
- Father, is there anything in my life that makes You sad?
- What in me brings You joy?
- Lord, what promise do You have for me today?
- Who can I encourage today?
- Whose burdens do I carry? Why? Will You take them?
- Who have I judged? How do You see them?
- Jesus, is anything hindering our friendship?
- Is there any particular lie I believe that You would like me to break in prayer today? What is the truth You want me to receive?
- Father, will You guide me? Where are we heading?
- God, is there a dream You want to awaken in me?
- Where are You in this, Father? What are You doing?
- If You could show me anything on the earth, what would it be and why?
- What do You see as my greatest strength, Lord? Why?
- God, which of Your characteristics would You like me to consider today?
- What moment in my life brought You the most joy, Father?
- What moment in my life brought You the most sadness?
- If we could go anywhere in the world, where would You like to take me and why?
- If I were an animal, what would I be and why?
- If my heart were a house, is there any room You would like to redecorate? Why?
- Father, what was the highlight of Your day?
- Is there any area of my life where I’ve given up that You’d like to restore hope?
- Father, is there anything about my day You would like to speak to me about?