

Secrets to Hearing God's Voice

A relationship is only as strong as the communication within that relationship. That's true of any relationship. It's the key in our growing relationship with the Lord!

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who communicated with God. Today there are many men and women of God who demonstrate that they hear from God on a regular basis. The truth is that deep within each person there is a deep hunger to commune with our Heavenly Father and hear Him speak directly within our hearts. He is the one who placed that desire there!

Jesus said in John 10:27, "*My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.*" Every born again believer has the capacity to hear Him. However, we need help learning how to recognize and listen well to Him. Mark Virkler's book ***Dialogue with God*** really helped me develop the ability to communicate with the Lord and I'd like to share with you a few principles I have learned to practice on a daily basis all derived from Habakkuk 2:1-2.

Hab 2:1-2, "*I will stand on my guard post...I will keep watch to see ... what He will speak to me...Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision..." NASB*

Habakkuk was a key prophet during the days that Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, continued to decline in idolatry turning their backs on the Lord. Habakkuk prays asking the Lord to intervene. This short three chapter book is God's response detailing the impending captivity of Judah by the Babylonians. You remember King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel? The Lord used this king to bring punishment to Israel for 70 years and then restore the nation back to Himself. Now, you have the setting of Habakkuk's desperate prayers! He sought to communicate with the Lord on the matter and this is what he teaches us to do by example.

#1 – Habakkuk said that he needed to stand at his guard post or his watch tower in order to focus on the Lord's reply. A watchtower would have been posted on a high wall to see out over the region for oncoming enemy attacks. This was a quiet place for him. To us, this represents our quiet place or prayer closet. The principle from this verse is this: *I must learn to still my own thoughts and emotions so that I can sense God's flow of thoughts and emotions **within** me.*

This is where we connect with the Holy Spirit within us coming to a place of peace, quiet, calm and rest. Psalm 46:10 teaches us to be still and know (experience) God. There is a deep spontaneous flow of the Holy Spirit deposited in our new spirit that we received at salvation. Jesus, in John 7:37-39 calls this supernatural flow 'living rivers' within. We never have to stir them up; they are surging and flowing naturally. We step into the flow connecting with the Holy Spirit in stillness and remain there. This is actually what abiding is all about.

Having grown up with a mind set on survival mode, constantly running in mental over-activity, I found 'learning to be still' quite a challenge. Here a few things that helped me that I still practice to connect with the flow of the Holy Spirit. Expressing love to the Lord through a quiet worship song, soaking music or praying in the Spirit are the most effective ways for me to become still in my thoughts and emotions. Meditating slowing on a single Scripture or a small passage is also a great way to connect with Him. I am then positioned before the Lord in peace in the supernatural flow of His living rivers. I know I've connected with the Holy Spirit because there is evidence of peace, calm and rest. We all need that! If thoughts come to me of things I've forgotten to do, I write them down to remember later, keeping my focus on the Lord. If thoughts of sin or unworthiness come to my mind, I simply repent thoroughly, receive the washing of the blood of Jesus, putting on His robe of righteousness, and see myself as forgiven before the presence of God. (Is 61:10, Col 1:22)

#2 – After Habakkuk settled into his quiet place (guardpost), notice what he did next. He said, "I will keep watch to see". What was he looking at? Habakkuk fixed his spiritual eyes on the Lord! As we come to

that place of stillness, praying, we are then to fix the eyes of our heart upon Jesus. It's critically important that we fix our gaze on Jesus (Heb 12:2) coming into His Presence.

What does Jesus look like to you? Do you envision Him wearing white robes and sandals? Do you see Him in more modern clothes? Set your spiritual eyes within your heart on Him, because He is always there with you. Envision Him sitting next to you as you are coming to that quiet place. In Colossians 3:1-2, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to set our heart and mind on Jesus, Who is seated at the right hand of God. In 2 Cor 4:18, he also teaches us to fix our eyes on what is unseen. So, how do we do that? Practice just what Habakkuk did. Fix our spiritual eyes on the reality of Jesus being right there. I love that! So throughout the day, not just in my quiet time, I set my spiritual eyes on the vision of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. It is as simple as that. You will probably discover that inner vision comes so easily you will have a tendency to reject it, thinking that is just you. Remember this: doubt is one of the enemy's most effective weapons against the believer's mind. Doubt is overcome by faith.

In learning this principle for myself, it was helpful to picture Jesus first in a gospel scene. It's easy to envision Him feeding the five thousand or talking with the woman at the well. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to enter into that Biblical scene with Jesus using your spiritual eyes. At first, you might see yourself in the crowd looking on, but as you practice, you will begin to see yourself interacting with the King! Sound strange? Can you close your eyes right now and picture your couch in the living room or the refrigerator in the kitchen? Yes! Then you already have the ability to use vision. When you go to the movies, do you see scenes of that movie playing in your mind for a day or two? That's vision too...Spiritual vision, however, is a focus on the reality of the Lord, true Biblical scenes, and 'seeing' how the Lord is working in a situation.

#3 – So far Habakkuk came to a place of stillness in his thoughts and emotions, fixed the eyes of his heart on the Lord, the next thing he did was 'watch what the Lord would speak to him'. Don't miss this! He's looking at the Lord and then hearing what the Lord is saying. That's our next principle. When we connect with the Spirit, eyes on Jesus, we then listen to His voice flowing in spontaneous thoughts. God's inner voice comes to us as spontaneous thoughts, visions, feelings or impressions that light upon our mind. Don't you love that?!

So guess what? You've already heard God speaking to you. Ask yourself if you've ever used a phrase similar to one or more of these:

- "I just felt impressed to go a different way home, and I was there just in time to..."
- "For some reason people always pour their life story out to me, and I seem to have just the encouragement they need, when they need it."
- "I was driving down the road and a person came to my mind out of the blue. I felt the need to pray for them."
- "I felt the need to leave a few minutes earlier than normal and just missed a huge traffic jam."
- "I prayed about a difficult situation and then suddenly felt a peace about it, knowing that the Lord was in control."
- "I don't know how, but I knew the answer to something and I hadn't even studied it."
- "As I read my Bible, that Scripture just sort of jumped off the page at me. I've been thinking about it all day."
- "What a coincidence! I ran into that person just when I needed their advice."

When any of these things happened to you, what did God's voice sound like to you? Was there an inner audible voice or was it spontaneous thoughts that just lit upon your mind? Most of you would say, it was spontaneous thoughts. As we quiet down connecting with the Holy Spirit within and fix our eyes on Jesus, we then tune to the flow of spontaneous thoughts. The key is to remain in faith instead of

immediately questioning “Is this me, is this God, or is this pizza?” This is doubt and shuts off the flow of the Spirit every time. Luke 11:13 says when we ask the Heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit, we get the Spirit...every time! Begin in faith, remain in faith.

#4 – Referring back to our friend Habakkuk, he then was told to ‘record the vision’. So, in other words, as he tuned to the flow of spontaneous thoughts with his focus on the Lord, he began to write out what he heard the Lord saying to him as a response to his prayer. Some people call this journaling or two way dialogue. The principle is to write out our prayers and then record God’s response. It’s very simple!

Journaling wasn’t very appealing to me until I learned how valuable it is in recognizing the Voice of God within me. In the past I used to write out lots of prayer requests. I thought it was pretty spiritual to keep a ‘log’ or a pile of sticky notes, napkins, or gum wrappers with my requests written out so that every morning I could petition the Lord for all the things on my list! It never dawned on me to bring my prayers to the Lord, actually listening for His reply and writing down what I heard. Is this scriptural you ask? If you begin to search Scripture for this idea that Habakkuk practiced, you will find hundreds of chapters of God’s people demonstrating this principle of recording answers to prayers (Psalms, many of the prophets, Revelation). Specifically check out some of David’s Psalms. He begins pouring out his heart troubles to the Lord and then all of a sudden there’s a shift in the Psalm. His attitude changes as he begins to speak life and truth about the situation. He’s modeling to us that he wrote out his petitions and prayers, then simply recorded what he heard the Lord saying within his heart.

Two very important things to remember:

1) We must become still and properly focused on Jesus if we are going to hear from the Lord. If you are not still and not properly focused on Jesus, you are liable to hear your own thoughts and receive in impure flow. Intuitive flow comes out of that which you have your eyes focused. If you fix your eyes on Jesus, the intuitive flow comes from Jesus. If you fix your eyes on some desire of your heart, the flow comes from the desire of your heart. Here’s an example. If I come to my quiet time and I’m thinking about a new car I’d really like to have and I write out my prayer, “Lord, I would really like to have that new BMW. What do you want to say to me about it?” First red flag!! Where are my eyes focused? They are gazing on the car, the desire of my heart. So, with improper focus I might mistakenly record the Lord’s response as “Oh, yes child you should have that and be sure to get the red one!” :o) Do you get my point? Our focus on Jesus is the secret to hearing the voice of God!

2) As you being to journal and record your two way dialogue, watch out for doubt! Doubt may hinder you at first but simply take your thoughts captive, throw it off, remain in faith reminding yourself that communicating with the Lord is a proven Biblical concept and the desire of His heart for your life. Once the flow is over and you’ve recorded everything you sensed the Lord saying, you can go back and test what He said making sure it is compatible with Scripture. His personal (rhema) spoken words to you will always line up with His written (logos) word. Don’t rush to look up verses as soon as the flow of thoughts begin because it cuts off the flow. Let Him finish speaking to you, record what you hear, *then* test it. Also, share your journaling with someone else who hears God’s voice asking them what they sense about what you’ve written. This builds your faith and theirs!

Okay, it’s your turn. Put a smile on your face, sit back comfortably, get out your pen and paper and turn your attention to the Father Who loves you! It’s by the blood of Jesus that we can come into the Throne of Grace and the Holy Spirit Who helps us connect with Him Spirit to Spirit. Seek His face and practice the suggestions of coming to stillness in principle number one. Fix your gaze on Jesus, tuning to the spontaneous thoughts that come within and begin to write in faith!

Note: I have found a four color pen to be helpful too. Blue or black represent my prayers. Red represents His responses. This make is easy to identify the Lord’s personal words.

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