

How to listen to God's voice

Excerpt from the "Arrival Kit" by Dr. Ralph Neighbour

How to Listen to God's Voice (1)

Read Luke 6:12; 21:37; 22:39-46

Each of these verses speaks of an important habit in the Lord's life. Luke 6:12 records that at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was faced with an important decision. The Son of God was preparing to begin His cell group ministry. (We must know that even the Lord Jesus Himself ministered with a small crowd; And they all had their own shortcomings.) Jesus prayed all night in the "listening room" (see the article "The Listening Room") before choosing His disciples, and He made a decision only after hearing the revelation of God and the Holy Spirit.

Luke 21:37 records that in the latter part of Jesus' ministry, He taught in the temple every day and prayed at night in the "listening room" on the Mount of Olives. This was the habit of the Lord Jesus.

In Luke 22:39-46, we see Jesus praying again at night. It was at that time that He experienced the agony of the cross. Although His flesh was not crucified until the cross on Mount Calvary, when He said, "Father! If you will, take it away; yet not according to my will, but your will", His will had been crucified in the "listening room." Jesus prayed so earnestly that his sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood, showing great pain.

At other times, Jesus prayed to the Father alone. Including the forty days and nights in the wilderness after His baptism. In Matthew 14:23, we find Jesus alone in the "listening room" on the mount praying. In addition, He prayed on a mountain far north of Capernaum, and changed his image as He prayed.

If the Son of God had a "listening room," so do we! For our life in the kingdom of God, whatever we may encounter, we need to go to the "listening room" to wait for the Master's instructions.

Do you know? Our lives are determined by what we consider the most important! Over the years, I have tried many times to learn to play golf, but each time I have given up. Why? Because spending hours chasing a little white ball was boring for me. My wife, Ruth, loved to watch baseball games, and I had to carry a book with me to pass the time. If you let me be alone in a quiet room and give me a computer to write on, then I will be happy. Whatever we do, we are guided by our values. If we do not think it worthwhile spending time in the "listening room", we will find countless excuses to push it off and live a purposeless life. Is it not ridiculous to think

about it, to go through the years, year after year, in a daze, and to be completely ignorant of the guidance of the King of kings? Do you understand what I mean?

How does God's Holy Spirit speak to us? When you learn to listen to God's voice, God will speak to you in your mind, giving you an idea, or clarifying an issue to you. God will also speak in your will, calling you to do what He thinks is best. Or maybe God will speak in your inner spirit, giving you peace when you feel troubled, or stirring up waves in your moments of calm. God also speaks to you through your memories to remind you of the help He has given you in the past. When you break God's commandments, He will remind you in your heart and make you feel ashamed.

One thing you can be sure of is this: If you are willing to spend time with God, you will hear His voice. King Solomon wrote, ".....You have to obey my words and keep my commandments in your heart. Those who obey my commandments shall live." Taking time to listen to God's Word alone can restructure your value system. There is a basic principle in economics that says, "If you buy A with so much money, you cannot buy B with the same batch of money!" How you spend your time is far more important than how you spend your money, don't you think so? Think about it!

How to Listen to God's Voice (2)

Read 1 Peter 1:10-12, 16-20; Matthew 22:29

How does the Bible relate to your "listening room" time? Let us begin with the one who wrote the Bible. 1 Peter 1:10-11 "Some prophets told how God would treat you with undeserved grace, and they searched hard to find out more about the way you would be saved. The Spirit of Christ was in them and was telling them how Christ would suffer and would then be given great honor. So they searched to find out exactly who Christ would be and when this would happen."

Jesus Christ, who lives in you, also lived in the lives of the prophets who wrote the Bible and led them to write it down. The passage goes on to say, "But they were told that they were serving you and not themselves." Therefore, the Bible plays an important role in your life. You cannot be in the "listening room" without the Bible.

Now that Christ is the author of the Bible, you can be sure that whatever He reveals directly to you will never violate the Bible. Biblical teaching and the revelation of the Holy Spirit must be mutually reinforcing. The Bible will affirm what God has said, and Christ will never say anything unbiblical to you. Here are a few verses for you to ponder. After pondering a verse, underline the important words if necessary.

Romans 15:4 "And the Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope."

2 Timothy 3:15 "Since childhood, you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise enough to have faith in Christ Jesus and be saved."

Luke 24:27 "Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets."

Luke 24:32 "And they said to one another, 'When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?'"

John 10:35 "...the Scriptures cannot be nullified."

We must always take the Bible with us when we go to the "listening room" to communicate with God. Reject any ideas that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible immediately.

The truths revealed in the Bible are absorbed by our minds after we have read and understood them. The next step can be described in a special word, which is the word "clarify". As I seek the Lord at the same time with my heart and mind, the Spirit of God will speak in my heart and reveal His thoughts and opinions directly to me. At this time, I will have a strong feeling of experiencing God's presence. This experience may be a profound form of worship, praise, confession of sin, or a call to serve God in some way. In an instant, all the problems and pains were answered. God may instruct you to help someone come to know Christ, or give you a revelation to tell a cell group or a member of your family. The time Jesus spent with God was not a formal routine, He longed for time in fellowship with God, and so should you! In the kingdom of God, our life of fellowship with the Lord and the rest of the body is an exclusive right that the unbelievers will never understand!

My advice

When you want to hear God's voice, the Bible is a very important tool. So I strongly recommend that you have a complete idea of the whole Bible so that you do not have to rely on someone to tell you what God wants to tell you from the Bible. You need to take a little time out of your day to read the Bible in one year.

Do not use the time you spend in the "listening room" to study the Bible. That is a time for the fellowship with God. Bible study is not a substitute for fellowship with God. You must understand that this period of Bible study is a special time of equipment that will benefit you for the rest of your life. Jesus' severe rebuke of the Pharisees is also a warning to us. He said, "You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about me; and yet you are unwilling to come to me so that you may have life." (John 5:39-40)

Many people have to spend time and money at studying in Bible colleges, but you can study "Touring the New Testament" and "Cover The Bible" for just 15 to 20 minutes a day at home. Written specifically for personal study, it comes with audio-visual materials that provide five minutes of daily instruction, and at some point you will be instructed to share your Bible study with your disciples or someone in the church who has the gift of teaching and ask them to give you additional guidance.

Listening to God's Voice (3)

Read Romans 8:5–7; 8:27; 12:2

Read the above verses carefully in their order. These verses show that the Holy Spirit is our teacher and will guide us into "all truth." We know that whether the Holy Spirit reveals it to us through a verse in the Bible or speaks directly to us, His guidance will never contradict the teachings of the Bible.

Our minds or "hearts" (our spirits) cannot be used separately, both of them must be used at the same time. Contemplating the Bible involves mental analysis and natural feelings of the heart. Being in the kingdom of God does not mean forsaking individual thoughts. In fact, when seeking God, you still have to use your own thoughts. The difference is that at this point your mind has the right focus.

Although you must use your mind to organize and judge when understanding the Bible, you are not using your mind to receive the revelation of the Holy Spirit. It is our inner spirits that receive the revelation. The mind and the spirit go hand in hand. The clarifications (or revelations) of the Holy Spirit are not irrational, but super-rational, because it involves the spiritual world that exists.

Before you surrender your life to God, the powers of darkness control your mind (Romans 8:7) and your spirit at all times. But now it's completely different! Now your mind and spirit can commune with the Holy Spirit who leads you to the truth.

What is so special about God's voice?

1. You can feel that the voice is coming from the depths of your heart, not from your own thoughts. Actually, this is nothing new! Whenever you say "I love you" to someone, you know that it doesn't come from your mind, right?
2. The revelation of the Holy Spirit is usually not something you come up with.
3. The voice will come to your mind naturally. There's no need to dig hard.
4. It will also reveal a very special message to you.
5. You can feel the difference between the words you receive and what you are used to.
6. And it will make you feel God's presence and power.

Hebrews 5:14 says that listening regularly to the revelation of the Holy Spirit helps us to “discern between good and evil.” I repeat: God speaks to you all the time! Unless you learn to recognize God's voice, you will confuse it with your own thoughts, and even if He says something to you, you will be confused.

When you cannot determine the source of some thoughts, 1 John 4:1 says, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." So whenever you have questions, ask yourself, "Does this idea glorify Jesus? Is there any teaching that violates the Bible?"

The prophet says in Isaiah 6:8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send?' Who will go for us?' I said, 'Here I am, send me!'" You can expect the Lord to guide you into ministry too! Isaiah says in 30:21, "Turn to the left or to the right, and you will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'"

Throughout the ages, many people have recorded their fellowship with God in the "listening room" and have preserved it to this day. They are precious memories of the authors; some of them are so profound that they have been published for generations.

I suggest that you also keep a personal "listening room journal" to record all the thoughts that come to your mind from God. You may find it a little strange at first when you hear God's voice; You may wonder in your mind, "Is this thought coming from God or from me?" If you dwell on this issue, it will hinder your fellowship with God. So it is best to write it down first, and then go back later and prayerfully discern whether it's a revelation from God.

All you need is a small booklet, and if you have a laptop, use it. Many centuries ago, John Wesley wrote his "Listening Room Diary" in a code he had made up, which would take a long time to decipher. When you are honest with God in the "listening room" and listen to what God is saying to you, it may include some very personal questions, so you do not want to let others read them openly. Do not forget to write down the date!

Athletes must continue to train diligently in order to reach the top. They work hard to get better results in the competition. The same is true in the kingdom of God. Learn to listen to God's voice, so that you can further experience an intimate fellowship of God's presence that you have not experienced.

So what are you waiting for? Start writing your journal today! You'll be glad you did.....

Listening to God's Voice (4)

Read Luke 10:38–42; Romans 12:11

Our values influence how we react to the same situation completely differently. Martha believed that serving Jesus was the most important thing, while Mary believed that being with Jesus was the most important thing.

There was a time in my life when I thought that serving the Lord was the most important thing I could do. And every time I thought in this way, I could feel the gradual loss of God's power in the ministry. This was like a wake-up call, and I suddenly realized that I had become another Martha. Like her, I judged with a critical eye those who "do not work as hard as I do for the Lord." This attitude caused me to completely lose the love of the Lord, and my spirit also hurt the people around me. In those days, when night fell, my "listening room" became a confession! (1 John 1:9). I think we must always remember that God does not judge us by what we do; God accepts us unconditionally! Whenever we stop communing with God because of our ministry, we become like Martha. **Therefore, we must learn to do both!**

In Romans 12:11, Paul writes, "Be diligent and not be lazy, but be on fire in your heart, serving the Lord always." In other words, Do not delay what you're doing, but do not neglect the time to have fellowship with the Lord in the "listening room."

Without the power of the Lord, we cannot do the Lord's work. And to be a conduit of God's power, we must be in constant communion with the Lord.

Continue to pray until

Lydia M. Swain is the personal assistant of Pastor Cho Yong-gi of Hanseong, South Korea. She told us about the importance of "keep praying until" She said that once when she came to the Lord, God had caused her to feel a heavy burden on her daughter in America. Overcome by this strong emotion, she went home and fasted and prayed for several days, for she sensed that her daughter's life was in danger. After spending a long time in the "listening room," the Lord said to her, "It's all right now. Don't worry, I'll take care of her!"

Later, she received a call from her daughter saying that she had been on a plane 30,000 feet above the ground not long ago. She was about to unbuckle her seatbelt and get up and walk to the aisle when she heard the voice of the Lord say to her, "Don't let go of your seatbelt!" She paused for a moment, and as she sat there thinking about it, a man suddenly got up and walked quickly to the door, pulled it open and jumped down. Immediately all the unfastened objects in the plane were sucked out of the cabin!

Lydia told us that one of the things she had learned over the years was not only to pray, but to pray until the burden in her heart is relieved. Do not forget this important truth. Be on fire in your heart and serve the Lord always.

Listening is for the edification of others

Take seriously the responsibility of being Oikodomeo (Greek for edification) to "edify others." In the cell group, you will learn about the problems and needs of other people's lives. Therefore listen to the revelation of God, about the causes of these problems, ways to solve them, etc., and know how to tell them what God has revealed to you.

I often do not know what God has revealed about the questions raised by the members of the cell group even after the gathering. Sometimes it takes me to pray in the "listening room" before God gives me instructions or a word for me to share at my next group meeting or to tell them privately. You may also have this experience when you "keep praying" for the needs of someone else's life.

Whenever God reveals a message to you to tell another person, you can write it down in the "listening room journal" and meditate on it. God may show you how to speak. Sometimes God will reveal to you about yourself or someone else's physical condition. You cannot pray for the sick with the sole desire to see miracles. Jesus healed because He had compassion on those who were sick. If you can understand Jesus' compassion, your prayers will be effective.

I have a sister named Lance in my group. She learns that her daughter-in-law is pregnant with a teratose fetus; After several scans, all the diagnoses showed the same signs until the late stages of pregnancy. So Lance went to the "listening room" and prayed earnestly for the baby. God heard her cry and healed the baby in her womb, and the baby was born perfect. Lance "continued to pray until", and God healed the baby in the womb. Have faith in God, and trust that God will use you to bring His good will to others.