

How to Hear God's Voice

in a busy world

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From the moment we hear the alarm to when we lay our head back down on the pillow, our days are packed with activity: Get the kids out the door to school, race to work, wash the gazillionth dish, meet a deadline, run yet another errand, attend a meeting, fix the leaky sink, plan the next day, crash.

Where in that busyness are we to find time for God, much less really listen for His voice?

If you're like me, you long to connect with the Lord, to pour out your complaint, *and to hear back from Him*.

What are His ideas on how to deal with a hard relationship, rearing a child, or a problem at work or school? What words are you to speak today, and when would He like you to be silent? What in His character would He like you to sense?

Listening for God's voice is a spiritual discipline that takes time and openness to develop. There isn't a magic formula or a one-size-fits-all plan. But when I look in the Bible, I see several approaches that helped God's people hear His voice.

Choose the approach that best fits you, and try to do it for 5 minutes. See the "Take 5" cards on page 4 for ideas. Print them out and carry them with you. I bet you'll soon start hearing God's voice in ways you didn't expect.

PLAY MUSIC



Quiet your soul and open your heart to hear from God by playing music.

Biblical foundation: 2 Kings 3:15. Without seeking God's guidance, three kings had allied for battle and had marched through the desert for so long that they had run out of water for their troops and their accompanying animals.

Desperate to know what they should do, the kings approached the prophet Elisha to inquire of the Lord. Consider Elisha's position: The situation was tense, war was imminent, and the kings wanted to hear from God on demand.

This is not exactly the makings of a blissful and quiet devotional time with God! So what did Elisha do? He requested music:

“But now bring me a musician.” And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him. (2 Kings 3:15 ESV)

Elisha knew that in the midst of this pressure, the only way He would be able to hear God’s voice would be to quiet his soul with music.

If everything around you is so distracting that you can’t seem to be still enough to listen to the Lord, try listening to a playlist of Christian songs or hymns. **See the “Take 5: Play Music” card on page 4** for ideas on fitting a worshipful music time into your day.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS



When we count our blessings, we refocus on what God has given us. If we are quiet long enough, we might be surprised at what God brings to mind as a thanksgiving, and in this way, we allow God to speak into our lives.

Biblical foundation: Colossians 3:15-17. The apostle Paul survived a stoning, floggings, shipwrecks, prison chains, isolation, persecution, and hunger, and yet almost every one of his letters encourages us to be thankful.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15-17 ESV)

See the “Take 5: Count 3 Blessings” card on page 4 for ideas.

GET UP EARLY



Get up early and talk with Jesus before the noise of the day crowds out His voice.

Biblical foundation: Mark 1:35. Even Jesus had to grab time early in the day to spend time with God the Father.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35 ESV)

I encourage you to read the whole passage in Mark 1:35-39. Notice how quickly Jesus' quiet time was interrupted (verses 36-37): "And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, 'Everyone is looking for you.'"

Don't fret if that happens to you. After all, it happened to Jesus! Treasure the time with the Lord and then roll with whatever the day brings you.

See the "Take 5: Get Up Early" card on the next page for ideas on how to use your morning time. Also, not everyone is a morning person, so feel free to change this to "Stay Up Late"!

NOTICE NUDGES



Notice the Holy Spirit's nudges, and follow through on them.

For example, notice if you get a nudge to say a kind word or write someone a card. Expectantly follow through on whatever idea God plants in your heart, and watch Him work!

Biblical foundation: Acts 7:30-32, a retelling of the events of Exodus 3:

"Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look." (Acts 7:30-32 ESV)

What if Moses had not gone over to look more closely? He would not have heard the voice of the Lord.

See the "Take 5: Notice Nudges" card on the next page for ideas on how to follow the Lord's leading.

Take 5

Play Music

"But now bring me a musician." And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him. (2 Kings 3:15 ESV)

Choose the idea that will work for you:

- Go on a walk or sit in your favorite chair and pull up a song or playlist that is worshipful. Let God minister to you through the music and the lyrics.
- Sing a Christian song or hymn out loud.
- If you can't concentrate in your house, get in the car and pop in a CD or tune the radio to a Christian music station. Drive a route with as little traffic as possible.
- Look for blank space in your day when you could add music to refocus your mind on Jesus: the commute to work, cooking supper, folding laundry, the school car line.

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Take 5

Count 3 Blessings

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15 ESV)

If the busyness of work, making supper, and marking to-dos off your list are clouding your countenance:

1. Take a 5-minute break, or a 2-minute break if that's all you can muster!
2. Count 3 or more blessings. What are you thankful for?
3. Write them down if you can. Listen for what God brings to your mind and pay attention to any that are surprises to you.

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Take 5

Get Up Early

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35 ESV)

Get up early and talk with Jesus before the noise of the day crowds out His voice. Make a plan the night before:

- What time will you set your alarm?
- Where will you spend the early morning time?
- What will you read or write? Set out any books, notebooks, or devices you'll need.
- Mark your Bible at the spot where you'll start reading.

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Take 5

Notice Nudges

And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." (Exodus 3:3-4)

Notice the Holy Spirit's nudges, and follow through on them:

- Make sure the nudge is from the Holy Spirit and not of your own desires. If the idea pops into your mind from out of the blue—it is not something you have been processing for a while—if it is biblical, and if it would build someone else up and not tear them down, consider that God may be speaking to you.
- Follow through: say the kind word, send the card, offer to help, run the errand.
- Watch to see how God works through your obedience. Participating in God's plan will grow your faith by leaps and bounds.

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