



## HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Scripture clearly assumes that we can all hear the voice of the Lord (e.g Ex 15.26). But it also assumes that we cannot only hear His voice but we can hear it clearly enough to act on it - both for ourselves and for others. So how do we learn to do this in such a way that his voice is as familiar as that of our other friends? This note is in three parts:

- We start by listing some of the ways the Lord used to talk to His people – rather diverse!
- We then highlight some of the more obvious obstacles many of us face to hearing His voice.
- This is followed a discussion highlighting some of the varied ways we can learn to make it easier to hear His voice.

### Part 1: Some of the Ways the Bible Shows God Speaks to Us

An ongoing debate has raged down through the centuries as to whether God is still speaking to us over and beyond *Special Revelation* – The Scriptures – and *Natural Revelation* – through nature, the natural world and conscience (Ps 19.1, Rom 1.20 etc.). For the purpose of this note we are assuming His heart to speak to His people continues unabated today, and the ways He has spoken as recorded in Scripture are still in His repertoire even though not many of us will see Him in the burning bush that does not burn out!

Just because we read in Scripture that this is a way that God spoke to someone, or even when He spoke to nations, this does not mean He will use this approach again today in anyone's life. A certain flaw exists in our listing some of the ways God has spoken to people since the genius of God's creativity means He does not have to use ways He has used in the past. But let us look anyway at some of these ways and see if we can learn anything from this record in Scripture.

1. **BURNING BUSH** (Ex 3: 1ff.): God uses a natural feature of the landscape to get Moses attention, and give the appearance that the bush was burning in the usual combustible way, when in fact it was not reduced to ash by the 'flame'
2. **A STILL SMALL VOICE** (1Ks 12: 12): Characteristic of God's character is that although He can use a global size hurricane He will often prefer to have our reverent silence before He speaks quietly.
3. **AN ASS, DONKEY OR ANIMALS**: On a number of occasions God uses animals to speak directly to people, like Balaam's ass (Num 22.27), or the numerous animals mentioned in the Bible.
4. **THE ACTUAL VOICE OF GOD**: Throughout Scripture 'the Lord said' is mentioned countless times, but we never actually know whether it was an audible voice that we hear, though the matter-of-fact way it is mentioned tends to suggest it is (Ex15.26, Acts 9.4-5).
5. **THE INNER VOICE**: This voice is sometimes our conscience talking to us, but other times the Lord communicating with us (Acts 11.12, Isa 30: 19-21 etc.).
6. **THROUGH OUR FEELINGS**: The passions are a key way the prophets of the Old Testament, especially Jeremiah and Hosea heard the Lord, then spoke what they felt (Jer 20: 7-18).

7. DIRECT VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: He is seen speaking to and through people, as He did at Pentecost (Acts 2. 1-4). He spoke from God as He is God (1Pet 1.21).
8. A CLOUD/PILLAR OF FIRE: The Children of Israel were guided through the wilderness by a cloud during the day, and by a pillar of fire at night (Ex 13. 21).
9. ANGELS: Angels are a common phenomenon in Scripture as a messenger of God to people (e.g. Lk 1.26-38). Do you know your angel(s)?
10. THE BIBLE: During the times of the Early Church Christians had the Old Testament as their guide, which they inherited from the Jewish people, but by the end of the first century after Christ they had the forming Canon of Scripture as well (Gal 1. 11-12).
11. THROUGH VARIOUS PARTS OF OUR BODY: Our pain (Jer 6. 24) and illnesses (2Sam 13. 2), our minds (Pharaoh Gen 41. 8), sin and our baggage (Prov 29. 16), as well as our attitudes can all convict us of who we really are, and/or what we need to change.
12. THE WRITERS OF SCRIPTURE, THEIR LIFE AND MINISTRY: Example and learning from others, especially what they do wrong, is a wonderfully easy way to learn. The people of Scripture especially are all well able to teach us if we are willing to listen (e.g., Peter, Paul, John, Nicodemus, Stephen etc.).
13. PREACHING AND TEACHING: These are two of the churches greatest forms of exaltation and guidance for anyone who is willing to listen. Both in Scripture (Mt 4. 23).
14. THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST: Our ultimate guide (Heb 1. 1-2, Mt 17. 5b.).
15. DREAMS & VISIONS: Two distinct types of experience, but they are common in Scripture, especially during times of major historic spiritual activity and change, e.g. Exodus, Advent of Christ, Ascension etc. (dreams = Joel 2.28, visions = Acts 10. 9-18 etc.).
16. REVELATION: Revelations are a clear evident way of God speaking (Eph 3.3-5).
17. A FLEECE (Jdg 6. 37ff.): Together with the Urim and the Thummin (Ex 28. 30), a fleece can serve as a way of God guiding a person, as Gideon learned (Jdgs 6).
18. PROVISION, CIRCUMSTANCES AND OPPORTUNITIES: Guidance from the Lord is often accompanied by a dramatic intervention of the Lord through provision, for instance a new job, money or a supernatural connection – ‘this could only be the Lord’. Numerous characters in the Bible saw this kind of provision and opportunity, for instance Joseph (Gen 37. 1ff.) and Hezekiah (2Ks 19. 1ff.).
19. PERIODS OF TRANSITION AND CHANGE: Something in human nature always longs for the ordinary, the routine, the continuity of life day to day, whereas God in Scripture, as life itself has an annoying habit of stirring up turmoil in our lives, as He did for instance in the life of Ezekiel (Ezk 2. 1-10) and the disciples (Mk 5. 35ff., 6. 4ff.).
20. BEING DISCIPLINED/REFINING: Scripture records a number of occasions where the ‘heavy hand of the Lord’ is on someone, either by sickness ‘to make me lie down’ (Ps 23. 2) or some other hardship (Jer 38.1).
21. MIRACLES AND HEALINGS: Frequently we see God’s hand of intervention in healings and miracles (Ex 6.6ff., Mk 9. 14-29), though we have no guarantee this will happen just because we ask.

22. SILENCE: Part of God's nature is to be silent, and sometimes that silence is very loud in its intent (Lam 3. 28).
23. READING SCRIPTURE: The reading of Scripture does many marvelous things for us, but more than anything else it helps us focus on Christ, His nature and His world (Heb 4. 12-13).
24. FELLOWSHIP: Being together is a command of Christ, and in Scripture we see this power evident on many occasions (e.g. Israel, the Disciples, Acts etc.).
25. FASTING: The Lord uses the spiritual disciplines like fasting as a way of shaping our lives and giving us the strength of character to both live this way and benefit from such disciplines ('call a fast' is mentioned numerous times Dt 4.4). In the discipline will be His voice.
26. TESTIMONY: How often in Scripture do we read about a person giving testimony and it helping and guiding them and others, e.g. (Deborah Judges 5.1, Esther Esth 4. 15, Paul Acts 7. 59-60 etc.).
27. EXERCISING SPIRITUAL GIFTS: With almost forty to choose from, God has numerous ways of talking to us (See separate Bible Note Gifts of the Holy Spirit).
28. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: The fruit of the spirit expressed in other people's lives is one of the most profound and beautiful influences on our lives, especially the gift of being loved (Gal 5. 22ff.). Note they are all feelings.
29. PRAYER: Our prayer life should routinely open us to the Lord (Jn 16.24), and many that prayed got much more than they bargained for (e.g. Pentecost Acts 2).
30. OUR OWN DESIRES: Many in Scripture have expressed a profound desire for either becoming more than they already are, or more for the Lord. This desire will often be one of the most profound ways of the Lord guiding us (e.g. Solomon 2Chron 1. 2-13, Paul Phil 3. 10).
31. MUSIC AND WORSHIP: One aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit is to equip us for worship (e.g. Book of the Psalms). Some two thousand years after Christ the writing of hymns and songs continues to be one of the greatest power evidences of Christianity. In contemporary church today it is as though the 'harp of David' is being restored to the church (1Sam 18. 10, etc.), guiding it in its worshipping path.
32. CREATIVITY, IDEAS AND IMPRESSIONS: We are all creative in different ways, and such creativity is a solid way forward in all of our lives. What we are good at we should exercise. God has so equipped us (Ex 28.1ff. etc.).
33. MEDITATION: Our waiting on the Lord allows the Lord to talk to us, and sometimes it is not until we set such time aside that He does. For instance, look at the life of many of the prophets who welcomed the Lord talking to them.

## Part 2: Highlighting Some of the Obstacles to Hearing

Imagine you are deciding to learn a new language. By far the most effective way of doing so is to immerse yourself in the culture and background chat of the local people. This is what you need to do in order to begin to connect with the Lord and hear His voice. The first step is to begin believing you can learn to hear and speak this new way of communicating. So declare to the Lord that you are beginning to believe you both can and wish to learn how to hear Him talking to you – with His help.

Don't be surprised that the first thing God will want to talk to you about is you! It's how He is likely to teach you how to recognize His voice. So what challenges are we going to face in taking this big step?

## Finding Your Spirit

Let's imagine you begin tackling this challenge as a homework project, and plan to give an hour a day to learning this new way of life. So you begin your hour, take the phone off the hook, sit with your notebook and beverage, and then what ... ? You sit there and hear nothing? Don't worry. It's not that He is not talking, but that you need to learn to listen, to **tune in to His wavelength**. Many of us have spent many years trying to shut out the voice of God, because we have not wanted to listen to what He wanted to say. Or we have various other voices and we silent him unintentionally. Are you one of them? If you are, then begin by saying sorry to the Lord.

Remember the principle that **the real world is the spiritual world**. You will find the Holy Spirit talking to you much of the time through your own spirit, and some times this will be felt as much as thought. So you must begin to find your spirit in order to hear God. Begin by trying to listen to yourself. Many of the secrets of what is going on in our spirit are in our spirit, and the Holy Spirit is more eager to teach us about our human spirit than we are to learn. He will always teach us how to tune in to our spirit if we let Him. Let your brain and its cognition be one of the voices you hear, and the other say in your chest or your emotions.

One of the first things that will happen as you learn to wait on God, as you start listening will be that **you will remember all the ordinary things of your day** ... shopping you forgot to get, people to ring, organizing the baby-sitters etc. Get a piece of paper and empty your head of these by writing out a list of all the practical things that come to mind. Attend to all of them at the end of your hour. Empty your head of them all and lay them down. They are all a distraction.

After clearing away the mundane you may find yourself overwhelmed by a huge number of issues you and the Lord need to deal with, without knowing **where to start**. These will be things that you have been carrying for some time, awaiting the opportunity to bring before the Lord. Again, the principle is the same, write out a list – empty your head and your heart. It is indeed a process of emptying yourself of all that maybe you have been trying to hold together.

Now what, where do we start? Write out a list of the reasons you can think of that are going to be obstacles to hearing the Lord's voice – doubt, unbelief, failure in the past, too much on, cynicism, only works for others etc. You can treat these as something to let the Lord talk to you about first! If you are unsure, there are lots of ways of deciding **which issue to start with**, but the most reliable is to go through your list and see which makes you twitch the most! We call it the 'hot spot'. Which is the hot issue for you at the moment? Often it will be the one you least want to deal with. Another way to decide is to ask which one is full of emotion? Don't worry about picking the 'wrong' issue. Once you start, the Holy Spirit will steer you into new knowledge about a helpful topic anyway.

Think of the journey as **a series of rooms in your spiritual house**, which the Lord wants to enter and clean up. Decide which room is the most urgent. Then you are ready to begin. Don't worry if initially your homework time feels awkward and clumsy. You will be like a toddler learning to walk, exploring a whole new dimension of your relationship with yourself and the Lord. With practice it will become as natural as breathing, but to start with it may be a battle.

The effectiveness of your growing discipleship journey will depend on your own growing ability to hear the voice of God clearly, as you find more of your own God-given spiritual nature.

## Giving Time

God always wants to talk to us, but only as time progresses will we learn to 'tune in' to the way He speaks to us, or the things He wants to talk to us about: **What is on His heart?** There will be many other distractions and competing voices that become very loud as we attempt to give God quality time. Tuning into God brings to the surface much of the competition. Giving God time to talk to us includes creating time when no one else has opportunity to interrupt Him. Finding such a place takes discipline and sacrifice. When we listen to someone, we do not also continue reading a book. Instead we sit quietly, absorbed in what is being said, that is, one hour a day just listening to God. Not talking, just listening. It is essential we all learn to recognize Father's voice.

## Listening, Not Talking

Traditionally, most of the time we spend with the Lord we are busy talking to Him. For instance, telling him what we want from Him. But when the Lord speaks to us, He usually is quite particular about what He wants to say. But beware, it is unlikely to be a subject we would have raised.

As we begin to listen to God **we must invite Him to initiate the conversation.** Often He will have done so earlier - as a clue to help point us in the right direction. Perhaps something will have happened during the day, a person will have 'come to mind', or a feeling or image will have troubled us.

When you spot the subject, let God talk to you about it. Focus on it. For instance, most days we should have a time when we let God remind us of the matters we have forgotten, or are likely to forget that day. If our spirit is troubled so that we are unable to sit quietly and listen, then the cause of that unease is likely to be one of the first things the Lord wants to talk to us about.

## God's Voice, Really?

If we want to hear the voice of the Lord clearly, we must first recognize that there are many other voices competing for our attention. There will be voices from our past, our own prejudices or hidden agendas, our fears, that will all rise up in a cacophony of noise. **Until we allow the Lord to deal with these voices, they will interrupt His voice** - they will all be coming from our spiritual and emotional baggage and openness to the Enemy.

The Church will also add its voice, by a thousand prayer subjects, 'thoughts for the day' or feelings of guilt for merely presuming we are permitted to listen to God. Shouldn't our leaders hear God for us? Do we not pay them to keep us spiritually well? Remember, it is the voice remaining after the spiritual baggage is gone that will be the Lord. We all learn by mistakes - so be prepared to take risks, test what you hear and come to Him prepared to let go of all your prejudices and baggage. We need a clean heart to do this well.

## A Clean Heart

When there is sin and damage in our life it will often stand as an obstruction to the voice of God. That is why **God will frequently first want to talk to us about ourselves.** His own agenda of refining in our lives is often the first subject that He wants to raise with us - usually for several months, or even longer.

So when we give time to listening, and God touches areas of sin or damage in us that He wants to take, receive it as God's topic of conversation and explore it to the full. Let Him show you the sin or disorder, and come with brokenness and humility before Him so He can cleanse you. Conviction of sin and its cleansing is an essential precursor to God drawing near.

## Welcome Truth

When God speaks, He always speaks Truth - but **Truth as He sees it**. Sadly, we spend much of our lives believing lies, so we often fight Him or attribute His voice to the Enemy. If we are to become more familiar with His voice we must develop a passionate hunger for truth, His Truth, regardless of how much it hurts. The way God sees things is often radically different from that which we expect, or have been trained by our church tradition to know as true. Knowing Truth carries a price. We will begin to see things differently. A divine originality will often challenge our presumptions. The more we practice welcoming God's Truth, the more easily we will recognize His voice. Though always be prepared for the unexpected, as this is probably God's view you are seeing for the very first time. Test it.

## Fear God

We are all too easily deceived by those around us, as we want to please others, or are unwilling to stand out in a crowd. **When we fear others more than God we will not be able to hear His voice clearly.** We will not want to hear the originality of His voice because we might fear what it will lead to in our lives.

We must covet God's perspective on everything, over the opinion of all those around us, and ourselves, although we will not have earned the right to hear His voice until we have shown by our lives we value more greatly a reputation in His presence than with any of the competition. We will frequently have to choose between Truth as God sees it and shares it, and keeping peace with others. In time people will want to hear Truth from the Lord via us, but initially they may be uncomfortable and even cynical. When it happens, don't let it feed your pride. Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom.

## Our Emotion

One of the clearest ways that God can get our attention is through our emotion and its bouquet of feelings. In learning how to hear what God wants to say we must always take note of how we feel. If our feelings are obstructed with stale toxic anger, revenge, guilt or fear etc., these will cloud our desire and ability to hear the voice of God. **We cannot hear His voice without our feelings**, as our feelings are often the means of God speaking to us. Hearing God's voice is rarely a clinical audiological experience. God has created feelings in all of us to be spontaneous, and a part of any conversation with Him. We must keep them clean, so that the Lord can use them to initiate conversations with us.

For instance, as we feel anger rising up inside us, it may well be a righteous response to sin that the Lord wants to expose either in our lives or others. As fear encroaches the Lord will often be exposing the threat from the Enemy that He wants to make known to us. As the tears flow we will discover where God's compassion is resting and be able to ask Him about it. God frequently gets my attention by bringing tears to my eyes. Without healed emotions we will be unable to fully hear His voice, for God's presence is felt by us before He is thought by us.

## Dethroning Our Mind

The mind actually gives us few helpful clues as we learn to listen to God. In fact, sadly, **our mind is so often the Enemy's playground.** This is where modern psychotherapy fails, as it listens to the mind and memories, not the human spirit when seeking roots of some types of sickness. As a result, much of the time we end up managing our sicknesses and not removing them from our life. We end up teaching people to live with their problems rather than healing them from them.

The human mind, by its very nature, will struggle to give us the truth about ourselves. It is therefore unhelpful basing prayer on what we think the problem is. We often end up praying for the symptom rather than the root drives as God sees them. In learning to listen, put your mind with all its arrogance to one side and let the Holy Spirit show you the truth through your human spirit and your feelings.

## Learning to Repent as a Way of Life

Scripture clearly teaches that **until we learn to repent we will not be able to hear truth** (2Tim 2.25). A heart to learn repentance is a precursor to God's voice. Repentance should be treated like a spiritual muscle that we must learn to exercise in order to expose the sin and disorder the Holy Spirit wants to expose in us. As we start our journey with the Lord, our repentance is often very superficial. We are consumed by our own pain and damage and are unable to see ourselves from God's perspective. We almost don't believe it is sin and baggage really.

But as sin is exposed the repentance must move from being an exercise of our minds to being a heartfelt response from our spirit. We must learn to grieve for the offence the sin is in our Lord's holy presence. Many people find themselves having to grow in repentance, little by little, day after day, until the Lord begins to grant them the knowledge they need to be free from their baggage. Welcome the repentance beginning to grow in you.

## In Summary

We learn to recognize God's voice in the 'secret place'. It will always be more difficult in public - there are too many other voices, though practice makes perfect! **It will be in the privacy of our own spirits,** in the intimate quietness of our regular and disciplined time with Him that **we will hear Him clearly.** He has very much to share with those who are willing to listen and who can be trusted with Truth as He sees it. But we must purposely make ourselves available to Him. Not talking, but listening.

## Part Three: How to Hear and to Test What We Hear

In this third section of the Bible note we have listed a number of 'tests' that may prove helpful when we are in doubt about whether we are hearing God's voice. However, none of them are a final 'proof', they are all just indicators which we can use whilst becoming more familiar with God's voice. Ultimately it is only faith that can receive God's voice, for **trusting Him to talk to you involves taking risks** - we call it faith! It is learning from the mistakes we make - as we learn to walk we can call it growing in holiness - blessings!

## The Role of Scripture

We must always examine the word we hear against the teaching of Scripture. Does the word we have heard sit comfortably with the principles recorded in God's Word? Will the word we have heard lead us into temptation or sin, or will it draw us closer to the Lord? But be careful, sometimes there is no clear comment in Scripture on the subject. We must also not substitute the teachings of the church for trust in Scripture, as trusting the Word of God is our first priority.

Over the years God has often spoken in a radical way, and it has sometimes been years later that we find the helpful informative principle tucked away somewhere in Scripture. Don't rule out the original or the new that you hear just because you have not yet read it in Scripture, for none of us knows as much as we think we do. Also, just because *you* have not read it in Scripture it does not mean it is heresy.

## How Do We Feel?

What do we really feel in our spirits about what we hear? If we feel comfortable, then this is good. Also, is it offensive to our minds or something we already know – then beware. There will be times when what we hear from God does not always sit comfortably with us. Truth, as Jesus sees it, can bring division, pain, and hardship just like it did in His lifetime. Ultimately, we must grasp the simple fact that God is in the business of refining us, not nursing our feelings. **We need our feelings challenged and released**, and our minds cleansed and brought under Him.

## History

Is what we have heard consistent with God's ways of dealing with us or those we know? Scripture is full of instances where God has acted outside of our accepted convention. God moves through human history purposely changing it to prepare us for eternity. His ways with us will frequently break new ground, in both our understanding and our experience. Rarely does God deal with two people in the same way. When we look at history we often see people repeating the same mistakes in each generation. When God speaks to us, it is often to break this habitual hereditary bondage. Unless we are prepared to take risks and see things from a different perspective we may find ourselves attributing to the Enemy what the Lord has said. God is an original thinker and talker. Make history, do not repeat it.

## Originality

Does it have a ring of originality, a new and Divine/supernatural perspective about it? As one grows in the Lord, much of what we believe both about ourselves and God will be overturned - burned up as dross. The church, bound, deceived and damaged as it is prefers comfort and peace to Truth and originality. None of us like being ambushed. God will behave uncomfortably with us if we allow Him. We have been wrongly taught that every word from God should bless us and not disturb us.

If it has a **ring of originality** it could well be from the Lord. Also, if it makes us uncomfortable it is more likely to be the Lord than when it comforts us. Just because you have not heard it before, or do not like what you hear is no reason to junk it. Test it. God is a radical when He needs to be. We find many words from the Lord start as an affirmation, and then continue with a 'but...'.

## Building Us Up

Ultimately we have to ask whether what we have heard is going to build us up, or damage our passion for God? God's idea of building us up is frequently to first bring brokenness to our lives. Letting us fall

apart is often His way to healing us. Do remember, **He wants to build up our view of Him and His ways in our lives**, at the expense of our selfish arrogant pride. We must 'die' before we can live His way in the fullness of the person we are created to be. When we let God knock away the supports from under us, then He can begin to model us into His Son. When God speaks, it is often to take from us, before He can give to us, taking all that is not righteous and offering us His holiness. Then He can get close to us. Does this word do that?

## Sin

Is the word exposing sin, inviting repentance, or forcing us to make personal choices? One of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit in our world is to convict humans of their sin. As we grow in Christ, so our sensitivity to sin will also grow. God pursues a permanent war in us against personal sin, sin in our families and forbears, and the sin of others laid on us. For it is sin (spiritual baggage) that so often stands in the way of us hearing God's voice clearly. Sin is the source of all damage in our lives. God is continually dialoguing with us on the subject of sin. Just as in Scripture, much of what God says is about exposing sin in our lives. **We must learn to be prompt repenters!** If it exposes sin, take it seriously as it is God speaking. If it exposes sin in others then learn in humility to repent on their behalf, rather than respond in judgment of them.

## Fruit

Will the *fruit* of what we have heard be healing, renew fellowship with us or lead us, or others, into a deeper intimacy with Christ? The ultimate test of any of our efforts, as Christ taught, is whether it bears divine fruit. **The ultimate fruit is Love in an unhindered relationship with God.** Birthing such Love in any of us is costly, both for God and for us. Whenever God speaks, it should birth new waves of supernatural Love in us. Fruit for us is always fruit for Him.

## God's Fingerprint?

Does it affirm what we already know? Like the potter with the clay, in time we begin to learn how to be malleable in God's hand. God builds intimate and personal patterns in His dealings with each of us. For we learn best when we are on familiar ground, when we understand His ways with us personally. **This fingerprint is His pattern for us in His Son.** For Christ in us is God's mould for us. So when He talks, we should expect it to be consistent with the knowledge we already have of His dealings with us personally. Original yes, but contradictory, no?

## Breaking New Ground?

Does it break new ground or open new horizons in our lives? All of us have damage in us, and this also gets in God's way. God has to cleanse us of such damage, if He is to use us and walk unhindered with us. **All healing and progress must be stolen from the Enemy in us, taken from self and Satan.** God must plunder hell for us, salvaging all that is deserving of being saved, burning up all in us that is not worthy of eternity.

Like our spiritual 'house', God first occupies the hallway, then increasingly more of the rooms, though only we have the keys to each room. He may tell us what needs emptying out of each room, but we have to make the choice as to whether we will handle and dispose of the contents. Cleaning up can be a messy, untidy and traumatic job. None of us like it, so God takes a long-term view and is never satisfied until He occupies the whole house.

## Our Past?

Does the word force us to let go of our past, our old ways or end wrong relationships? For most of us the history of our past is one of darkness, deception, and damage. We are easily deceived and led the wrong way, particularly when it sits comfortably with our 'hidden agendas' or secret fears and desires. Much church teaching in this area is seriously flawed.

We have a tendency to take carnal wisdom and make it 'Biblical'. For instance, many Christians teach that all the sin in our past is dealt with at our conversion and that we never need to look back. We are pleased for those for whom this is true. But our observation is that we cannot move into our future in Christ until we have personally let go of our past. **God has to undo our personal sin-sick history before He can give us our anointing, and what we are not willing to claim He cannot cleanse.**

Godly patterns must be learned and established in our lives. Old habits must be broken. Many of our previous values and standards need to be reviewed, and some abandoned. Everything must be new, for the old must die. We begin to see that there is very little that we want to take into our new life in Christ.

Our whole value system must often be turned upside-down. God's way of doing this is frequently to force us to unpack the past, and to face all that has gone wrong. Like cleaning out the loft we end up throwing most of it away - if we are courageous and honest.

## Healing

Does it release hope, courage and break fear or phobias in our lives? Most of us do not look sick, or even feel sick much of the time, though when the pressure is on, when the stress comes in those moments of crisis, then we realize we have no resource, no energy or depth to cope with the pressure of the moment. What is amazing is not the large number of sick people around us, but how we are able to cope with so much and still keep going.

Many of us spend much of our time learning to 'manage' our sicknesses, learning to live with the disorder, not be permanently freed from them. Many leaders in church today teach us that this is the only way, that we must have the faith to overcome our sickness. So we pretend we are healed, and choose to no longer accept the extent of the sickness we carry. Neither do we admit that we still need to be healed of such sickness. We have a tendency to live a lie.

God requires we be free from our sicknesses, not learn to manage them. When God speaks it often takes tremendous courage to act on what we hear. **If the words challenge you to look at sin or sickness in your lives then it is probably God.** Test it by going into the truth of the feelings, and if the fruit is healing, ask for more!

## Anointing and Gifting

Is the word going to ultimately release gifting and anointing to us? It is almost as though the Enemy can see into our spirits and identify at a very young age what our spiritual potential really is. Were our spiritual gifting to become anointed then it could do the Enemy great damage. We have frequently found that those who are most sick, when healed, turn out to be the most spiritually and naturally gifted. As these folk move into their anointing, the Enemy is in for a hammering. He has attacked us long before we let God in. So if we hear **words which will bring new knowledge of ourselves and our spiritual gifting and call**, then we can be sure they are from God. Be warned, however, for such Truth can feed our pride rather than bring healing if we do not receive it in brokenness.

## Pride

Is the word we are hearing working in us humility and brokenness? We can say to our close friends that they must help keep us encouraged, because God has an endless range of ways to keep us humble. Yet even God's ability to do so is often contingent on our willingness to receive and act on His rebukes. It would appear that some of us would rather remain in barrenness than be humbled, or have to say sorry.

Like saying sorry, giving is always easier than receiving. The one makes us vulnerable while the other can be manipulation and control. One of the principles of God's Kingdom seems to be that what we value most will always rule over us. As we begin to fear God more than the Enemy, or put God above the survival of self, we will begin to grow in Him in healing. **If the words we hear challenge our pride or arrogance, we can be sure it is God.**

## God's Still Small Voice

Was it a soft, still voice, or was it thunder? A few times in our lives God may be gracious enough to speak to us both loud and clear, though most of the time for most of us this is not the case. We all want to hear the voice of God clearly, both for ourselves and for others. So why does God make it so hard? We do not believe He does. God does not tantalize us by turning the volume up and down. He is able to, as is seen in Scripture, but not nearly as much as we think. Much of the time the problem is with us. A broken radio does not prove the absence of a radio signal. Our baggage steals the volume and clarity.

God's voice will often maintain a consistent volume - yet rarely be more than a personal whisper. **We have to tune our spiritual ear to His.** By practice, we familiarize ourselves to His voice. We frequently doubt His voice simply because it is unfamiliar to us. There is no substitute for familiarity. In much the same way as a young gull on the cliff top recognizes its mother's cry among the masses of birds on the thermals, or the penguin its chick in the congestion of the nesting colony, we all have to learn to hear His voice. Give time to listening.

## Glorifying Christ

Is the word giving glory to Christ? This has to be one of the easiest tests. For Christ Himself owned the validity of it when His disciples noted that pagans were performing miracles in His Name. Christ said let them. So it is with the voice of God. **If the voice honors Christ and exalts Him, then it is for Him.** We can trust all that glorifies and exalts Christ. If it glorifies Christ it cannot be from the Enemy, for he may recognize our Lord but only exalts himself.

To glorify Christ is to honor Him for who He is. There are examples in Scripture of the demonic recognizing the person of Christ. But this will normally be for the purpose of mocking, despising and humiliating Him publicly. This does not glorify Christ, even though it acknowledges Him as the Son of God. Will the word that you have heard glorify Him?

## The Importance Of The Holy Spirit

Does it introduce us to **a deeper intimacy with the Holy Spirit?** Most of us have not even grasped the reality that the Holy Spirit is a separate person in the Trinity, and that we can get to know personally. Few of us have learned to speak personally to Him. He is God and is for us. He is our aid and Counselor, our Helper and Friend. Sometimes we will hear an angel speak, sometimes, occasionally, Christ Himself. But most of the time it is the Holy Spirit that we hear. He stands with us, giving us the Truth Christ promised us.

Most of us struggle with the Holy Spirit. Most of us think visually, in concepts. So we can 'see' the Father (an old man with a beard?); we can all 'see' the Son (on the cross?); but who among us can 'see' the Holy Spirit? How can we visualize Him? We must learn to 'see' the Holy Spirit. We all hear more easily when we can see the person's lips. So it is with the Holy Spirit. We must learn, with practice to 'see' Him with our spirits. Then we will hear God more clearly.

### Heaven On Earth?

Does it release 'heaven' in us, or our churches? Does the word we hear add a new dimension to our understanding of the spiritual world? God wants us to be comfortable in both worlds - His world and our current one. Ultimately we are required to become His channel to our world, though like a sewage pipe it has to be cleaned well before it can be used for anything else. Every word God utters releases His perspective on our world, though not until the vessel is clean can it carry pure sweet water. Although we have learned over the years that God never stops talking, His most precious Truth He will not give to those in pride or to those who are likely to use or abuse the Truth. **We must all earn the right to hear Truth by being refined, made pure.** Then heaven through us becomes the hope of glory for others.

### Time

Does the word we have heard stand the **test of time**? Have we begun to see the patterns of how He talks to us? Are we aware that this is an area of our lives where He has focused on before, or mentioned to others through us? All truth from the Lord is given from spiritual reality that is outside the framework of time, so it may not be in the linear order we want or might expect. Let God be God.

### Final Comment

If we wish, God will always speak Truth to us, here in our world, though we must be prepared to take the risk and step outside our traditional attitudes, values and prejudices, to begin to move in God's world. To hear His voice clearly we must first learn to possess His perspective on our world. Hearing God's voice becomes easier as we do it. For whenever God speaks, it is from the backdrop of His supernatural nature and world, and often we will not know whether it was God who spoke until we see the fruit released - a little more of heaven. **Does it release Christ here on earth?**