

John Newlin Ministries, Inc.

- realizing the power of a life in Christ-

THE GREAT NEED TO BE ABLE TO HEAR FROM GOD

Incredibly important in these extraordinary times. We all need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to navigate these troubled last days. We need to understand clearly the path we are each to take.

Perhaps it is a bit easier to hear from God when you are walking, early in the morning or late at night, anytime you are the only person around. Late at night alone on the beach was when I suddenly heard the Lord speak these wonderful words over the water: "Keep your eyes on me, John." That became the "Keep Your Eyes on Jesus" statement we have on our stationery and banner and newsletter and more.

And perhaps it is a bit easier to hear from God when you are so sad, when your heart is broken, when you are crying before the Lord and you are just quiet and in his presence. Years ago when I was really sad, at a very difficult time, I was lying on the floor face down, praying I think, or just being quiet. So sad. And suddenly these words were spoken by God: "You know how much I love Jesus? That's how much I love you." That was God the Father speaking to me. You can imagine how much those words meant and still mean.

But of course we want and need to be able to hear from God in all circumstances at all times.

Hearing from God. So many want to know: How do I hear from God? What do I have to do?

I've written on this in the past but we all need to look at this again. First and foremost is being in the presence of God, spending time alone with him in a quiet place, reading scripture, being quiet, perhaps saying a few words, maybe listening to quiet worship music that touches your heart, certainly praying in the Spirit – praying in tongues. My own definition of prayer is just spending time with the Lord, being with God, talking, listening, maybe once in a while asking a question but often not. It's more like communing. God certainly does want to hear us speak our concerns, our worries, our questions. But he also wants to be with us. Just be.

There is nothing like being in the presence of God. To the extent you can, practice being in that presence as much and as often as you can. Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century French monk, wrote a book about that—*The Practice of the Presence of God*. You can still buy that book. He lived in that presence all the time no matter what he was doing, and much of that was working in the monastery kitchen.

We really can't put all this down into categories or rigid approaches to hearing, but I have tried to describe in the following several ways I have experienced hearing from God over the years. Remember, God may have an entirely different way of speaking with you.

1. **Straight, direct communication** - Often over the years and especially early in ministry, God would wake me up in the middle of the night and I would go into another room and sit in a comfortable chair and read the Bible. Many times it seemed I would read Isaiah. And by the time I got to chapter 9, the Lord would be talking. Sometimes guidance. Sometimes comfort. Sometimes a real conversation. Like the time he began talking and I said to him, "You healed a lot of people." And he replied, "Not all I wanted to." I asked why, and his reply was a simple one: "The Pharisees."

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2. **A still small voice** – Sometimes a person when praying, or reading the Bible, or listening to wonderful praise music, or just walking around not necessarily thinking about any specific thing, will suddenly hear inside a very still small voice that says something specific in a way that the person immediately knows, “I don’t speak like that.” And then the person realizes, “That was God.” And this still small voice may continue or not. You may perhaps even ask questions that the still small voice answers during this time of God’s being close to you.
3. **An audible voice** – It is true, although less common, that a person may actually hear an audible voice speaking to him, and that voice is from God. Sometimes it can be a clear bold instruction. I know someone who while walking down the street suddenly received a short sentence telling him to do something specific about an issue he had wondered and prayed about for a long time. He said he looked all around to see who had spoken to him, but there was no one there. This audible voice in no uncertain terms is usually a shock.

Many years ago when I was standing in front of a group preaching at one of our meetings, suddenly right in my ear Jesus said “John, tell them who I am and that I am coming soon.” You have all heard me say that before I am sure. No one in the group acted like they had heard Jesus say that, so evidently it was not audible to them. But to me it was dramatic and clear, no still small voice this time.

4. **Circumstances** – God can speak without words. Suppose a person has been working for years toward some project and then suddenly the right doors open up and everything just works and it all happens. The person realizes, “That couldn’t have happened by accident. Someone had to make all that happen. That was God.” That is a bit how our days of getting on television several years ago happened. I was invited to be a guest on another program. While there I realized the studio produced many Christian programs at an attractive rate and was open to do that. So we produced the programs there, with a young producer going out of her way to produce the opening graphics etc. When I contacted the various networks and stations, always the people were open and receptive. They had broadcast times at good rates. Everything just happened. I didn’t have to plan or negotiate or wonder how to bring it about. God was running the show.
5. **Through others** – Again, this just happens, and the other person may not at all be aware they are being used to communicate a message to you from God. Once we were involved with an organization, and a couple of times I had understood from God we should leave that organization. As we thought and prayed about how best to do that, an email arrived from a woman. In the email I suddenly saw that a couple sentences she had written specifically applied to our situation. She did not know that God was sending us a confirming message through her.
6. **Reading a particular Bible verse** – A person in reading a verse of the Bible, maybe one read hundreds of times before, may suddenly find great revelation. It is as if the verse has come alive, and indeed it has spiritually. Right there in front of the person is great wisdom and an application to the person’s life that he had never seen before. God is speaking through his word, his quickened word. That’s why we call the Bible a living book. It is.
7. **Receiving Scripture verse references** – Sometimes in prayer a Scripture verse reference, like John 3:16 or Acts 1:8, may come to a person’s mind – not the words of the verse, just the reference. Maybe even several verse references are received, and when the person looks them up in the Bible he discovers they apply directly to what he had been praying about. God has at times communicated to Cathy this way. Another close friend hears this way as well. Once years ago in prayer Cathy suddenly received

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six or more verse references. We looked them up. They in the order received amazingly gave insight and guidance as to what was going to happen and what we should do as regards the coming return.

8. **Dreams and Visions** – God does communicate in dreams and in visions. Sometimes it is hard to tell these apart if they happen at night, like having a dream/vision. Here is a good example I have used a lot. One night I had a dream. It seemed to take place in the center of a town. There was a movie marquee in the background with all sorts of lights, and it appeared maybe a movie premiere was happening. People were going this way and that, just a lot of action and confusion. I was seeing all this action and confusion from outside the scene. I really wasn't in it. Suddenly a man in a tuxedo who was holding a microphone stepped forward out of the crowd and put his face right in front of me. He looked directly at me. In a bold voice he said, "When you've done all you know how to do and can't think of anything else to do, get out of the way and let God handle it!" I sat right up in bed wide awake! That was a crystal clear message from God.
9. **A Dramatic and Extraordinary Communication** - We can never put God in a box or limit what he might do. I include this example because it means so much to me and because it shows to what lengths God will go to make sure a person following him gets his message. A few years ago I received an email from a minister in Nigeria whom **I did not know and had never known**. In the email the minister noted he had been doing some work and suddenly God began speaking to him about me. So the minister obediently recorded all God said and sent me the email. It was full of encouragement and guidance as to what is to come and even contained specific references to things he promised years ago. It was a letter from God!

Recently again God has been communicating from another person far away. A partner periodically sends the ministry a gift unique to the area where he lives. On the package label he includes a scripture reference. When I first recognized this and began reading the references, I was thrilled to find the words related directly to me and God's call on my life. Amazing.

Why does God choose such a method to communicate? Because it makes a dramatic, overwhelming impact! As God himself said when I asked him about the email from the Nigerian pastor, "got your attention didn't it?"

10. **Through Some Direct Action Clearly From God** - Once Cathy and I were driving home at night from a place far away. We were driving on a small highway westward through dark thick forests. Cathy was driving and I was looking at the GPS and a map. We knew if we continued west for perhaps a couple hours, we eventually would intersect an Interstate highway going southeast to our home and we would safely get there after several hours. But I also saw there was another small highway that we would soon intersect that would go south to our home as well. It would go through various small towns and not be as pleasant a road, but it was shorter. So I told Cathy. She initially did not want to take this route, but she finally agreed. So when we came to the turnoff for this small highway, she exited the road we were on and turned south onto the small highway. We continued in silence, thinking we were set for the trip. After a half hour I saw a highway marker that said fifty miles to a certain city. But that city I realized was not on our way south. It was west, far west, on the original road we had just turned off of. How were we on the road to that city? We checked again, and a look at the compass showed we were indeed going west, not south. We were still on our initial road before Cathy had turned! Even though she had clearly done that, we were not on the small highway going south! We were heading west and by now were closer to the big interstate! For a long time we were quiet, our minds pondering what had happened. Finally one of us said, well, I guess God didn't want us to take that road. Whatever might have happened had we indeed been able to drive south on the small rural highway we would never

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know, but clearly God had his plan for how we were to go home. And he made sure we got it by keeping us on the original road!

Remember, God cannot be limited in ways he communicates. The list above includes several ways. But God's ways are limitless. He is God.

If you still say God has never spoken to you and you can't hear him, well, think for a moment. At the least he has written you an extensive letter containing all you need to know about life, about him, and about his return. It's called the Bible. How's that for a communication. And you are holding a newsletter with specific guidance on how to hear from God – how do you suppose you came to be reading such a newsletter?

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May you live in the blessings of God always.

John

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