



reflecting Jesus

BETA

God will speak clearly
to anyone who is ready to listen

14

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did you know...

While elephants have big ears, researchers have found that they “hear” across long distances through vibrations that they feel with their feet.

photo: sxc iClarke



it is similar when we listen to God—“hearing” God is does not necessarily happen through our ears... but how?



the facts of his story

Answer these questions about how God speaks to us:

1. Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God spoke to people through _____
and more recently through _____. These messages have been written down in the Bible for us to read today.
2. God also speaks to us through _____ (Romans 1:20).
3. We understand that God is speaking to us because of the work of the _____ (1 Peter 1:20-21).
4. We are promised _____ as well to speak to us personally today (John 16:13).
5. The Psalmist says, "Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the Lord" (Psalm 107:43, NLT). From this verse we can see that God speaks to us through history and therefore our _____.

He who is made complete in Christ must first be emptied of pride, of self-sufficiency. Then there is silence in the soul, and God's voice can be heard.
Ellen White, Signs of the Times, April 9, 1902



thinking it through

1. Why do you think that God has chosen to speak in so many different ways, but he doesn't normally send an angel to appear and tell us things face to face?

2. What is the most memorable time that God spoke to you, and how did he do this?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ listening for God

why doesn't God speak louder?

God loves us so much he allowed his only son to die for our sins. He did this so he could be in relationship with us, for he longs to restore us into his image.

So here is something to think about: would a God like this, in trying to communicate with us, speak so softly or so strangely, that we wouldn't be able to understand him at all?

Do you think God is trying to be difficult or awkward when he communicates to us? Why then do we often have such a hard time hearing him speak to us? Is God playing hard to get?

For God to have all the power in the universe, but then make it really difficult for us to hear him just doesn't make sense. So could there be other reasons why we don't hear God?

Could it possibly be that the reason so few people hear God communicate to them personally, is not because God is speaking too quietly, but because we are not listening carefully enough?

Perhaps so. Perhaps it's a combination of our lack of time to listen, but also because we create so much of our own noise, that God's voice is drowned out in the din. Such "noise" is not necessarily literal noise that we hear with our ears, but anything which distracts our attention from the voice of the Holy Spirit.

noise

So what noises do we create that might block our ability to hear God's voice? Here are some examples of "noises",

- ☞ **Physical noise:** playing music. Surfing the web. Watching TV or movies. Addicted to

the news.

- ☞ **Mental noise:** constant complaining, whining, feeling sorry for myself.

- ☞ **Emotional noise:** dreaming about what it feels like being in love, being successful; wanting revenge against people who have hurt me; following the gossip about celebrities or people I know; being hooked on following a sports team; wanting to own the latest things.

- ☞ **"Bad" spiritual noise:** in other words, sin. Sin in us blocks out the voice of the Holy Spirit.

- ☞ **"Good" spiritual noise:** always filling our time reading Christian books or even listening to Christian music. We may think that it is all very good and spiritual, but if we don't have time to reflect and hear

God because we

are busy cramming our minds with new thoughts, it can still end up being just "noise".

Perhaps you have read through this list and thought, well that's not noise! I certainly don't have a problem with any of those!

If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch.

Christ's Object Lessons, 129

Well let's see. One of the ways to see how addicted we are to the noise around us is to take a break from it all—with a noise fast. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline because it begins to show us what we are really thinking and doing during the day. A noise fast helps show us what are own motives really are. So how does a noise fast work?

how a noise fast works

While a regular fast includes not eating, a noise fast includes choosing to take a break from the physical noise around us. Here's how.

For the next week, don't listen to any music, TV, radio, or movies. Don't surf the internet at all, or read any newspapers.

In their place, spend the same time you would have spent on these things in listening to God, in prayer, and reading your Bible.

You will be surprised how very difficult this is! However, if you can keep doing this for a week, you may find that the things you thought you just couldn't live without aren't as attractive as they once were. Importantly, you will get to know your own inner "noise", your own feelings and desires in a way you could never have imagined.

You may even find that you want to change the way you live. Most of all, you may begin to hear God communicate to you in much clearer ways.

using your habit

During your noise fast, use your Journal to keep

a diary of your experience. Write about your experience, the difficulties, your prayers, what you learn, and how you grow in becoming sensitive to the voice of God.

EXTRA: You may also like to try a normal fast. This is done when you want to pray about a special issue. An example of such a fast would be going without food, or eating only fruit, from 6pm one day to 6pm the next.

When we go without the food we are used to, it really helps to concentrate our minds on listening to God. It also helps us to understand ourselves better, particularly our motives. During this time, you would include the directions for the noise fast.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw that God has 1) spoken through history by his prophets, but most importantly through Jesus. All this has been written down in the Bible. Whenever we read the Bible, we have the opportunity to hear God speak to us. God also speaks to us about his character through 2) nature all around us. When God speaks, it is because of 3) the work of the Holy Spirit that we hear him. 4) The Holy Spirit impresses us personally about what is true, which will always harmonise with the Bible. God also speaks to us through 5) our circumstances. God may use friends, changes in our lives, hard times, things that happen at school or at work—all sorts of things—to teach us about himself.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to reflect on the times and ways that God has spoken to you, and to think about how you might live in order to hear him more clearly.

In "habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus" we looked at one way to more clearly listen to God using a noise fast. It may seem difficult at first, but it will teach your ears how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit more easily.



my time with God

This week, follow the instructions for the noise fast as described in the "habits" section. In your time with God, spend time particularly to pray, asking God to teach you how to discern his voice.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone the different ways in which God speaks to us and how to do a noise fast?



extra help

1. Celebration of Discipline, "Solitude" (chapter 7), by Richard Foster.