

Prayer is a Two-Way Conversation

By: Daniel Orona

Yes, prayer really is a two way conversation. No it's not just voices in your head. No most of the time it's not audible. But yes God wants to speak to you through His Son Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The hard part for us is listening and really understanding what God is saying to us.

There are several ways that God will speak to us including: dreams and visions, prophecy, tongues and interpretation and that still small voice. We will be focusing on the still small voice that we may hear the Lord speak to us at any give time. We will deal with the other ways in subsequent articles.

I cannot say this enough. God wants to talk to you. You are His son or His daughter and what Father doesn't want to talk to their children. Jesus said if your earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to your children how much more does your Father in heaven? This is shown in giving us His only begotten Son that we may come to everlasting life.

But think of a Father that doesn't talk to their children at all. There are a whole host of terms we would used to describe that Father and at best call them an absent Father. That's not God and certainly not what He intends for our life. I think back to when I was a child. My dad worked second shift and I wouldn't see him through the week when I was at school. I would constantly beg my mom enough to late me stay up and see him and occasionally she would let me. When he walked in the door around 11pm I would run up to him and wrap up his legs in a big old hug. But it wasn't enough for me just to hug him. I needed to be hugged back and he needed to hug me back. God is the same way, we must let Him love us back in His way and one of those is to speak to us and develop us.

Understanding that the basis of our relationship is the love of the Father toward us we understand why he wants to talk to us on a regular basis. What we need to develop is the understanding of how. With the release of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (See Acts 3), we aren't going to get the Moses treatment. Don't get me wrong. God can talk to anyone he wants to at any time however He wants, but the most intimate way is through that still small voice in our spirit.

I'm going to give you two examples from Scripture that are very similar to today. The first is when God called Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. In this story, Samuel is sleeping and he hears a voice in the night where the Lord called Samuel. Not understanding that it was the Lord, Samuel went to Eli and said, Here I am. Eli tells him that he did not call Samuel. This happens two more times and the last time Eli tells Samuel to say when he hears the voice again to say, "Speak Lord for your servant hears. The Lord then calls a fourth and final time and this time Samuel responds with, "Speak Lord for your servant hears." It was then that the Lord began to tell Samuel all that was about to come against Eli due to the works of his sons.

In this case, we see that Samuel could not perceive the voice of the Lord and thought that it was Eli calling out to him. When first beginning to hear the voice of the Lord we are in the same position. We are not able to perceive that the Lord is talking to us and think that it may be our own selves speaking. Sometimes that is the case and other times it is not. The Scripture says that my sheep hear my voice (ref) . But being new in Christ you are a lamb not fully grown, so it takes time to develop and be able to hear accurately. This is why it is so important to have a fellow Christian as your teacher to disciple you. Run what you hear past them and allow them to discern until you have experience because not everything you hear will be from the Lord. There are three that will talk to you, the Lord, your own Spirit and Satan. The only way to know is to try the spirits to know that they are of God.

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How do you try the Spirits? Remember the nothing that comes from the Lord will go against his written word. If it does, it needs to be thrown out and not accepted. Additionally, out of the mouths of two or more witnesses will every word be established (ref). It's important to not move until you have a second witness on what you heard. If you don't get one, just simply wait until you do. Finally, every spirit of the Lord will declare Christ Lord. If it does not fall into submission of who Christ is then it needs to be thrown out. The important thing is to not move until you have verification. Share it with your mentor and allow them to prayerfully discern. This will drastically help you to focus in on the voice of the Lord rather than the other voices.

The other story demonstrating how God talks to us is through the story of Elijah. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah had just called down fire from heaven and had just destroyed all the prophets of Baal that were leading the Israelites astray. Jezebel the queen had sworn an oath that her Gods would do the same to her if she did not kill Elijah and when Elijah heard this he ran for his life. Here Elijah fell into self-pity, but that is a message for another time. Regardless, God told Elijah to get into the cleft of the rock and there was a mighty wind, but God was not in the wind. Then there was a great earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Then there was a great fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, there was a still small voice and it was then that Elijah recognized it as the voice of the Lord. Similarly we expect God to talk to us through all these magnificent ways, when He very simply just wants to talk to us through the still small voice. It's truly humbling that the creator of the universe just wants to talk to us like we are His children.

So understanding all of this, how do we hear the voice of the Lord. It's very simple when it comes down to it. After you are saying your formal prayers, say what Samuel said, but a little differently. Say, "Speak Lord because your son or daughter is listening." Then wait. Push every thought out of your mind and this may take some time. Everything from what you are having for dinner to what you are doing a year from now will come up in your thoughts. God will not dwell and deal with our thoughts when He is trying to talk to us. So quiet your mind. Let it all come and go and listen. Almost like you are trying to hear someone whisper in a crowded room and you will hear him speak to your spirit. It most likely won't be audible, but it will be spoken to your spirit like words in a conversation. The voice will sound different than your own and you will recognize that it's coming from outside of you.

The first time that I heard from the Lord He very simple said, "Daniel, I love you and I have a work for you." That was it. That's all I heard. Then I heard a little more next time and a little more until now God and I have full blown conversations at any moment during the day. Remember He said, "My sheep know my voice." (Ref). As a lamb it takes time, just like it takes time for a baby to recognize the voice of his father. But hang in there and wait until He talks. Then discuss it with your mentor and listen to their teaching. Hearing the voice of the Lord accurately and regularly is just as important as the things we pray about and the Scripture we read. Remember it is His revealed word that is a light unto our pathway and a lamp unto our feet.