

# GOD IS SPEAKING: ARE YOU LISTENING

Mark Beard

## Text: Selected

**Jo M. Guerrero writes in the Christian Reader**, “My five-year-old daughter, Barbara, had disobeyed me and had been sent to her room. After a few minutes, I went in to talk with her about what she had done. Teary-eyed, she asked, “Why do we do wrong things, Mommy?”

“Well,” I replied, “sometimes the devil tells us to do something wrong and we listen to him. We need to listen to God instead.”

To which she sobbed, “But God doesn't talk loud enough!”

-- Jo M. Guerrero, Joplin, Missouri. *Christian Reader*, “Kids of the Kingdom.”

Listening is one of the primary means we have for learning about ourselves. As children we developed our perceptions of who we are, and what we are destined to become, largely according to what our parents say about us. As we grow older, other voices add to those perceptions, complementing or challenging what our parents have said.

Over time, we filter out what we do not want to hear, modify what is incongruent with our self perception, and absorb data that seems useful. This is called *discerning listening*. *It is defined as the power to distinguish or select what is true or appropriate or genuinely excellent.*

When we listen with discernment to God, to other people, even to our inner selves, we grow, we mature, and we gain wisdom. *Being able to listen has the potential to move us forward in the understanding and fulfillment of what God has intended for our lives.*

God is not silent. Sometimes it may seem as if He does not speak loud enough—but He does speak. In fact, God is constantly inviting us to listen to Him.

You may wonder, “How can I hear God?” Or “How do I know when He is speaking?” As we look through the scriptures, note with me several *methods* God uses to speak to us.

## I. GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE.

**Jesus challenged us in Matthew 11:15**, “He who has ears, let him hear.”

- A. He guides us through his Word.**
- B. He teaches us through his Word.**
- C. He enriches us through his Word.**

**John 6:63 said**, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” NIV

- D. He affirms us through his Word.**

**Carole Mayhall, in an article titled, Can a Busy Christian Develop Her Spiritual Life?, wrote, One night I was so lonely I couldn't sleep. I decided to try meditating on Psalm 36. As I read the words, vivid images began to fill my mind. "They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights" (v. 8).**

I pictured myself sitting at the edge of a beautiful flowing river of God's delights with a demitasse cup. I filled my cup and took a sip. It was wonderful. Then I heard the Lord say, "Carole, why don't you jump right in and let my river flow over you?" That night I found that when you ask God for daily insights from his Word, it's as if he taps you on the shoulder and says, "This is just for you today."

-Carole Mayhall in Can a Busy Christian Develop Her Spiritual Life? Christian Reader, Vol. 33, no. 4.

**The sequence of the process of hearing God and growing from it is as follows:**

- 1. He speaks**
- 2. I listen**
- 3. I believe**
- 4. I apply**
- 5. I am changed**

**John 5:24 Jesus said,** "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

**And in John 15:3 & 4,** "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

## **II. GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**A. The very presence of the Holy Spirit within us is proof that God wants to commune with us.**

**1 John 4:13,** "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." NIV

**B. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through inner promptings and the Word of God.**

**John 16:13,** "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."

### III. GOD SPEAKS TO THROUGH OTHERS.

Others can give us valuable feedback—*NOT that we should assume what everyone has to say is from God.*

**Hannah Whitall Smith** advises, “I lay it down as a foundation principle, which no one can gainsay, that of course [God's] voice will always be in harmony with itself, no matter in how many different ways he may speak. The voices may be many, the message can be but one, if God tells me in one voice to do or to leave undone anything he cannot possibly tell me the opposite in another voice. If there is a contradiction in the voices, the speakers cannot be the same. Therefore my rule for distinguishing the voice of God would be to bring it to the test of this harmony.”

-Hannah Whitall Smith in *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. Christianity Today, Vol. 37, no. 10.

**A. Others can give us details about ourselves that we may not see.**

**B. Others can show us our strengths.**

**C. Others can point out areas of need and weakness in our lives.**

**Colossians 3:15-16**, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...”

### IV. GOD SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO US.

**A. God speaks through our inner voice.**

**Romans 8:16**, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.”  
NIV *This is the beginning...*

**B. God speaks through important life issues.**

**C. S. Lewis wrote that**, “God whispers to us in our pleasures ... but shouts in our pains.”

-- C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 7.

## CONCLUSION

### **Study Debunks 'Find Your Passion' Advice**

Americans love to say things like "follow your passion," "pursue your dreams," or "do what you love and love what you do." But do these mantras truly represent the path to vocational clarity, personal fulfillment, and human flourishing?

**Not according to a new study by researchers from Stanford University and Yale-NUS College, which found that "following your passion" is likely to lead to overly limited pursuits, inflated expectations (career, economic, or otherwise), and early or eventual burnout.**

The study's authors concluded:

People are often told to find their passion as though passions and interests are pre-formed and must simply be discovered. This idea, however, has hidden motivational implications ... Urging people to find their passion may lead them to put all their eggs in one basket but then to drop that basket when it becomes difficult to carry.

Although our culture tells us to "look within," assuming a fixed set of passions to guide us on our way, researchers found more positive results among those who allow room for interests and intelligence to develop over time. The study encourages us to ask: Are we still looking only to the self or are we looking outward and upward as well? **As David Brooks [once wrote](#): "Most successful young people don't look inside and then plan a life. They look outside and find a [need or God's call], which summons their life."**

*Joseph Sunde, "The folly of 'following your passion,'" Acton blog (7-25-18)*