

Waking Up the Nation,
One Reader at a Time...

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

How to Listen for God's Voice

by Joan Vetter

It is true - often we have fathers who don't talk to us for whatever reason. Maybe they are angry men, demanding and controlling, or they are absent. Or perhaps they just don't know how to lovingly reach out to care with their words. However that is not what God intended for a father/child relationship.

We are told in scripture that God is our Father. I know that has a myriad of responses at first for many. For some it is a longing to experience the place of acceptance, but others may not pursue God, thinking He will reject them or ignore them. However, if we associate the name God with father, common sense reveals a God who desires to communicate with His family.

I remember so clearly one of the first times I heard God speak. I was in a meeting where the leader indicated we would all hear God tell us what He thought of us. My first response was doubt, and even thinking maybe everyone would hear something but me. He instructed us to ask God, and then just be still and hear with our spirit and not our mind. At first it was all too quiet. Then three words tumbled forth right on the

heels of each other. Today those words still evoke that similar response of a sweet knowing that my heavenly Father loves me.

Recently I heard a pastor speak about training his son to listen for deer when he took him hunting. He said it is the same way with learning to listen for God. First, we need to believe that He desires to speak to us and that we can learn to hear Him. Then, we persevere even though we may make a few mistakes along the way. However, we remain in an attitude of thanksgiving that we are the sheep of His pasture and His sheep will hear his voice.

Have you ever received a phone call where the person failed to identify themselves and just proceeded to talk? If it is someone familiar we know their voice immediately. Or perhaps we recognize the voice but can't place it, or we have no clue who it is.

Therefore, training, for the most part, is simply spending time with God through His Word and especially through the Holy Spirit. When we know His nature and His Word we can recognize who is talking to us.

Sometimes God may send an angel to communicate

with people. Such is the case with Zacharias in Luke 1:13, when an angel proclaimed, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." However, Zacharias proceeded to question the angel by saying, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." Then, the angel announced that Zacharias would be mute and not able to speak until the baby was born, showing us that even when we hear a true word from God or an angel, are we willing to trust?

Even the deaf learn to communicate through sign language. Sometimes God may use a sign to speak. For instance, yesterday I saw a sign at the YMCA with a picture of two hands encompassing the words Safe Place. It reminded me of my computer screen saver, a picture of clouds in the form of two huge hands. The emotion of being safe in God's hands flowed over me with such a sense of gratitude.

Another way God speaks is through people or words we read. I asked the Lord if I should do something a friend requested of me. I honestly didn't have peace about it, but hated to disap-

point her. Today I read a daily devotional with these words: "Resist the temptation to take on more than you can effectively handle. Any over-extension could deplete your resources, physically, emotionally, financially or spiritually. Exercise sound judgment when making choices and you would do well to be conservative. The enemy would love to stretch you beyond your abilities." I recognized without a doubt that was God answering my prayer for wisdom.

I challenge you to search through the Bible looking for the places God speaks to His people, and then let your heart and ears be tuned to the frequency of His personal voice to you. Just like your finger prints are one of a kind, the way He communicates with you will be unique. "I heard the Lord call my name - listen close you'll hear the same."

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