

Discerning Between The Three Voices You Hear in Prayer

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I'd like to share with you three things that I have learned over the years about listening to the Lord, and knowing for sure that it's Him you're listening to. The title of this is "The Three Voices of the Spirit". Life would be so much simpler for souls that really want to hear and obey God and please Him, if they could only hear His voice clearly and know for sure, it's Jesus.

I've consistently, all my Christian life, heard three different voices that come from three different sources in the spirit during prayer: the voice of my mind, which sounds like what we would call "talking to ourselves". On a day-to-day basis, it's a running dialogue of opinions and chatter. However, when we're seriously listening for the Lord, it tends to tell us what WE want to hear.

The second is the demon's voice, which sounds affectionate, reasonable, persuasive, and very compatible with our own thoughts and desires. It tells us what we want to hear or what makes sense. At other times it accuses us or other people, drawing us into judgment, which the devils know is a way to open the door for them to come in and sift us. If they can't get away with lying to us about good things to set us off course, it will switch to the discouragement mode.

And third, the Lord's voice, which also sounds affectionate, reasonable, and at many times much like what we sometimes perceive to be our own, because He is always renewing our minds with His thoughts. His instruction is gentle and does not provoke us to judge others. Rather, He encourages us to be long-suffering with them, as He is with us.

So those are a kind of light overview of the three different characters of the voices that we hear when we're praying and we're in the spirit.

Now how it all started for me, I began hearing from the Lord by writing in my journal. I would journal my heart, and my feelings, my desires and then wait and listen for the Lord to respond. At first this seemed to work beautifully – but then I began to notice contradictions and things that were predicted that didn't come to pass. Red Flag!!!

This is why I can't just indiscriminately write down what I hear. I have to go deeper. The Scriptures say in 1 John 4:1: **Test the spirits and see if they be of God.**

Okay, so how are we going to test them? Well, a lot has to do with listening very carefully to the attitude and the demeanor of what you're hearing. As I said, one sounds like we're talking to ourselves and sounding more regal and authoritative - like God. The second sounds very affectionate and reasonable and persuasive - that's the demon. The Lord's also sounds affectionate and reasonable, but He's gentle and doesn't provoke us to judge others. And let me tell you, the demons are really smart. They'll do that – they'll sound like the Lord and they won't provoke you to judge others. They'll make it a little harder for you to know. But there's that sweet space in your spirit, down in your gut, where you know that you know that you know it's the Lord.

I just find it very hard sometimes to be confident that it's the Lord when I'm communicating with Him about something I'm attached to. People say, "Well, but I hear the Lord in my heart." But here's what the Scriptures say in Jeremiah 17:9: **The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond. The heart is perverse and unsearchable. Who can know it?** So that's tricky, too! What's in our hearts isn't always what's Holy and right and Godly.

So, I was very young in the Lord and insecure and these contradictions would throw me into a panic, especially because I'd been a New Age practitioner for 12 years before the Lord rescued me. I wanted to base everything in my life on what the Lord told me to do, because I'd made such a mess of my life for the first 33 years. I was so sick of "following my star." Let me tell you, I was ready to obey and to follow the Lord.

When I was first saved, my very first experience of hearing the Lord speak to me was through the Scriptures. I opened my "new to me" big family Bible three times prayerfully. I've never forgotten those readings. Little did I know they would define my mission in life. I never expected anything like these readings so I was detached from them. They were Moses and the burning bush: Out of the burning bush I've made you to hear My voice. The second was the story of Esther, fasting in prayer. And the third was the call of Jeremiah to speak out about the things that the Lord showed me that needed correction, and to encourage.

So truly, the Lord does direct our lives individually in the Bible and there is merit in seeking a word from Him directly through the Scriptures. And to this day, those words still define my mission. I think it's just a matter of trusting that God will open that Bible to the right page. It's a childlike trust. It doesn't come easily for us because we're so mental and so controlling. The whole idea of letting go of control and allowing something to open to the right thing is just real scary and alien to us.

But it's a matter of letting go and taking Daddy's hand, like a little child, like a 3-year-old or a toddler would take the Lord's hand and just walk with Him. He wouldn't ask "Well, where are we going? What are we going to do? And when are we coming home?" He wouldn't go into all these mental gymnastics to secure his future. He just takes the Lord's hand! That's what going to the Scriptures for a confirmation is like.

Okay, so I want to give you an example of three clear messages about the same topic as you'd hear them in your prayer time and write them down, believing it was Jesus speaking to you.

The first one. When I began singing, I wanted to have a powerful voice, and in prayer when I was seeking the Lord, I heard "Work your voice and it will be powerful."

Okay, **the next voice:** "Your voice will be much more powerful than that singer you so admire. She's very good, but your voice is outstanding. Work it day and night and you'll get there." Okay, that's the second voice.

The third voice: "Your voice is unique to you, just as other singers have their own beauty. Don't copy other vocalists. Work consistently and you will in time blossom into your own."

Okay, so, a little question here – which one do you think is the Lord?

- 1) "Work your voice and it will be powerful."
- 2) "Your voice is outstanding. Work it day and night and you'll get there."

3) "Your voice is unique and blossom into your own uniqueness."

Well, in the first one, I was attached to having a powerful voice. That's a caution, a red flag. Anything you're attached, you're likely to tell yourself. Also, I felt a check in my spirit when I heard this.

OK, the second - it plays on my vanity. It judges and criticizes another singer and it directs me to over-do my practice, which might even lead to vocal damage.

And the third voice – it contradicts my desire, but it encourages me to become who I am.

So, after time had expired, I began to see that that's not my style, to be powerful. That's not what comes naturally to me as a form of expression in song. And not only that, but the songs the Holy Spirit gives me are not suited to power, but to gentleness and softness. Later I figured out I was telling myself "You will have a powerful voice" because that's what I wanted to hear. I was attached.

So, I learned after many years of failures you cannot just trust a word that plays up to your attachments. Or should I say you can't just trust ANY word you hear. You have to discriminate, as the Scriptures instruct us to.

When we have been in worship and the time comes for us to sit quietly before the Lord and to listen, there's a potential for three different voices to be heard. But only ONE is the voice of God. If you just indiscriminately write down what you're hearing, you run the risk of being directed into a path that is not yours by your very own flesh, or by demons who will guide you into judgment, which will bring repercussions. Basically, they're setting you up for a fall, because they know that when you judge, you go out from under God's covering, and then they can step in and sift you.

But when you clearly discern Jesus speaking to you - you've gone over the three options and you've decided "This is the Lord. I can feel it in my spirit and there's nothing to indicate that it's from the enemy." When you clearly discern that Jesus is speaking to you, the whole world can come against you. I could lose my voice for a month to laryngitis, or not have any opportunities to sing and it wouldn't matter. Because the Lord gave me His word about my voice, and all I have to do is have faith in what He told me.

So, it's really, really important guys. Don't just write down anything you hear. Please! Please! Discriminate, as the Scriptures teach us to do. Test the spirits. You don't want to end up at a dead end later on because you just took anybody's word for it.

Well, the Lord bless you and help us all to have better discernment.