

Listening in Prayer

January 12, 2020

At the end of a church training event, a pastor asked if he could pray over me. His prayer rocked my world. He prayed as though he knew me personally though we'd only met the day before. He said things that sounded as though God was talking directly to me. He clearly stated things that were in my heart, it was as if he'd read my mind.

That prayer was mesmerizing. I wanted to pray like that. I begged him to teach me to pray and feel that God is speaking directly to me. So, over time, he shared with me how to open my heart to listen to what God is saying.

Over the years, I've put his teaching into practice.

At that time, I was part of a district prayer team and we prayed for all the pastors of our district once a month. As a group, we'd studied listening in prayer together. A few years later, our prayer team was asked to attend a prayer retreat at Summit Heights United Methodist out on Outer Loop. Their pastor asked us to pray for their leadership as they closed out their day long event.

We didn't know any of these people personally. There were four of us to pray and about 25 people to pray over. We four prayed together before the leaders came into the room and asked God to speak through us. Afterwards, they came forward in four lines to the altar and knelt before each of us. I have no idea what I prayed, but as each person came to me, I put my hands on their shoulders and asked God to speak through me.

My prayer partners and I were completely spent when we finished. There was no doubt that God had spoken directly to several of those for whom we'd prayed. We four talked about that experience for years afterwards; it was one of the most spiritually moving things I've ever done.

It was invigorating and very exciting. It was the first time I knew with certainty that God was speaking through me.

Listening in prayer became a priority for me and when I will take the time to listen, my prayer life is beyond my wildest imagination.

Another way I've seen listening in prayer work was accomplished when I was volunteering as an adult leader for campus ministry at UofL. We were unsure what God had in store for us and we spent an hour as a group, silently praying about the direction God wanted for our organization. We were to write down anything that God spoke to us while in prayer. At the end of the prayer time, we shared with one another what God had impressed upon us. Incredibly, the same word was spoken to over half of those gathered.

What I'm telling you is that it is absolutely possible for you to have this type of communication with God yourself! You can be this excited and as confident in your conversations with God. It takes your steadfast relationship with him and taking the time to listen.

There are all kinds of examples throughout the bible of how God spoke to people.

Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

God's voice is distinctive. He promises that we, his sheep, will hear it. The more you pause and listen for his voice, the more you will find that your ears tune in to it—you become familiar with it. It just requires your listening.

Ask the Lord questions, then listen, and he often speaks.

Often, our problem is that we're too distracted and busy that it's often the exception rather than the rule that people listen to one another, much less listen to God. We need to learn how to listen. Almost everyone struggles to hear God and many people have never heard him.

Learning to hear the Lord's voice isn't complicated. But it does require some discipline to find a quiet place and to allow some time just listening. The Art of Listening in Prayer instructs us as follows:

Perhaps the hardest part of listening prayer is clearing your mind. With all the noise of life regularly cascading through your mind, it can be hard to hear God's voice. There's no formula, but let me share a few principles that have worked for me:

1. Set aside at least half an hour to start. When you are ready, quiet yourself. If stray thoughts come through your mind, write them down on a separate piece of paper.
2. Read some scripture. Ask the Lord to speak to you through it in a way that you can understand. Ask God to protect you in Jesus' name from deception.
3. Then write down your question for prayer. Pause. This is where you wait and listen. God may direct you to another passage of Scripture. He may share a tender word. Whatever you feel he may be saying to you, write it down.
4. Ask him to confirm anything he shared with you.

(<https://artoflisteningprayer.com/listening-prayer-101/>)