

What are some practical tips for listening to God? by Dr. David Litner

Listening to God is an important part of the Christian life. God desires to speak to us and we have the privilege of listening to God's instruction and guidance. William Barclay once said, "Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that God should be able to make use of us. It may be that one of our great faults in prayer is that we talk too much and listen too little. When prayer is at its highest, we wait in silence for God's voice to us."

So, how can we discipline ourselves to hear the voice of God? Consider these practical tips:

- Plan ahead. Restructure your schedule so you can spend uninterrupted time with God. Find a quiet place and bring along your Bible, notebook, and pen. Perhaps you enjoy worshipping with music and would like to bring along your favorite worship music.
- Prepare yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically. It is essential that we come to God with a pure heart, and a desire to hear from God. Spend time confessing sin (ways you experience separation, barriers with God and others) and receiving God's forgiveness. Take a walk, a hike, a bicycle ride, stretching, yoga, etc. to open yourself physically.
- Spend time in prayer, worship, Bible reading, and meditation on God's Word. As you read the Bible, ask God to speak to you.
- Wait expectantly. This is not a time to zone out or think of the activities for later in the day. You are waiting for thoughts to come, perhaps feeling or impressions or images as well. If something apart from God's voice comes to your mind, jot it down in the margins of your journal. This will free your mind to be able to concentrate on God and listen for God's leading. Spend time in silence, waiting for God to speak in your spirit. Feel free to ask questions and then await responses -- journal the dialogue -- and try imagining what God might say to you to open you up.
- Act on what you hear, trusting that if you are "off," God will help you get back on track as you continue to listen.
- Continue your time of waiting on God throughout the day. Always be listening for the Spirit's voice.