

## **BLOG 1: The Holy Spirit as Tutor**

Extracts from James Goll's: "The Beginner's Guide to Hearing God"

*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. John 16 vs 7*

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." John 16vs13*

*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. John 15 vs 26*

To get close to the Holy Spirit we often have to deal with many misconceptions, debates and opposition, even within the church. Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock write:

"What an extraordinary gift the Father bestowed upon His children when He sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper! Is it any wonder that Satan tries to minimise the significance of the gift and divide and confuse the body of Christ concerning it?"

Many Christians know a lot **about** the Holy Spirit and can state the theology about Him accurately, but the real question is "do I know Him as a person, as someone with whom I am becoming intimate? Is he really my Helper, my Comforter and my Guide?"

The way Holy Spirit operates as our Comforter and Guide makes Him more like a Tutor or a personal mentor– he literally coaches us and helps us to understand what lessons we need to learn and when.

**Tutor** *n*: a person charged with the instruction and guidance of another as a private teacher

When we talk about who has influenced the course of our life most significantly most people cite a special schoolteacher or mentor. Would the Holy Spirit be top of your list? Is He the coach you have listened to most carefully and allowed to work most deeply within your heart?

The quality of time we spend fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit has everything to do with hearing God's voice. The Holy Spirit works with us to help us learn what we need to in order to hear God more clearly. He will teach us holiness, humility and an openness of heart. He will teach us how to read the Word of God and he introduces us to the Author of the Word. He gives us tongues and other gifts which bring us closer to hearing the heart of God. He teaches us how we fit into the bigger picture and He teaches us how God sees us. He establishes His Kingdom within us. He will teach us that holiness, righteousness and honesty are more important than how to read the stock market and that sacrificial giving is foundational if we want our life to show that we have followed in Jesus' footsteps.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and He will always point us towards truth. The Holy Spirit not only give us a revelation of Truth , but He also builds truthfulness into the depths of our personalities. We become like Him as we spend time with Him. His characteristics are imparted to us. They rub off on us as do the characteristics of our spouses, for example. Having the standard of truthfulness built into our lives enables us to not only hear but also to **discern** the voice of God.

Along with truth, our Helper is willing and able to build into the fabric of our being the many other attributes of God's character. As Tutor, He has a personal interest in seeing us grow in expressing what God is like as we express what we hear Him saying.

## **BLOG 2: Accepting How God Speaks**

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For many Christians, accepting that God ***speaks today*** is one of the greatest challenges. That His voice is clear and present and that He is available to communicate with us every second is still a fairly revolutionary in concept for many believers. That He ***wants*** to speak to us is even more amazing!

We know that God speaks in a wide range of ways. Let's look at some examples from Scripture:

- A dream or vision (Job 33 vs 14-18)
- A voice in a trance (Acts 10: 9-16)
- The voice of many angels (Rev 5 vs11)
- The audible voice of God (Exodus 3vs4)
- God's written Word (Psalm 119vs105)
- Wonders in the sky and on Earth (Joel 2 vs30-31)
- Visions and parables to the prophets (Hosea 12 vs10)
- Heavenly experiences in which ones is brought up before the Lord (2Cor 12 vs1-4)
- The Holy Spirit bearing witness to our spirit (Romans 8 vs16)
- God's own Son (Hebrews 1vs2)

This is not an exhaustive list but it gives an idea of the variety of ways God speaks to us. He can speak to us any way He chooses and sometimes it is not the way we would prefer!

Quin Sherrer says:

"God speaks to us in many ways. If we are open to hearing His voice at every turn, we will begin to recognise it with much greater frequency."

All the examples considered above are quite dramatic. However it is not always like this.

Sherrer continues:

Less dramatically, God can speak to us through an “internal witness” or a “knowing” in our innermost being, a settling peace, a conviction that the decision we might normally fret over is the right one. He can also speak through circumstances (“closed and open doors”) or a seemingly serendipitous meeting that brings us an opportunity.”

We have to learn to acknowledge and accept the ways that God speaks – to look for and listen to Him as we spend time in His presence. We need to be confidently expectant that we will hear from Him if we are prepared to listen!

Once we have accepted that He wants to communicate with us we have a long-term learning process ahead of us. We all have some unlearning as well as new learning to do. This is where it is so vital that we have the Holy Spirit as our Tutor!

When we listen for the voice of God we often get locked in set patterns. We get used to hearing God clearly in one specific way. We then focus on that one specific way that He speaks to us and we fail to mature. Sometimes He asks us to exercise our faith in the reality that He is with us whether we “feel” His presence or not. As we grow in maturity sometimes He shuts down our “comfort” channel. At this point we often panic and wonder if God has left us or if there is something seriously wrong. He hasn’t stopped speaking - He is opening our hearts and minds to hear His voice in new ways. He does this so that we will grow progressively in our relationship with Him. He is not a slot-machine, He wants us to be dependent upon Him

and moving towards maturity. Eventually we learn to love and recognise the wide variety of ways in which He speaks to us today.

### **BLOG 3&4: Learning to Hear God- Key Principles**

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*Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. - Matthew 7 vs24-45*

There are a few basic tools and principles that can assist us in the art of hearing and following God's Voice.

#### **Principle 1: Keep it Simple**

James Goll suggests three simple steps when we are enquiring of God:

##### **Step 1: Submit to His lordship**

We need to ask God to help silence our own thoughts, desires and opinions. We want to hear only the thoughts of the Lord. We need to take the advice given in Proverbs 3 vs 6-7 "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil."

George Muller was an Englishman who supported vast orphanages by faith alone. He would pray daily for the provisions to feed the hundreds of hungry children under his care. One of the secret's to his walk with God is rarely taught today. He told his followers that if they wanted to hear from God and pray in faith, then they first would have to "cleanse themselves of

their own opinions”. Another word for this is submission. We can’t hear God if we have a preformed opinion on an issue. We have to submit to his lordship. We have to consciously submit our thoughts, our opinions, our pre-conceived attitudes and notions, and even our traditions to the Lord

### **Step 2: Resist the Enemy**

We can use the authority Jesus Christ has given us as His disciples to silence the voice of the enemy. We can stand firm in our position as God’s own children. The enemy will try to bring all sorts of fears and plausible doubts. God’s Spirit in us will make us able to do what we can never do alone. The apostle James wrote, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4vs7). Submit first, then resist.

### **Step 3: Ask a question and expect God’s answer.**

We should ask the question that is on our heart, bringing it before the throne of Almighty God. We then need to wait for Him to answer.

Sometimes the answer will come immediately and sometimes we will have to wait. We must believe that we will be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1vs9). The vital part here is that we *expect* God to act.

### **Principle 2: Allow God to speak how He chooses**

We should not try to dictate to God the communication method we would prefer; rather we must listen with a yielded heart. There is a direct link between yielding and hearing. He can speak through His written Word, through

### **Principle 3: Confess any Known Sins**

A clean heart is a prerequisite to hearing God. Psalm 66vs18 says “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear”. If the Lord cannot hear us, He cannot respond to our enquiries. This principle is foundational to Christian beliefs, we need to confess our sins to our Father – He is waiting to forgive us.

### **Principle 4: Obey the last thing God said**

Why would God give us new orders if we haven't obeyed His last ones? He's waiting for us to do what He's already told us to do. This alone could be a major roadblock to hearing God. If He has already spoken and we already know what is required of us, then we should do it. It's an issue of obedience

### **Principle 5: Get your Own Leading**

God will use others to confirm our Words, but we must learn to hear the voice of the Lord for ourselves. God wants to talk to us personally. We need to be secure in our own identity in Christ. We should not be wrongly co-dependent upon others. At the same time we should not develop an independent and rebellious spirit. We need to hear God for ourselves

### **Principle 6: Don't talk about your Word too Soon**

Observing this principle helps us avoid four traps:

1. Pride: We can start to centre more around ourselves and our gifts than on the Master and His ways, this makes us proud

2. Presumption: We can start acting like a “know it all”. We need to remember that even though each of us is precious to God, we are not the only spokespeople He has
3. Missed Timing: There is a kairos moment (perfect timing) for everything
4. Confusion: “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor 14vs33). Chatting prematurely about things the Lord has told us can bring confusion

### **Principle 7: Know that God will confirm what He’s telling you**

2Cor 13vs 1: “Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or more witnesses”. If it really is God speaking, He will speak the same or similar thing more than once. This helps to take the pressure off! We don’t have to figure out what to do with a “once-off” word, If it really is from God it will be confirmed! Typically these witnesses would include: the Word of God, those in authority over you and your own spirit.

### **Principle 8: Beware of Counterfeits**

The enemy counterfeits God’s voice and he counterfeits spiritual experiences. People are attracted to the supernatural and people want guidance. We need to concentrate on discernment and recognising our Master’s voice by spending time with Him.

### **Principle 9: Practice hearing God’s voice**

Practicing hearing God’s voice will make it easier. The more time we spend with Him, the more easily we will hear Him.

## **Principle 10: Cultivate and Intimate Relationship**

From God's perspective, the most important reason for hearing the voice of God is not so that we will know the right things to do but so that we will know Him. The voice of God creates a deeper hunger within us so that we might come into closer communion with Him. He wants to commune with us even more than we want to commune with Him.