

DAY 4 - HEARING GOD'S VOICE 1: ACTS 13: 1-3

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”^[a]), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas^[b]), and Saul. ²One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

PSALM 131: 2

Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother’s milk.
Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Conversation with God is an important part of prayer. Listening to God is another important part. Have you ever tried to talk to a person who keeps talking and talking, and does not give you the floor to enter into the conversation? Not funny. Such a one-sided monologue is not true friendship! Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me” (John 10:27). As you learn to listen to God, you will discover a great treasure and will “abide” in a two-way relationship with your Savior. God loves talking to his friends. Are you learning to be a good listener?

It is helpful to know that hearing God's voice happens in your spirit. Teacher Ralph Neibor writes:

“Living in the Kingdom does not mean tossing reason aside. We must use our spirit and our mind (our "inner man"), not just either our mind or just our spirit. Your mind is engaged when you come to God, and now your mind is finding the right focus. Although the mind is the part where insight / thoughts are processed and tested, it is not the organ where we receive revelation. It happens in the spirit. Your mind and spirit work together. The insights / thoughts are not just rational, they are over-rational! ”

We read in Mark 2: 8 that “Jesus knew in the spirit” what the people were thinking. He did not try to “calculate”, it was a revelation to Him. How can we prepare our spirit to listen to the voice of God?

Read Acts 13: 1-3. What were the disciples doing in Antioch?

Why could the Spirit speak to them?

There is nothing obscure about the message of the Holy Spirit. It was specific and at a specific time. What the Spirit said was in line with the gifts of Saul and Barnabas. God speaks the same way to this day. Like the Christians in Antioch, we can use spiritual practices or skills to improve our hearing. They worshiped and fasted, two Christian disciplines that make us sensitive to the Lord. Worship and prayer are closely related because most prayer includes worship, and worship includes prayer (for worship and prayer, read 2 Kings 3: 9-16). For centuries, God's people have used these ways of hearing God.

Read Psalm 131: 2. What does the author of the psalm do?

What helps you calm your soul?

To calm yourself down, try practicing Concentration Prayer. Find a place where you can be alone. Sit comfortably with your hands on your knees. Now place your hands, palms down, and consciously surrender to God whatever worries or distracts you. For example, pray, "Lord, I release my fear of passing exams." Then turn your palms up and accept God's peace from this worry. "Lord, I accept your grace for my work today." And so on. Pray for anything that bothers you in this way. In a few minutes, you will be more ready to listen to God. Maybe the Lord's Prayer helps you pray. Make sure you take the time to just sit quietly before the Lord. Say, "Lord, do You want to tell me something today?" and then wait.

Cultivate a listening spirit in the daily events of your life. "Lord, what are you telling me through this? What are you teaching me the Lord through this?" As you walk past beautiful flowers ask God what He is telling you. As you are visiting a sick friend in the hospital ask God if He has a word for you or your

friend. Don't try to come up with something, just be open. Once in a church I attended, there were tremendous difficulties. Everything was in great tension. I went to the forest to ask the Lord what to do. Should I do something? Should I create a crisis? Shake everyone up? It was difficult for me to hear God. As I walked in silence, I noticed many old, dead trees that had fallen, but they were still propped up by a few young trees. And because of this it would still be a long time before they would fall to the ground. And then the Lord spoke: "In my forest, changes are taking place slowly." In my spirit, I felt that He was warning me not to rush, and not to make drastic and radical decisions. I was very grateful to God for such wisdom.

Why don't you try it now? Take a few minutes to exercise: Palms down, palms up. When your soul has calmed down, pray, "Lord, is there anything you want to tell me?" Try to start your prayer with this simple exercise.