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HEARING GOD

THROUGH THE YEAR

A 365-DAY DEVOTIONAL



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WEEK ONE

Monday

Living for God's Words



Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

DEUTERONOMY 8:3

People are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, speaking and being spoken to by him. God's visits to Adam and Eve in the garden, Enoch's walks with God, and the face-to-face conversations between Moses and Jehovah are all commonly regarded as highly exceptional moments in the religious history of humankind.

Aside from their obviously unique historical role, however, these moments are not meant to be exceptional at all. Rather they are examples of the normal human life God intended for us: God's indwelling his people through personal presence and fellowship. Given who we are by basic nature, we live—really live—only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus by “every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Pray: Talk with God about the idea of having ongoing conversation. Tell God what truths you most need to hear from him regularly. Ask God to show you circumstances and places in which this conversation might occur most easily (praying, gardening, exercising or cleaning house).

Tuesday



Where Am I?

*The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.*

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:8 NRSV

*D*uring one Sunday dinner we discussed how the pastor felt God's guidance strongly regarding how the congregation would build a badly needed new sanctuary. He testified that God *spoke* to him about things that should be done. My wife's grandmother, "Mema," seemed deep in thought as we continued to chatter along. Finally she said quietly, "I wonder why God never speaks to me like that."

We all knew that Mema had a richly interactive life with God, so her question was not a sign of weak faith or rebellion. Worse yet, we could not explain how we knew when God was speaking. I was caught up in my own experiences of the workings of God's voice, but I did not understand it. I knew only its reality, and I thoughtlessly assumed this was a functioning, intelligible fact in every believer's life.

Understanding that we hear God and how it happens is important so that our confidence that we are fully acceptable to God is not undermined.

Reflect: *Where are you in the process of understanding how God speaks to you? If you believe you've heard God in your life, how did you know that? Why might you have discounted times God spoke to you? Ask God for guidance in pondering this.*

Wednesday



Helpers on the Journey

So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”

1 SAMUEL 3:9

*I*n his book *Confessions*, Augustine tells how in a distraught condition he “heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, ‘Take up and read; Take up and read.’” He could remember no child’s game with these words. In tears, “I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book and read the first chapter I should find.” He opened to verses that addressed his exact condition (Romans 13:13-14), which was immediately transformed.

The writings of great Christians of the past such as John Calvin and William Law help us identify experiences of God’s speaking, just as Eli helped Samuel. They assure us that the same Spirit who delivered the Scriptures to holy men of old speaks today in the hearts of those who gather around the written Word to teach and to learn.

Reflect: List people you could talk to about how they hear God in their lives. Don’t dismiss those who are quiet but communicate a calm sense of the presence of God. Choose one who would be easiest to talk to and approach that person.

Thursday



God, Our Teacher

*Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me
on a level path.*

PSALM 143:10 NRSV

*H*earing God. Some would say that's a presumptuous and even dangerous idea. But should we expect anything else, given the words of Scripture and the heritage of the Christian church? As Christians we stand in a millennia-long tradition of humans who have been addressed by God. The ancient Israelites heard the voice of their God speaking to them out of the midst of fire (Deuteronomy 4:33). A regular place of communion and conversational interchange between the high priest and God was established in the mercy seat over the ark of God (Exodus 25:22; Luke 1:11-21).

But the *individual* with faith among the Israelites also cried out expectantly to be taught by God (Psalm 143:10). Isaiah, who had firsthand experience of conversing with God (Isaiah 6), described the process this way: "Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. . . . The LORD will guide you continually" (Isaiah 58:9, 11 NRSV).

Meditate: *Read Psalm 143:10 aloud and sit in the words for a few minutes. Notice how personal this phrase is: "for you are my God." Relish that. Then ask God specifically what you need to be taught from his "good spirit."*

Friday



God's Home in Us

*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.
My Father will love him, and we will come
to him and make our home with him.*

JOHN 14:23

On the evening before his crucifixion, Jesus assured his little band of followers that although he was leaving them, he would continue to show himself to all who loved him. Judas Thaddaeus then asked just the right question: *How would this manifesting take place (John 14:22)?* Jesus replied that he and his Father would “come to them and make our home with them” (v. 23 NRSV).

The abiding of the Son and the Father in the faithful heart involves more than communication or conversation, but it surely does involve these too, in a manner and measure our Lord considers to be appropriate. It is simply beyond belief that two persons so intimately related as indicated in Jesus' answer would not speak explicitly to one another. The Spirit who inhabits us is not mute, restricting himself to an occasional nudge, a brilliant image or a case of goosebumps.

Meditate: *Reread John 14:23 aloud slowly. Shut your eyes and savor the idea of “home.” Why would God want to make a home in creatures such as us? Why would you want to have God make a home in you? What does this cause you to want to say to God?*

Saturday/Sunday *A Personal Relationship*



God has said,
“Never will I leave you
never will I forsake you.”

HEBREWS 13:5

Sometimes today it seems that our personal relationship with God is treated as a long-distance arrangement in which Jesus and his Father listen to us from afar—maybe nodding and smiling. In heaven each believer has a “sin” account, which God keeps wiping clean as Christ’s death pays each believer’s sin bill.

But doesn’t a personal relationship involve more than that? A mere benefactor, however powerful, kind and thoughtful, is not the same thing as a *friend*. Jesus says, “I have called you friends” (John 15:15) and “Look, I am with you every minute, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, paraphrase). It’s reasonable to assume that this personal relationship of friends would include individualized communication—words and ideas God communicates uniquely to each friend.

Meditate: *Slowly reread Hebrews 13:5 or another verse printed on this page. Say it aloud to yourself and pause. What word stands out to you? Pause again. Why do you think that word stood out? What might God be trying to say to you today?*

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