

## The Foundation to Hearing God

### *What is God Saying*

All great undertakings require groundwork. If you want to stand a chance at running a marathon you need to train, eat healthily and get the right equipment. Likewise, if you want to grow in the skill of discerning the voice of God, you need to lay down some foundations first.

Here are three foundations to discerning the voice of God:

**1. In order to discern the voice of God, you need to believe it is possible to discern the voice of God.**

This one is obvious, but it is worth making it explicit: if you want to do anything in life, you need to first believe it is possible to do it. Thankfully, we have lots of great reasons to believe it is possible to hear the voice of God. Philosophically, it makes sense that we can hear from God. (Follow [this link](#) for a more indepth look into that topic.) More than that, we have lots of examples from the Bible and everyday life of ordinary people hearing from God - hearing things that don't look to be projections of their own hopes and fears.

**2. In order to discern the voice of God, you need to be consistent.**

Once again, this goes for any new skill - you can't learn a new language if you only speak it once a year; you can't grow in generosity if you only give money away on the 30th of June; and you can't grow in your ability to discern the voice of God if you only turn to God when you've got a problem or a big decision to make.

There's two reasons for this.

Firstly, if you only try and discern the voice of God every couple of months or every couple of years when there's a decision to be made, you'll be rusty and struggle to do it. It's a skill that needs to be kept up.

Secondly, and most importantly, if you only turn to God for advice and help, are you actually interested in hearing from God? If that's how we operate, we might be interested in hearing God's advice and help but not really in hearing from God Himself. To want to hear from God is to want to hear from Him moment to moment, day to day, year to year - in the bad times and the good, when we want to and when we don't, when it is rewarding and when it isn't. To hear from God *is* to hear from him consistently.

**3. In order to discern the voice of God, you need a desire for God and an indifference of the heart.**

The biggest barrier to our hearing from God isn't the fact that God only very rarely speaks audibly; the biggest barrier to our hearing from God is *us*. It is our fears and shame and our strongly held desires and beliefs.

These things can stop us from hearing from God in the first place.

*(For example, if we are given the opportunity to move to a new city, but we are deeply afraid to do so, it is unlikely that we will spend the time asking God if we should take up the opportunity out of the fear that he would say 'yes').*

And they can also distort the voice of God, so we hear the wrong thing.

*(For example, if we really wanted to move to that new city, we might interpret a general sense of love from God as a sign that he wants us to move.)*

The best way to overcome this is to become aware of our shame, fears, beliefs and desires and do what we can to turn our hearts to God, so we might grow in our desire for him above all else. As we grow in our desire for God, we will develop what the Ignatians call 'an indifference of the heart' to everything else. That is, we will care less about the circumstances of our life, knowing that no matter the circumstances we will be with God, and that is what we desire above all else. An indifference of the heart frees us from tyranny to our desires and fears and allows us to listen to God. (And we can't muster an "indifference of the heart", we can always have an "indifference of the will", a declaration to God that while our fears and desires still lay heavily on our hearts, at the end of the day we choose for his will to be done.)

Belief, consistency and desire for God our foundational for human flourishing, discipleship *and* growing in our capacity to discern the voice of God.