

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 24, 2016
"Listening for God in the Bible"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

1 Samuel 3:1-10, Luke 5: 15-16, Psalm 139: 1-4, Psalm 46:10, 1 Kings 19:11-13

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

The precepts of Judaism in the ancient world taught that to look at God, utter his name, or even hear his voice would surely lead to one's death. **READ 1 Samuel 3:1-10.** Hannah's son Samuel helped the ailing high priest, Eli, with jobs around the tabernacle and made sure that the lamps did not go out before the sun came up. One day after closing down the tabernacle, Samuel was asleep and God spoke. Not recognizing the voice, Samuel ran to the elderly Eli, thinking it was him. When the voice continued to call Samuel, Eli told him to listen because it must be the Lord speaking. Samuel placed himself at the disposal of the one calling him. He was willing to serve, but he was confused about the identity of the one calling him.

- Why do you think Samuel has difficulty discerning God's voice from Eli's?
- What do you think your reaction would be if you heard God calling your name?

Pray and ask God to prepare your heart so you can hear Him calling you.

DAY 2

There are many instances in the Bible where God speaks a bold and clear message. During Jesus's baptism, God's voice boomed from the heavens and said, *"This is my Son in whom I am most pleased."* God spoke to Moses in the form of a burning bush. The Lord shouted to Abram, *"Pack up your wife Sarai because I'm moving you to a new town."* The risen Jesus, towered over Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road and said, *"Stop persecuting me! Leave my people alone. I'm calling you to be a mighty preacher to go and plant churches in my name."* If we heard the "booming voice of God," most of us would stop everything we were doing and listen. But most of us don't hear God's booming voice. For many of us, God is speaking more quietly like he did with Samuel. Read 1 Kings 19:11-13. Are you listening for God's "still, small voice"? Sometimes life causes too much chaos and the word from God you want to hear is overpowered by all of life's noise.

- What does it mean when God speaks to your friends or neighbors, but you can't hear him?
- Think about what it will take for you to slow down long enough to hear God's voice.

Pray and ask God to help you simplify your life. Ask for His forgiveness if busyness has been a stumbling block. Pray for help in quieting your life so that you can hear His voice.

DAY 3

Jesus' life was one of obedience, always listening to the Father, always attentive to His voice, always alert for His directions. Two voices shape our lives: The voice of the world and the voice of the Lord, both pulling us in two contrary directions. When we return to the place of solitude, away from the voice of the world, the voice of the Lord will gradually become stronger and we will come to know and understand the peace we are searching for with our mind and heart. What are we to do in our solitude? Nothing. We are to simply be present to the One

who wants our attention and listen. Doing nothing is not as passive as it sounds. It instead requires effort and great attentiveness.

- How much time and attention do you give God?
- When you are able to find a moment or place of quiet, what do you hear God saying?

Specifically set aside some time today to spend in solitude. Look at your schedule to see where you can regularly spend time in solitude, and commit that time to the Lord.

DAY 4

It can be difficult to listen wholeheartedly to God. Sometimes we hide ourselves from God because of fears or insecurities. We tend to present to God only the parts of ourselves that we are comfortable with. This causes our prayers and self-knowledge to become selective and narrow. By behaving as strangers before God, we become strangers to ourselves. God tends to speak to people who want to hear the truth from Him. He tends to offer divine direction to those who order their daily lives around hearing from Him. When we listen attentively and wholeheartedly, we will hear that quiet voice and come to recognize it as the voice speaking to the deepest places of our heart.

- In what ways do you hide from the Lord?

Pray for the courage to be completely vulnerable before God and thank Him for accepting you just as you are.

DAY 5

There is no doubt that Jesus' life was very busy. Jesus was so involved in his ministry that it became difficult to have any time alone. Yet he found a way to leave the crowd, withdraw from the pressing needs, and embrace solitude and silence. Alone with God in prayer, he could hear the spoken word directly from the heart of God. Solitary prayer was the source of his strength. Having been in the presence of God, Jesus was able to discern God's will not for a lifetime, but for the moment. After time set apart for solitude and silence, prayer and listening, he knew where to go, what to say, and what to do the rest of the day.

- Think about times you have needed clear direction from God. Were you able to discern his wishes?
- What is your source of strength?

Pray and ask God to help you embrace silence so that you would have the clarity to discern his will.

DAY 6

J.I Packer said, *"God, our Maker, knows all about us before we say anything (Ps. 139:1-4) but we can know nothing about Him unless He tells us. Here, therefore, is a further reason why God speaks to us: not only to move us to do what He wants, but to enable us to know Him so that we may love Him. Therefore God sends His word to us in the character of both information and invitation. It comes to woo us as well as to instruct us; it not merely puts us in the picture of what God has done and is doing, but also calls us into personal communion with the loving Lord Himself."*

- Is hearing from God a priority in your life?
- What choices can we make that will lead to knowing God better?

Pray and thank God that you have been trusted to hear, receive and carry His message of hope to a world in need.

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.