

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE | *Listening Prayer*

As we consider the voices that we are listening to and the influence they have on us, it's important to remember that the voice we need to listen to and be influenced by most is the voice of God.

Now, while this is a great-sounding *idea*, the simple truth is that very few if any of us would claim to be able to hear the audible voice of God. (*And as for those who do, we might suggest they see a professional about it!*) But the truth is, we were made to hear, not just *about* God, but directly from Him. That's what prayer is: a two-way dialogue with the God of the universe, where we both pour out our hearts to God, and quietly listen to Him as He pours out His wisdom, truth and love into our lives.

If this idea seems far-fetched to you, listen to this brilliant quote from the revered author, Dallas Willard:

“Hearing God? A daring idea, some would say--presumptuous and even dangerous. But what if we are made for it? What if the human system simply will not function properly without it? There are good reasons to think it will not. The fine texture as well as the grand movements of life show our need to hear God. Isn't it more presumptuous and dangerous, in fact, to undertake human existence without hearing God?”

Dallas Willard

The truth is, listening to God can seem silly, it can feel awkward, and often-times we may even walk away frustrated that it didn't "work". But listening to God, like anything else, is something that requires patience and practice.

So for the next few minutes, sit silently before God, listening for His voice. Get comfortable in your chair. If it helps, you might want to turn off or silence your phone. It's probably best to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths; try to relax and slow your mind, shutting out any interruptions.

There's a story in the Bible of a young child who God spoke to in the middle of the night. His name is Samuel and his mentor, Eli, taught him this simple practice as a way of inviting God to speak to him. He instructed him to simply pray, ***“Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.”*** (1 Samuel 3:9) and then wait quietly.

When your mind begins to wander, simply return to this prayer and let it guide you back to a posture of stillness, calm, quiet, and listening. Don't try to force anything. Don't assume you

already know what God might want to say to you. Simply quiet your own internal voice and wait for God to speak to your soul.

Try to sit for a couple minutes in silence.

That experience may have been really tough, or you may have found it life-giving. Maybe you heard God speaking to your heart, maybe you didn't, and maybe you're not sure. You might want to unpack this experience with another person or you may want to find some more time this week to dig deeper into the experience of listening. Learning to listen to God isn't something you will typically achieve in 2 minutes, but we encourage you to make this part of your daily quiet time. The more space we make for God, the more likely we are to hear from Him.