

The Next Step
A new series on discipleship

"Listen: Learning how to hear the voice of God"
John 10:27

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."
John 10:27 NIV

If I were to ask your spouse, your boss, your coach, your teacher, your colleague or your best friend to give you a grade as a listener from 1 to 10, 10 being the best listener, what grade do you think you would receive?

More importantly for discipleship, if God were to give you a grade from 1 to 10 for listening to him, what grade do you think you would receive?



Galleria mellonella: The Greater Wax Moth

The first line of a speech by Mark Antony in the play *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, occurring in Act III, scene II, is one of the most famous lines in all of Shakespeare's works: "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears."

What have you done with your ears; with the gift of hearing? And do you know how to listen for the voice of God?

How does one sharpen the skill of listening?

What would it look like to have your spiritual hearing checked?

Always remember, God wants to speak to you even more than your greatest desire to hear from Him.

Let me suggest four practical skills that can make anyone of us a better listener and more importantly a better disciple.

1. Great listeners use more than their ears.
 - Eye contact
 - Analytical engagement
 - Empathetic listening
2. Great listeners dial out distractions.
 - The danger of Sensory overload
 - The example of my maternal grandfather

- The do not disturb sign you hang out on your hotel doorknob
 - Turn off your cell phone and your television: if you text or twitter or facebook or watch television more than you converse, you're probably not a very good listener
3. Great listeners are engaging, responsive and interactive.
 - Confirm your understanding of what is being shared
 - Ask great follow up questions
 - Handle what you hear as a valuable investment
 4. Great listeners soak up the silence.
 - Resist the impulse to make noise
 - Quietness can enhance reflection, connection, interest

If you want to sharpen your spiritual listening skills, here are five places that will give you your best return on investment.

1. Listen while you worship
 - Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3)
2. Listen through your struggles
 - Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8)
3. Listen through your blessings
 - The transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:5)
4. Listen to your conscience
 - Acts 24:16; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Timothy 4:2
5. Listen to the Scriptures
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:105
 - The 4 "R's" request, read, reflect, respond

Perhaps you realize you need to be a better listener; hopefully your heart has been stirred to aspire to hear the voice of God distinctly and regularly. Whoever you are, you can become a great listener and you can learn to hear the voice of God. It's within your grasp. There was a remarkable display of courage and skill by a hearing impaired young woman last season on America's Got Talent. She completely lost her hearing and with it, lost her hope for a few years. But listen to this.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKSWXzAnVeO>

0:0 to 1:30; 1:56 to 3:25; 4:00 to 4:15

Would you lend God your ears this morning . . . along with your heart and your faith?