

Discerning the Voice of the Lord

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We are often asked, “How can I tell whether it is God speaking to me or the devil.” Now anyone who tells you it is easy is a novice. It is not easy because the enemy is subtle, and he knows us well. He is a master at deceit. There are no few quick tricks you can learn that will assure you that you will never be deceived. There are, however, some unvarying principles which you must learn and then you simply have to learn by experience to know the Master’s voice. All Christians have discernment by nature of the life of Christ that is within them. But it is a sense that must be exercised and developed through use. “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). As you begin to exercise these senses of discernment, you will make some mistakes; but every one of these mistakes teaches you something about the Lord and about the enemy. Jesus said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). There is no way to instant maturity. You grow and learn to know the Lord. But here are some guiding principles.

1. The Cross of Christ must have rendered you neutral so far as self-will is concerned. “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin that he might live the rest of his life not in the lusts of the flesh, but to the will of God.” Three times Christ prayed in the garden. “Not my will but thine.” You must truly rid yourself of all your personal goals and objectives. Especially treacherous are these high sounding religious goals and objectives and longings: i.e, a great ministry, power to witness, a special gift, etc. You must have truly presented yourself for Christ’s disposal according to Romans 12:1. It is only then that you can be pleased with what God says no matter what it is.

2. Know the truth. Get a good working knowledge of the Bible. The Holy Spirit does not cross himself by saying one thing in the Bible and then lead you to do something contrary to scriptural principles.

3. “Commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established.” Proverbs 16:3. Proceed in a normal course of life, trusting the Lord to establish and order your thoughts as he has promised to do for those whose only desire is to work the works of God. Trust Him to check you in spirit or in providence if you are about to take a wrong step. Listen to His voice. He is able to guide you. Give Him credit for doing what He has promised to do. You do not have to strain and fret over every little decision. He is more able to speak and cause you to hear than you realize.

4. In matters of great importance where there is no definitely revealed word, do not move until you are

constrained to. If there is uneasiness about the move, wait for a more sure word. God can make you certain. You can afford to wait until you are. You are not going to miss anything by waiting; and God is not going to scold or punish you while you are testing the spirits. Did He not command you to do so? Consider His patience with Gideon.

5. The Holy Spirit is consistent and persistent. God is immutable. He does not change. If, while waiting, you have a number of different impressions, each one seeming better than the previous one, throw them all out. The Holy Spirit leads you in only one direction. He will never change His mind about that. The same leadership will continue to persist until you obey.

6. The Holy Spirit does not drive and demand. It is the devil who puts you in a rush and demands that you act immediately. You will feel that if you take time to pray and wait that you will miss something. Do not listen to that spirit. It is not God but the devil. God will lead you and give you time to consider until you are fully persuaded. And there will be peace in the action, not pressure and torment.

7. Look for providence. God sponsors what He initiates. He provides the way and clears the obstacles. He opens the appropriate doors. The devil can cause hindrances, but he cannot stop what God has led you to do. As you proceed, God will confirm or He will stop you.

(This was taken from the book "Faith Cometh" by Conrad.)