

UNIT 1.B.: HEARING GOD'S VOICE

WHAT PREVENTS US FROM HEARING GOD'S VOICE?

Thinking We are Too Busy To Talk With God

It is often in the midst of being **overcommitted and overwhelmed** that we suddenly realize we need to spend time with God. It's frequently the case that we do things in a backward fashion. Instead of consulting God as an afterthought, we should have started our day asking for his guidance.

The enemy of our souls wants to distract us from talking with God. When we awake, we're often anxious about that day's activities and quickly direct our energy toward things that we hope will make that anxiety subside. It's often the case that we race through the entire day without stopping to ask for God's counsel.

However, the greatest antidote for anxiety is not ticking items off of a to-do list. Rather, it is knowing that I'm living my life in the will of God and walking in close relationship with him. If I can start my day with the assurance that I am acting within his will, it's possible for me to experience inner peace in the midst of trial and hardship.

When I think I'm too busy to talk to God, I need to ask myself **what activities are preventing me from talking with him.** What aspects of my life cause me to be so anxious that I'm distracted from a time of prayer? We are called to "stir up" the indwelling gift of the Holy Ghost that was given to us at confirmation.

2 Timothy 1:6:

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

The Flood of Information & Influences That Invade Our Lives

Today, we are bombarded by news and drama on television, streaming and social media on our cell phones, messages on our watches, home electronic devices, radio, etc. In this cacophony and tumult of words, **the enemy wants to drown out the voice of God.** We are again distracted by the many choices we have. Entertainment can distract us from the turmoil and even pain of this life, but only momentarily. News can make us informed citizens, or it can be used in an attempt to shape our thinking. We can give so much time to streaming that we never actually engage in real life.

In a world where so many different forces are vying for our attention, we must make a conscious decision regarding what we will allow to influence our lives.

Apathy

In an affluent society those who are doing well often do not see the need to hear God's voice. Money comes in. Time is filled with entertaining things to do. Seeking pleasure becomes the foremost priority (2 Nephi 12:9-12). The exhilaration that comes from entertainment and the comfort that comes from gluttony temporarily distract us from any problems in our lives. But those distractions and pleasures often do not last.

Instead of spending our energy filling our time with pleasure, **we could find a greater sustained joy in aligning our lives with God's purposes and serving others.** To do that, we must first desire to be with him and listen to his voice.

Ingratitude or Bitterness Toward God

For some of us it has been a rocky road. The pain and heartache of this life has been overwhelming. We sometimes waste our time comparing ourselves to others, seeing only what they have and we do not. Perhaps our lives have been so painful that we want to shake our fist at God and ask why. Perhaps we already made up our minds a long time ago that we know he doesn't answer prayer. Hope is extinguished. We might ask what's the use of even trying.

Ingratitude can lead to bitterness and then to cynicism. Our experience can shape our perception of who God is. In our cynicism we simply assume that God will not answer our prayers, or is not able to. Knowing what the scriptures say about who God is can help us focus on **God's character and attributes**, which will increase our faith, and give us hope, instead of despair.

To those who doubt, God says:

Matthew 7:12:

"Ask and it shall be given you."

Mosiah 2:13-20 (King Benjamin to the Nephites & people of Zarahemla):

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that **he created all things**, both in heaven and in earth. **Believe that he has all wisdom, and all power**, both in heaven and in earth. Believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you. And now, if you believe all these things, see that ye do them . . . **ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long suffering toward you unworthy creatures.**

Alma 3:76-80:

Behold, I testify unto you, that **I do know that these things whereof I have spoken, are true.** And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you, **They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God.** Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days, that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for **the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.**

WHAT CAN I DO TO BE IN TUNE WITH GOD'S VOICE?

First, I must come before God with a clear conscience and a pure heart (e.g., right desires). This may include removing worldly influences that tend to corrupt my thoughts or divert me from God's mission for my life.

Psalm 24:4-5:

He that hath **clean hands, and a pure heart**; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord . . .

Second, I have to be willing to ask.

Matthew 7:12:

Say unto them, Ask of God; **ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**

Third, I should exercise faith. If I just offer up a quick prayer to test God and see if he is there that is one thing. If I believe with all my heart that he is a God who answers prayer, that is a different matter. In doing this, I come expectantly before his throne with the assurance that he wants to bless his children.

Mark 9:45:

Seek unto my Father, and it shall be done in that very moment what ye shall ask, **if ye ask in faith**, believing that ye shall receive.

Hebrews 11:6:

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

Jeremiah 29:13:

And ye shall seek me, and find me, **when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**

Fourth, I should take time to listen. A quiet location is important. We want to remove every distraction from our environment. When our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, it should be recorded. So you might want to keep a journal of impressions that you receive from the Holy Spirit's counsel.

1 Samuel 3:10:

Speak, for thy servant heareth.