

YOU CAN HEAR GOD – USING A PRAYER JOURNAL TO HEAR GOD’S VOICE

There are many ways to hear God’s voice. One is by journaling because it makes it so easy to hear what God is saying and at the end of your time journaling you will have a record of what God said to you.

This technique for hearing what God is discussed in Mark Virkler’s article “You Can Hear God’s Voice!” [Below]

Mark Virkler was praying to learn how he could hear God’s voice. In fact, he even took a year off from his pastoral duties to focus on learning how to hear from God. During that year, Jesus finally came to him one night and woke him up with an audible voice and gave him four keys to effectively hearing God’s voice.

A brief summary of what Virkler shares in his article is that hearing God’s voice involves four keys:

1. Know what God’s voice sounds like
2. Become still with a worshipful attitude
3. Fix the eyes of your heart on Jesus
4. Journal in faith

Here are a few thoughts on the above points to get started. They’re not meant to replace Virkler’s article but to provide supplemental guidance.

Know what God’s voice sounds like

God can speak in different ways at different times to different people. A lot of people assume God would speak in an audible voice. He certainly can and does do that. But don’t assume that He will always speak that way to you.

In fact, if you consider that the eardrum receives vibration waves carried by the air and delivers a message to the mind, you have to wonder why almighty God would go to the trouble of sending his message through the air and then through the ear and finally into the mind when he can simply speak directly to your mind.

For many, he normally takes the shortcut straight to the mind so that ear doesn’t hear God’s voice but the mind receives his message. So, God’s words appear inside the mind like thoughts that are the thoughts of God.

When receiving a message from God, in this way, it comes as a thought quietly placed into the mind. Why “quietly”? Because there isn’t the energy of the mind’s wheels behind that thought since the mind didn’t generate it. That is why people talk about the “still, small voice of God.” God’s thought quietly appears in the mind, we write it down and a new thought from God takes its place.

Become still with a worshipful attitude

To hear God, we need to cut out the noise and activity. Don’t expect to hear from God while the TV blares and you’re rushing to get dinner on the table. God is best heard when you find a quiet, restful place and focus your heart on the adoration of God.

It's wise to start a journaling time with praise and worship that helps one tune into God's voice. If God's voice stops flowing into the mind, return to worship.

Fix the eyes of your heart on Jesus

To truly hear God, you must focus on Jesus who is our open door to heaven. Through him we have unlimited access to God — including direct communication with God.

You hear what you focus on. If you focus on your mind, you will hear your thoughts. If you focus on your problems, you will hear your worries. If you focus on your desires, you will hear your wishes. If you focus on Jesus, you will hear God.

One great way to focus on Jesus is to use your imagination to picture him and you in a scene you are comfortable with. For instance, you might imagine yourself sitting in a garden with Jesus sitting on a rock by you having a chat with you.

Journal in faith

What makes journaling such an effective way of hearing God is that it allows you to put aside your analytical thinking for a while and just have an attitude of faith while whole-heartedly listening to God.

We hear God by faith. As Mark Virkler points out, it is important to put aside any doubts while you are in the process of listening to God's voice. Just write. Don't analyze. When you're finished writing down your conversation with God, then you can go back and examine what you heard and see if it really is from God — but try not to enter this analytical process of judgment until you are finished hearing from God.

These four keys make hearing from God possible for us. It is recommended that you share what God tells you with a couple of your spiritual mentors who can help you confirm whether what you heard is really from God or not.

The above is an edited version of an article at: <http://therisinglight.com/2010/03/29/you-can-hear-god-journal-gods-voice/>

How to Hear God's Voice – By Dr. Mark Virkler

She had done it again! Instead of coming straight home from school like she was supposed to, she had gone to her friend's house. Without permission. Without our knowledge. Without doing her chores.

With a ministering household that included remnants of three struggling families plus our own toddler and newborn, my wife simply couldn't handle all the work on her own. Everyone had to pull their own weight. Everyone had age-appropriate tasks they were expected to complete. At fourteen, Rachel and her younger brother were living with us while her parents tried to overcome lifestyle patterns that had resulted in the children running away to escape the dysfunction. I felt sorry for Rachel, but, honestly my wife was my greatest concern.

Now Rachel had ditched her chores to spend time with her friends. It wasn't the first time, but if I had anything to say about it, it would be the last. I intended to lay down the law when she got home and make it very clear that if she was going to live under my roof, she would obey my rules.

But...she wasn't home yet. And I had recently been learning to hear God's voice more clearly. Maybe I should try to see if I could hear anything from Him about the situation. Maybe He could give me a way to get her to do what she was supposed to (i.e. what I wanted her to do). So I went to my office and reviewed what the Lord had been teaching me from Habakkuk 2:1,2: "I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me... Then the Lord answered me and said, 'Record the vision....'"

Habakkuk said, "I will stand on my guard post..." (Hab. 2:1). **The first key to hearing God's voice is to go to a quiet place and still our own thoughts and emotions.** Psalm 46:10 encourages us to be still, let go, cease striving, and know that He is God. In Psalm 37:7 we are called to "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." There is a deep inner knowing in our spirits that each of us can experience when we quiet our flesh and our minds. Practicing the art of biblical meditation helps silence the outer noise and distractions clamoring for our attention.

I didn't have a guard post but I did have an office, so I went there to quiet my temper and my mind. Loving God through a quiet worship song is one very effective way to become still. In 2 Kings 3, Elisha needed a word from the Lord so he said, "Bring me a minstrel," and as the minstrel played, the Lord spoke. I have found that playing a worship song on my autoharp is the quickest way for me to come to stillness. I need to choose my song carefully; boisterous songs of praise do not bring me to stillness, but rather gentle songs that express my love and worship. And it isn't enough just to sing the song into the cosmos – I come into the Lord's presence most quickly and easily when I use my godly imagination to see the truth that He is right here with me and I sing my songs to Him, personally.

"I will keep watch to see," said the prophet. To receive the pure word of God, it is very important that my heart be properly focused as I become still, because my focus is the source of the intuitive flow. If I fix my eyes upon Jesus (Heb. 12:2), the intuitive flow comes from Jesus. But if I fix my gaze upon some desire of my heart, the intuitive flow comes out of that desire. To have a pure flow I must become still and carefully fix my eyes upon Jesus. Quietly worshiping the King and receiving out of the stillness that follows quite easily accomplishes this.

So I used **the second key to hearing God's voice: As you pray, fix the eyes of your heart upon Jesus, seeing in the Spirit the dreams and visions of Almighty God.** Habakkuk was actually looking for vision as he prayed. He opened the eyes of his heart and looked into the spirit world to see what God wanted to show him.

God has always spoken through dreams and visions, and He specifically said that they would come to those upon whom the Holy Spirit is poured out (Acts 2:1-4, 17).

Being a logical, rational person, observable facts that could be verified by my physical senses were the foundations of my life, including my spiritual life. I had never thought of opening the eyes of my heart and looking for vision. However, I have come to believe that this is exactly what God wants me to do. He gave me eyes in my heart to see in the spirit the vision and movement of Almighty God. There is an active spirit world all around us, full of angels, demons, the Holy Spirit, the omnipresent Father, and His omnipresent Son, Jesus. The only reasons for me not to see this reality are unbelief or lack of knowledge.

In his sermon in Acts 2:25, Peter refers to King David's statement: "I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken." The original psalm makes it clear that this was a decision of David's, not a constant supernatural visitation: "I have set (literally, I have

placed) the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken” (Ps.16:8). Because David knew that the Lord was always with him, he determined in his spirit to *see* that truth with the eyes of his heart as he went through life, knowing that this would keep his faith strong.

In order to see, we must look. Daniel saw a vision in his mind and said, "I was looking...I kept looking...I kept looking" (Dan. 7:2, 9, 13). As I pray, I look for Jesus, and I watch as He speaks to me, doing and saying the things that are on His heart. Many Christians will find that if they will only look, they will see. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). It is as simple as that. You can see Christ present with you because Christ *is* present with you. In fact, the vision may come so easily that you will be tempted to reject it, thinking that it is just you. But if you persist in recording these visions, your doubt will soon be overcome by faith as you recognize that the content of them could only be birthed in Almighty God.

Jesus demonstrated the ability of living out of constant contact with God, declaring that He did nothing on His own initiative, but only what He saw the Father doing, and heard the Father saying (Jn. 5:19,20,30). What an incredible way to live!

Is it possible for us to live out of divine initiative as Jesus did? Yes! We must simply fix our eyes upon Jesus. The veil has been torn, giving access into the immediate presence of God, and He calls us to draw near (Lk. 23:45; Heb. 10:19-22). “I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened....”

When I had quieted my heart enough that I was able to picture Jesus without the distractions of my own ideas and plans, I was able to “keep watch to see what He will speak to me.” I wrote down my question: “Lord, what should I do about Rachel?”

Immediately the thought came to me, “She is insecure.” Well, that certainly wasn’t my thought! Her behavior looked like rebellion to me, not insecurity.

But like Habakkuk, I was coming to know the sound of God speaking to me (Hab. 2:2). Elijah described it as a still, small voice (I Kings 19:12). I had previously listened for an inner audible voice, and God does speak that way at times. However, I have found that usually, God's voice comes as spontaneous thoughts, visions, feelings, or impressions.

For example, haven't you been driving down the road and had a thought come to you to pray for a certain person? Didn't you believe it was God telling you to pray? What did God's voice sound like? Was it an audible voice, or was it a spontaneous thought that lit upon your mind?

Experience indicates that we perceive spirit-level communication as spontaneous thoughts, impressions and visions, and Scripture confirms this in many ways. For example, one definition of *paga*, a Hebrew word for intercession, is "a chance encounter or an accidental intersecting." When God lays people on our hearts, He does it through *paga*, a chance-encounter thought “accidentally” intersecting our minds.

So the third key to hearing God’s voice is recognizing that God's voice in your heart often sounds like a flow of spontaneous thoughts. Therefore, when I want to hear from God, I tune to chance-encounter or spontaneous thoughts.

Finally, God told Habakkuk to record the vision (Hab. 2:2). This was not an isolated command. The Scriptures record many examples of individual’s prayers and God’s replies, such as the Psalms, many of the prophets, and Revelation. I have found that obeying this final principle amplified my confidence in my ability to hear God’s voice so that I could finally make living out of His initiatives a way of life. **The fourth key, two-way journaling or the writing out of your prayers and God’s answers, brings great freedom in hearing God’s voice.**

I have found two-way journaling to be a fabulous catalyst for clearly discerning God's inner, spontaneous flow, because as I journal I am able to write in faith for long periods of time, simply believing it is God. I know that what I believe I have received from God must be tested. However, testing involves doubt and doubt blocks divine communication, so I do not want to test while I am trying to receive. (See James 1:5-8.) With journaling, I can receive in faith, knowing that when the flow has ended I can test and examine it carefully.

So I wrote down what I believed He had said: "She is insecure."

But the Lord wasn't done. I continued to write the spontaneous thoughts that came to me: "Love her unconditionally. She is flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone."

My mind immediately objected: She is not flesh of my flesh. She is not related to me at all – she is a foster child, just living in my home temporarily. It was definitely time to test this "word from the Lord"!

There are three possible sources of thoughts in our minds: ourselves, Satan and the Holy Spirit. It was obvious that the words in my journal did not come from my own mind – I certainly didn't see her as insecure *or* flesh of my flesh. And I sincerely doubted that Satan would encourage me to love anyone unconditionally!

Okay, it was starting to look like I might have actually received counsel from the Lord. It was consistent with the names and character of God as revealed in the Scripture, and totally contrary to the names and character of the enemy. So that meant that I was hearing from the Lord, and He wanted me to see the situation in a different light. Rachel was my daughter – part of my family not by blood but by the hand of God Himself. The chaos of her birth home had created deep insecurity about her worthiness to be loved by anyone, including me and including God. Only the unconditional love of the Lord expressed through an imperfect human would reach her heart.

But there was still one more test I needed to perform before I would have absolute confidence that this was truly God's word to me: I needed confirmation from someone else whose spiritual discernment I

Is It Really God?

Five ways to be sure what you're hearing is from Him:

1) Test the Origin (1 Jn. 4:1)

Thoughts from our own minds are progressive, with one thought leading to the next, however tangentially. Thoughts from the spirit world are spontaneous. The Hebrew word for true prophecy is *naba*, which literally means to bubble up, whereas false prophecy is *zyyd* meaning to boil up. True words from the Lord will bubble up from our innermost being; we don't need to cook them up ourselves.

2) Compare It to Biblical Principles

God will never say something to you personally which is contrary to His universal revelation as expressed in the Scriptures. If the Bible clearly states that something is a sin, no amount of journaling can make it right. Much of what you journal about will not be specifically addressed in the Bible, however, so an understanding of biblical principles is also needed.

3) Compare It to the Names and Character of God as Revealed in the Bible

Anything God says to you will be in harmony with His essential nature. Journaling will help you get to *know* God personally, but knowing what the Bible says *about* Him will help you discern what words are from Him. Make sure the tenor of your journaling lines up with the character of God as described in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4) Test the Fruit (Matt. 7:15-20)

What effect does what you are hearing have on your soul and your spirit? Words from the Lord will quicken your faith and increase your love, peace and joy. They will stimulate a sense of humility within you as you become more aware of Who God is and who you are. On the other hand, any words you receive which cause you to fear or doubt, which bring you into confusion or anxiety, or which stroke your ego (especially if you hear something that is "just for you alone – no one else is worthy") must be immediately rebuked and rejected as lies of the enemy.

5) Share It with Your Spiritual Counselors (Prov. 11:14)

We are members of a Body! A cord of three strands is not easily broken and God's intention has always been for us to grow together. Nothing will increase your faith in your ability to hear from God like having it confirmed by two or three other people! Share it with your spouse, your parents, your friends, your elder, your group leader, even your grown children can be your sounding board. They don't need to be perfect or super-spiritual; they just need to love you, be committed to being available to you, have a solid biblical orientation, and most importantly, they must also willingly and easily receive counsel. Avoid the authoritarian who insists that because of their standing in the church or with God, they no longer need to listen to others. Find two or three people and let them confirm that you are hearing from God!

trusted. So I went to my wife and shared what I had received. I knew if I could get her validation, especially since she was the one most wronged in the situation, then I could say, at least to myself, “Thus sayeth the Lord.”

Needless to say, Patti immediately and without question confirmed that the Lord had spoken to me. My entire planned lecture was forgotten. I returned to my office anxious to hear more. As the Lord planted a new, supernatural love for Rachel within me, He showed me what to say and how to say it to not only address the current issue of household responsibility, but the deeper issues of love and acceptance and worthiness.

Rachel and her brother remained as part of our family for another two years, giving us many opportunities to demonstrate and teach about the Father’s love, planting spiritual seeds in thirsty soil. We weren’t perfect and we didn’t solve all of her issues, but because I had learned to listen to the Lord, we were able to avoid creating more brokenness and separation.

The four simple keys that the Lord showed me from Habakkuk have been used by people of all ages, from four to a hundred and four, from every continent, culture and denomination, to break through into intimate two-way conversations with their loving Father and dearest Friend. Omitting any one of the keys will prevent you from receiving all He wants to say to you. The order of the keys is not important, just that you *use them all*. Embracing all four, by faith, can change your life. Simply quiet yourself down, tune to spontaneity, look for vision, and journal. He is waiting to meet you there.

You will be amazed when you journal! Doubt may hinder you at first, but throw it off, reminding yourself that it is a biblical concept, and that God is present, speaking to His children. Relax. When we cease our labors and enter His rest, God is free to flow (Heb. 4:10).

Why not try it for yourself, right now? Sit back comfortably, take out your pen and paper, and smile. Turn your attention toward the Lord in praise and worship, seeking His face. Many people have found the music and visionary prayer called “A Stroll Along the Sea of Galilee” helpful in getting them started. You can listen to it and download it free at www.CWGMinistries.org/Galilee.

After you write your question to Him, become still, fixing your gaze on Jesus. You will suddenly have a very good thought. Don't doubt it; simply write it down. Later, as you read your journaling, you, too, will be blessed to discover that you are indeed dialoguing with God. If you wonder if it is really the Lord speaking to you, share it with your spouse or a friend. Their input will encourage your faith and strengthen your commitment to spend time getting to know the Lover of your soul more intimately than you ever dreamed possible.

From: <https://www.cwgministries.org/Four-Keys-to-Hearing-Gods-Voice>

Journaling as a Form of Prayer

By Rev. Debra Walters (November 8, 2014)

Journaling is an active form of prayer that can have great benefits to your emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Prayer journaling not only changes you into becoming your best self; but it offers you a deeper appreciation for noticing and listening and hearing God’s wooing, warning and caring of you in the course of daily living a life of prayer and life as prayer back to God.

The art of journal or dairy writing has centuries of examples of those who participate in the action of writing ones thoughts, daily events, and forming a dialogue of progressive considerations in the pondering of ideas.

We all can recall the diary of Anne Frank. There are excerpts that historical fact finders use from the diaries of presidents to prove a political and religious viewpoint of their day. And there are journals that fill the blanks of history from a feminine point of view. (Most of history is after all told from his story more than hers.)

1. Use Journaling as a tool to wellness.

The journal writing I have done in the last five years stems from the influence of the 1970's to write for a wellness and balanced sake of self-reflection and emotional healing. Counselors and psychologists have utilized this genre for years.

This spiritual discipline of writing ones prayer journey will reveal clarity of healthier boundaries, toxicity of certain people or activities in your life, the need to put anger and forgiveness in appropriate perspectives, and what really makes you content/happy/blessed in that congruency of internal and external realities of being you.

2. Use Journaling as a spiritual dialogue

However, if we are clear about the purpose of journaling our story, our prayers, our thoughts, and the myriad of details that these areas provoke then the Bible itself is a form of journaling spiritual dialogue over a grief and loss that leads to wholeness and acceptance as in the book of Job. The story of Abraham and his family in Genesis 12-50 is the story of family dynamics and the beginning identity of a national identity told through story. The Psalms of David give us pause to reflect on God's sojourning with us in all our human emotions that are timeless and remain relevant. The Gospels give grand depth to reform and consideration of knowing a God that belongs to everyone and everyone can call God their Father as Jesus shared and showed.

Prayer journaling has similar attributes as the writers of biography, storytelling of ones events, capturing the emotions of a situation, and offering the ponderings of reflections. Since prayer is simply the act of talking with God; journaling prayers is inking the same words one would speak to God. The challenge in the writing of prayers or speaking them is in the art of listening to what God can offer through the Holy Spirit in this spiritual discipline.

3. Use your journal as a mirror.

The words written offer a glimpse into knowing yourself as God knows you. Within the willingness to write down the events that challenge repentance, forgiveness, acceptance, and wisdom; there is a mirror in the words that offer reality of who you are and whose you are in the writing. Again there is a dialogue in the written words of a prayer journal that requires a form of noticing God's presence with you.

4. Use your journal to learn from your inner and outer life.

Prayer journaling is a journey of growth and learning from all the thoughts, emotions, and duties of the day as it affects and opens up your internal world. There is only one goal in journaling ones prayers. It is the bringing together the congruency and consistency of your internal self with your external self. To be authentic to God – Self – Others is the definition of being comfortable in one's own skin as a whole soul. And prayer journaling is a part of that transformation in a spiritual prayer practice of journaling.

5. Think of journaling as writing a daily letter to God.

By writing something to God every day is like writing a letter. When we read Paul's letters to the churches there is a dialogue of defending himself as Apostle and leader in the faith. His letters hold the readers accountable to consider their relationships to God – Self – Others in the community of faith.

His letters encourage the readers to stay the course of their relationships to God – Self – Others with maturity and standards befitting one who would claim Christianity.

In prayer journaling, like Paul's letters, we can see the growth, accountability, encouragement, and changes within ourselves as we write to God the words that offer us the same consideration for accountability and encouragement.

6. Ask the Holy Spirit for God's wisdom and clarity.

In the deeper elements of prayer journaling it is important to pray for the Holy Spirit of God's wisdom to help you be clear and sure about the people, places, situations, circumstances, and search for where you and God the Father see God's will for you. And within your freewill to choose God's will; the prayer journaling can give you a compass and map of understanding and clarification.

7. Verify the conclusions of journaling with Scripture and wise counsel.

Prayer journaling is best balanced with the reading of scripture, seeking wise counsel of a spiritual director or pastoral counselor, reading other books for factual information on the subject you are praying through, and sharpening yourself with others who are trustworthy to be a prayer intercessor partnering with you and for you.

Prayer journaling has an endless level of positive attributes for dialoging with God in ink form. This form will lead to more informing and that will lead to transforming yourself into the human/divine soul that is uniquely and wonderfully you.

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The above at: https://prayerideas.org/how_to_pray/hearing-god/journaling-as-a-form-of-prayer/

Dialogue Journaling

by Lisa Miller-Rich (March 9, 2017)

Several years ago, God taught me a way to hear from Him. This is not the only way I hear from Him, but it was the on-ramp to all the other ways I now do. There is nothing mystical about dialogue journaling. It is simply a means to capture what prayer is: *Dialogue—talking and listening—between God and you.*

Below are some reasons I dialogue journal:

- When I need answers to big life-questions
- When I am seeking direction in the next season of my life
- When my emotions are stronger than my reason
- When I'm "full" and need to empty out in a safe place
- When I want my venting to lead to healing
- When I need to feel close to God and am struggling to do so
- When I want to "hang out" with Him and simply enjoy spending focused time with Him

The benefits of dialogue journaling for me:

- It helps me settle the question of "Is it me or is it God?"

- As I've done this over the years, it has trained me to know God's voice and how He talks to me
- My mind doesn't wander—especially in emotionally charged seasons
- It helps me truly see a conversation between God and myself
- I feel directed and have action steps

How to dialogue journal:

- Items needed:
 - Paper format
 - Blank pages of paper/Notebook
 - 2 colors of pen/pencil
 - Digital format
 - Computer/Tablet/Smart phone
 - Ability to highlight/type text in 2 colors
- Begin by choosing **your color** and **God's color**.
- PRAISE: When I have extended amounts of time, I begin by writing out my praise to God. It can take up a few lines or several pages. Write in your color.
 - One exercise I particularly enjoy is going through the alphabet and ascribing praise to God for each letter.
 - Another exercise I enjoy is customizing a scripture and writing out a prayer saying God's Word back to Him. The Psalms are powerful for this.
 - When time is more limited, I still begin with praising God. The idea being prayer ought to begin with where prayer began—Him.
- EMPTY: In your color, empty out what you need to communicate to God.
 - CONFESS – write out what you need to confess to God. Confess sins you've committed and any sins of omitting to do what you know He wanted you to do.
 - SHARE – I do this in a bulleted or numbered format. I list the things I need to talk to Him about. I don't worry about an order, I simply write down all that is on my mind and heart.
- PAUSE AND PRAY: At this point, I pause and ask God to choose what we'll talk about first from the list—and to have me add anything that He wants to discuss that I may not have written down.
- CONVERSATION: Through being quiet for a moment, I will know where to start. Sometimes I don't get a leading and I understand that God is, in effect, telling me to pick a topic and let's get going.
 - In my color of ink, I'll head a section with the item about which God and I will be talking first.
 - I write down my thoughts about the issue coming into the conversation—exactly the same as if God were sitting across from me.
 - As I write, a “new thought” will pop into my head. I change colors of ink to God's color and I write that thought down. I have learned not to overthink whether it's me or whether it's God. The test for that will be that anything I write in God's color will never contradict what He has revealed in His Word. This thought, for me, has come in a variety of forms, some of which are:

- Something I had not thought before regarding the issue
- A rebuttal to what I just wrote
- A challenge to what I just wrote
- A question of what I just wrote
- Something that makes me laugh at what I just wrote
- A confirmation that is not the way I would word it
- A scripture
- A call to remember God's past faithfulness
- A call to pause and be silent
- When I feel I have captured His thought, I switch back to my color of ink and reply to what He said. Sometimes I argue or question, sometimes I praise Him for His wisdom...it's an honest engaging in response to what God shared. This continues until I hear from Him again and I switch to His color.
- This back and forth continues until I am directed by Him that we've covered it.

When I look back and read through what I wrote, I can easily see the conversation I just had with God. I finish with asking the Holy Spirit to empower me to do what He's led me to in our prayer conversation.

The above at: <https://lisamiller-rich.com/2017/03/dialogue-journaling/>
