



I value independence, especially my own. I like my comfort as well. The problem with both of these valued ideals is that they often interfere with my ability to hear God. But I'm learning, and the most important thing I'm learning is that the sweetness of God's Living Word is infinitely more valuable than both of these things.

A Word for Our Lives

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. (1 Kings 17:2-3, NIV)

Do you want to be made well? Jesus' question to the lame man by the pool of Bethesda seems odd, but it is the same question God asks us when it comes to hearing his voice. Hearing others is one thing. Genuinely seeking to understand what they are saying is another. We tend to filter what we hear and let's be honest, when it comes to hearing God we're often afraid of what he might say.

After his appearance in Ahab's court, Elijah heard God directing him to an obscure and desolate place in the wilderness. Hiding out at the Kerith Ravine was no holiday at the Hilton, but it was the place prepared by God for his prophet.

Obstacles to Hearing God

The zeitgeist, or spirit of our age, places high value on two things – independence and comfort. Personally speaking, I value these things rather highly myself, but they can become obstacles to hearing God. In order to hear God's voice, we must follow the advice of

Scripture – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)

There is something else. Jesus made it clear that discipleship is not easy. Picking up our crosses and following him is the narrow road that leads to life eternal or, to put it another way, the life of the ages. This is the highest quality of life we can experience. In order to hear the Shepherd’s voice as he guides us to the green pastures and still waters where that life is found we must trust him. Like young Samuel, we must be willing to say, “Speak Lord for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9, NIV) Only then will we truly hear the still small voice of God as he lovingly whispers to the deepest part of our souls.

Sweeter than Honey

Please don’t misunderstand me. God’s voice is not the voice of doom and gloom. Hearing him is not painful drudgery. On the contrary, his Living Word is sweeter than honey from the honey comb. Most of the words God speaks to us are words of encouragement, comfort, and the love of a father for his children. *But in order to hear anything God says, we must be willing to hear everything he says.*

Elijah obeyed the voice of God. He spent six months in the desert heat beside a trickle of water that eventually dried up. He was alone, but solitude was not his only companion; God was there. He choked down food provided by unclean birds, ravens, but he also ate of the Bread of Life that nourished his soul. He may have been living in times of drought, but rivers of living water flowed from his inner most being.

Change is not easy for us, especially when that change involves relinquishing control of our lives. We really do desire green pastures and still waters. The problem is we’re searching in all the wrong places, willfully ignoring the voice of the Shepherd who lovingly longs to lead us in the right paths.

It’s your decision. God will never force you to listen. *Ears that do not hear* was not only a condition of many who heard the words of Jesus of Nazareth. But for those who are willing, the voice of God is the sweet tasting water that will bring life to our souls in these days of spiritual drought.

Think About It

1. As a way of learning to hear God's voice take a day and practice listening, really listening, to what others are saying. Allow their words to get past the filters of your beliefs, opinions, and convictions.
2. In your daily Bible reading ask God to speak to you directly. Don't hurry. Spend lots of time on a few verses or short passage. Read it several times. Pause, pray, and ask God to speak directly to your life. If you don't hear anything, don't worry. Continue this practice daily. You may be surprised at the time and place that God does choose to speak.
3. Recite the Lord's Prayer every morning for a week. (See Matthew 6:9-13) Say it slowly. Meditate on the words. As you ask for daily bread, remember the words of Jesus, who during his time in the wilderness reminded Satan that *mankind does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God.* (See Matthew 4:4)