

Living Worship



October 2011

All prayer is language—language in conversation, conversation between God and us. The most frequent distortion of prayer takes place when we fail to listen to God’s word to us. We do all the talking, demanding that God do all the listening.

Scripture provides the major way in which God speaks to us. Scripture is a huge story with many voices, but the primary voice is God’s voice. God has the first word. If we are going to get the story straight, it is important that we let God have the first word, and really listen; I mean really listen. Jesus’ story of the soils is a story about prayer. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

So if listening is required, silence is indispensable.

“But God doesn’t answer. Why don’t I get any answer?” It is the most frequent complaint regarding prayer. The obvious response is “Are you listening? Have you spent as much time listening as you have speaking?”

Scripture is not basically a book of information in which we learn about “the furniture of heaven and the temperature of hell.” It is not for the most part a history book in which we learn all about the cultures of the ancient East. And it certainly is not a science

text in which we are instructed in the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It is a conversation between God and God’s people—us. God creating us and God saving us, while we are given generous time to speak our belief and doubt, our praise and pain—whatever—and while we take our place in this marvelous story that comes together in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Eugene Peterson, Foreword to *Seeking God’s Face*

The din undoes us

Our lives are occupied territory...

Occupied by a cacophony of voices,
And the din undoes us.

In the daytime we have no time to listen,

Beset as we are by anxiety and goals and assignments and work.

And in the night the voices are so confusing
we can hardly sort out what could possibly be your voice from the voice of our mothers and fathers

And our best friends and our pet projects, because they all sound so much like you.

Illumination
"I'm Listening, Lord"
God's Word in Our Hearts
Psalm 119:9—16

We are people over whom that word *shema* has been written. We are listeners, but we do not listen well.

So we bid you, by the time the sun goes down today
Or by the time the sun comes up tomorrow, by night or by day, that you will speak in ways that we can hear out beyond ourselves. It is your speech to us that carries us to where we have never been, and it is your speech to us that is our only hope.


So give us ears. Amen
Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth,
Prayers of Walter Brueggemann

God Speaks Through

- His Word
- His Spirit
- His Creation
- His Servants

We Listen Through

- Ears
- Eyes
- Heart



Why is it important to listen to God?

Why is listening difficult?

How can we overcome distractions?

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Daily Scripture Readings to Teach us About Illumination “I’m Listening”

						1 <i>I Sam 3:1-10</i>
2 <i>I Peter 2:9, 10</i>	3 <i>Psalms 46:8-11</i>	4 <i>John 16:12-16</i>	5 <i>Mark 4:1-20</i>	6 <i>Revelation 3:19,20</i>	7 <i>Ephesians 1:15-19</i>	8 <i>Exodus 3:1-6</i>
9 <i>Psalms 119:9-16</i>	10 <i>Job 37:1-5</i>	11 <i>Isaiah 44:1-5</i>	12 <i>Isaiah 55:1-3</i>	13 <i>Psalms 85</i>	14 <i>Psalms 139:1-18</i>	15 <i>John 14:25-27</i>
16 <i>I John 3:1-3</i>	17 <i>Ephesians 3:14-21</i>	18 <i>Romans 8:38, 39</i>	19 <i>Jeremiah 29:11-13</i>	20 <i>Hebrews 3:1-15 and 4:14-16</i>	21 <i>Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29</i>	22 <i>Jeremiah 33:2-3</i>
23 <i>Luke 10:38-42</i>	24 <i>Eccles. 5:1-7</i>	25 <i>James 1:22-25</i>	26 <i>Prov. 3:1-12</i>	27 <i>Matt 17:1-5</i>	28 <i>John 10:1-18</i>	29 <i>Luke 8:16-18</i>
30 <i>Deut. 6:4-9</i>	31 <i>Kings 19:9-13</i>					

Speak, O Lord

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in your likeness;
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All your purposes for your glory.*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your church is built,
And the earth is filled with your glory.*

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Toward Transformation

If in listening to God we've merely been looking for more information, we've been missing the whole point. It's not about what you know and how much you know. It's about who you know. It's not merely about information but more about transformation. Listening to God and for God is about having our lives changed by his presence.

When was the last time you set aside an entire evening and said to God, "I'm listening?" Is it because we don't trust God to speak

to us? Is it because we're afraid of what we might hear?

When we begin listening to God, the Bible teaches us He will always move us beyond knowledge toward transformation. He knows who we are, he knows how we live, He knows where we get stuck, and yet He wants to speak to us. My prayer for you and challenge to you is to tell God this week, really tell Him, "I'm listening," and then sit back, quiet your heart and your mouth, and do just that. Listen to Him.

Peter Choi, CICW VH resources

Check yourself today. Can you ride in the car without the radio on? Can you go for a walk without being plugged into some source of noise? What would it take to be still and silent? Listening requires peace, quiet, waiting and patient perseverance. These things are so hard today! God is the one thing in life today who comes at us *slowly*.

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