

Spiritual Formations Questions for Small Groups and Families

"Listening to God" (1 Samuel 3)

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

1. Have you ever sensed that God was sending a clear message to you? If so, was it something for you to do? Or something for you to know? Was it a message of warning? Or assurance?
2. If you sensed that God wanted you to do something, what was it?
 - a. What was the context? What was happening? What were you doing or considering?
 - b. What was the difficulty? Was there anything challenging or scary about God's direction?
 - c. What was the result? Did you end up believing you had received God's direction?
3. You may know somebody who is constantly saying that the Lord said this or that to her/him. That person may not claim to have heard a voice but all the same seems to have constant clear direction in the everyday nitty-gritty. How do we discern what God has said and what is our own wishful thinking or impetuous judgment?
 - a. What are some of the venues through which God directs?
 - b. What are some of the indicators that he probably has?
 - c. Are there ever false positives or false negatives? Can you think of any examples?
4. What are some of our self-induced impediments to hearing God's "voice?"
5. Sometimes God seems silent. Why might that be?
6. Have you ever hesitated to sincerely ask God for direction because you were afraid of what he might say?
7. Ruth Haley Barton in *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* challenges us to approach God in prayer with an attitude of quiet listening. She writes (p. 35) "Reliance on our own thoughts and words, even in our praying, can be one facet of a need to control things...." How do you respond to this?
8. During this season we have invited the church to respond to "The Psalms Challenge." How might meditatively reading the Psalms sharpen your spiritual ears?

Good books for more on the subject:

Invitation to Solitude and Silence (Ruth Haley Barton, Inter Varsity Press)

Hearing God (Dallas Willard, Inter Varsity Press)