

In the Gospel accounts we get to see first hand what it was like for the perfect human, Jesus, to listen to the voice of the Father. There is a lot we can learn from how Jesus talks to and listens to God in prayer, but notice that there are only a couple times in the Gospel accounts where the Father audibly speaks to Jesus. The majority of the time Jesus hears his Father speak inaudibly and internally by the Spirit. Why is that? We don't know for sure, but it certainly does show us that this was normal for Jesus, and that it can, therefore, be normal for his followers.

We often express our prayers out loud to the Father, yet hear the response silently in our minds as God's thoughts mingle with our thoughts. If we are honest, sometimes it can be intimidating to ask God to speak. What kinds of things can we expect the Father to say?

Like with prophecy described in 1 Corinthians 14v3-4, the goal of the Father in listening prayer is always to strengthen, encourage, and comfort. If the Spirit does show us where something is off in our life, he calls us to repentance – not in shame, but to bring us to a place where we can experience more of his love and refreshing in our lives.

As you begin, remember that all of relationship with God starts and ends with God being good and loving. Imagine yourself as a child crawling up into the lap of your good Father, who loves you unconditionally. He wants nothing more than to be close to you and remind you of his love.

## AS A GROUP

Have one member of the group sit in the middle of the room. This will be the person you are going to listen on behalf of. This is simply a time to ask the Father what he wants to say about the person. You are asking for God to encourage them and to speak edifying words over them.

1. Start by asking Jesus to silence all other distractions in our minds, any spirit that isn't the Holy Spirit, etc – so that you can only hear the voice of the Father.
2. Ask the Father to give you a word, picture, Scripture, or a song for the person. Take turns sharing what you hear.
3. Ask the person if the things being shared make sense to them and if they are able to receive them. (i.e. Do they believe what the Father is saying to them through the Community?)
4. Ask the Father some follow up questions:
  - What do you want us to know about this?
  - Is there anything else you want to say to them?
5. Remember: This is a time to bless the person and affirm the Father's love over them.

## ON YOUR OWN

1. Start by asking Jesus to silence all other voices in the room, so that you can only hear the voice of the Father. Specifically ask Jesus to silence the voice of our enemy and any demonic forces. Also, ask Jesus to quiet any of the distracting thoughts in your mind.
2. Begin with forgiveness. Ask the Father to bring to mind anything you don't feel forgiven for. If there is anything, imagine taking it to the cross and leaving it there. Then ask the Father if there is anyone you need to forgive. If there is, imagine releasing this person and any offenses.
3. Invite God to bring to mind what he wants to address. Perhaps explore some of these prompts:
  - Is there anything I believe about myself that is not true? What does the Father want to replace it with?

- Ask the Father if there are any other things that he want to speak to you about.
- 4. When the Father brings something to mind, ask some follow up questions:
  - What do you want me to know about this?
  - Is there anything else? (Don't be afraid to wait longer and just enjoy the time of stillness in the presence of the Father.)
- 5. Here are a couple common frustrations when doing listening prayer:
  - What if you ask God to speak and there is nothing or you see just blackness in your mind's eye? If this is the case then ask the Father, "What do you want me to know about this?" Perhaps the blackness is an invitation into peace or rest. Press in and wait in his presence.
  - What if it's really hard to focus? Ask the Father, "What do you want me to know about this?" And remember that this is a Practice, it can take some time.
  - If you are not hearing anything, ask the Father if there is a Scripture that He wants to bring to mind.
- 6. Remember that, overall, this is a time to be deepening your relationship with the Father. Maybe this is just a time to relax with the God and receive his love.