

How to Hear God's Voice in Prayer

Beth Davis

Hi friends. I'm Beth Davis. And today I want to talk to you all about hearing God's voice in prayer. But first let's entrust everything to Our Lady.

Hail Mary

In the name of the Father and Son, and of the Holy Spirit Amen. Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary mother of God pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

“Pray with Them”

So, a few months ago, I was praying in my usual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. I had my little journal with me, I had my Bible, but not long into my Holy hour. A couple of young people came in and sat just a few rows in front of me. And almost as soon as they sat down, I heard the Lord say in my heart, pray with them. It was very simple. It was not so much an audible voice as a deep understanding. It was almost like I knew God was asking me to pray with them. And yet I kind of pushed up against that. I pray in this chapel all the time. There are plenty of people who come in, some of whom are really upset. And I've never before felt the Lord say pray with them. So, I waited, and to be honest hesitated a little bit. But as I kept praying, I found that I couldn't get away from that thought, that inclination that prompting if you will, to go and pray with these two young people.

So as soon as they finished their prayers, one left and then the other. I tried to pretend like I wasn't going to get up and pray with them. Do you know what I mean? When you kind of, you try to test it a little bit like, Oh that was probably nothing. But no like, I couldn't get away from it. So, I followed them out of the chapel, and as they were leaving the church, I just said, "Hey, I'm Beth, "and I wondered if maybe you'd like to pray with me." And they came up to me and shared that they had just found out that they were facing an unexpected pregnancy. And it was such a beautiful moment. Such a beautiful experience of the love, the mercy of Jesus, the reality of His Holy Spirit, His kindness toward these young people at an imperative moment. All because I heard the Lord in my heart, and I obeyed.

Following God's Voice

And I want to talk to you today all about how to hear from God, more confidently, more regularly in prayer. It's an exciting thing when we follow God's voice. When we have a regular routine of prayer, we become more sensitive to God's voice and our life becomes more vivid,

more vibrant. And that's what I want to hold out to you today. That's what I'm inviting you to, today.

God is Speaking to Us

But I think we have to start with a kind of a presupposition. Right, you and I, we have to agree about something first. And that is that God is speaking to us. That God is still speaking to us and that you can hear Him. Do you believe that? That God is still speaking and that you can hear Him. Now, I want to share with you that I came to that conclusion, that belief, because Jesus Himself said it in scripture. In the gospel of John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me." "My sheep hear my voice." "My sheep hear my voice." That means, that we have the ability to hear Him. And how can we hear Him? Why do we hear Him? Because He is still speaking. Hearing God's voice is a part of the deal. It's a part of your inheritance, your right. As a Catholic Christian is to hear God's voice.

But I think it's important that as we set out and talk about how to discern when it's God, when it's ourselves, when it's the world or even the enemy. It's important to first get an understanding of what I mean by hearing God's voice. I think we might need to broaden our definition and define our terms. What do I mean when I say God's voice?

The Holy Mass

Well, I want to suggest to you, that God's voice comes to us in many and varied ways. Primarily we hear God's voice in his Holy Word, in the scriptures. If you want to hear God's voice, get in the Word, read the Word. In fact, you'll discover something beautiful that as you get to know the voice of God in the word, as you come to understand how He speaks, how He spoke before, His word will even come back to your memory. The Holy Spirit Jesus tells us in the gospel of John, is the great reminder. So even as we read scripture, even if we're not intending to memorize it or to study it. Every time you go to Mass and simply hear the word of God, a seed is planted in your heart and the Holy Spirit can come and bring that word to remembrance at just the right moment. So, if you want to hear God's voice, get in the word. Okay, so that's one way that we hear God's voice, is in the scripture. How else do we hear God's voice?

Through the Church

Through the Church. We hear God's voice in the Church. And I mean that through the magisterium, through the teaching authority the Church. I mean that through our Priests, our Bishop. I mean, that through the ministry that the church gives us. I mean that in the Mass. God is always speaking to us in the Holy sacrifice of the Mass. God is still speaking in and through the Church. Okay, but let's zoom out a little bit, right? Those might be obvious answers, God's speaking to us in the word. He's speaking to us in the Church.

Through People

Where else is God speaking to us? He speaks to us through other people. You've experienced that. Not, only through very Holy people but sometimes we can even be surprised when a small child says something that pierces our heart, or a perfect stranger strikes up a conversation and says something that just hits right. It's exactly what we needed to hear, right? That is the Holy Spirit at work, speaking through the voice of other people.

Through Our Desires

How else does He speak to us? He speaks to us through our desires, right? Saint Ignatius talks about how to discern and understand our own desires, and how God is at work and speaking through them. Yes, sometimes, oftentimes they need purifying, but God absolutely speaks to us through our desires. He speaks to us through creation. He speaks to us through songs on the radio. He speaks to us through rainbows. We see that in the Old Testament, right? He will speak to us in a language that we understand. In all of those things that are special and meaningful to you, right? That you see a billboard or a bumper sticker or a butterfly, right? Whatever that special language is that you have with the Lord, He knows your heart. And He will appeal to you in the language of your heart. A language that you understand. Isn't that exciting? It's not a narrow way that God speaks to us. It's not only lightning bolts and a thundering voice from heaven. God speaks to us in our hearts.

Give Him Permission

So, we've got to kind of shake off this idea that God only speaks to us in audible ways, right? With the ears, actual ears of our head. And instead, begin to understand that God speaks to us and we hear Him with the ears of our hearts. Okay, so as you spend time with God in prayer you become more sensitive to God's voice. And guess what? The good news, the amazing news is that God is already speaking to you. He's already speaking to you in a language that you understand through the circumstances of your life. I want to give you that permission, that freedom, that confidence today, to begin to understand and believe that when things appeal to your heart, when you feel like God is to you. I want you to give Him the credit and believe that He is speaking to you and that you can hear Him.

Avail of Your Grace

Well, let me presuppose all of this with something that I'm sure you know. But will serve as a good reminder. If you're struggling to hear God's voice, right? The very first thing, the most important thing we can do, if we want to tune that spiritual sense of hearing is to be in a state of grace. So here is your Lenten invitation and reminder to avail yourself of the grace of the sacrament of confession. You won't regret it. God is waiting to receive you with mercy, with love, with wide open arms. And as we stay close to Jesus in the sacraments, in the sacrament of confession, receiving Him in the Eucharist at Mass, right? We will become even more sensitive

to His promptings. So be in a state of grace. And then, as you begin to hear God to sense God's Holy Spirit, what we might call promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Three Simple Steps

I want to give you three simple steps for discerning if it's God's voice. Okay, three simple steps. This has been for me a litmus test. When I've heard something in prayer, and I've wondered. Huh, was that just me? Is that just because I heard someone else say that? Is that the Lord? Three simple steps?

The first is, *does it agree with God's Word?* Does it agree with God's Word? Now you can know this. You can test this. If you're spending time in God's Word. If you hear the Lord say to you, I love you. You can be sure that's the voice of God. If you hear God say I'm with you. I'm right here, I will never leave you. You can be sure that's God's voice. How can I promise you that? Because Jesus Himself says it in the scriptures.

God promises these things to us in the scriptures in Jeremiah 31:3, He says, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*" Of course, He loves you. Of course, He's saying, I love you. At the ascension, Jesus says to the disciples, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." So, if you feel God's saying, if you hear God saying, I'm with you, I'm right here, you're not alone. That's good discernment. You're hearing God's voice. It agrees with His Word. If you want to open up your spiritual hearing, and hear God more specifically, more readily, get in the word, right? I'm not going to stop saying that during this talk, get in the Word. So, if it agrees with God's Word, you can be confident that this is the voice of God, right?

The second way, that the second step I have for testing something I hear in prayer is pretty simple, It's, *does it sound like Him?* And this had to be developed over time for me, because I approached scripture and I approached my relationship in prayer with the Lord with a real insecurity. I had a lot of fear that God was mad at me, that I was inconveniencing Him. And what I began to learn over time and with experience is that God is always kinder than I would ever be to myself. In fact, I found that I'm oftentimes still surprised by God's kindness. Surprised by His answer. I come to prayer and I think I know how God will reply. I think I know what I need. I think I know what God will say. But especially as I get in His presence before the blessed sacrament, I hear God's tenderness, His kindness, His patience. I think tone is so important in prayer.

So, if ever you send something in prayer and there's a little edge to it, a little conviction, a little guilt, a little shame, right? I would be very cautious about fully receiving that. I would test that. I would bring that to the Lord. Lord, is that you? Because I'm feeling a little defensive. That's not to say that God doesn't correct us or discipline us. In fact, in Hebrews 12:6 it says, "*That the father disciplines, those He loves.*" But my experience of the discipline of God is actually that it brings joy. It brings peace. It's almost a relief when God calls me on to holiness. There's never any condemnation in the discipline of God, only conviction and conviction is a good burn. So, step number two, does it sound like Him?

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And finally, number three, *does what you're hearing in prayer, bring peace?* Supernatural, transcendent peace. A peace that surpasses all understanding. Maybe God's inviting you to take a risk, and you're not sure on a human level, how all of that is going to work out. Maybe He's asking you to step forward in a commitment in a relationship, or to maybe step back and put up some boundaries in a relationship. Those things might in our humanity, feel a little bit scary or overwhelming. And yet, if we sit with it, if it comes from the Lord, it will be accompanied by a deep sense of spiritual peace. Peace, St. Paul talks about this. When he tells us about the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5, *"They are love, joy, peace."*

So, whenever we listen for, and pay attention to our spirit in prayer, God's voice will always be accompanied by love, joy or peace. Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 7:16, *"That we will know them by their fruits."* So, if ever you're wondering, was that God? Was that me? Am I taking on something someone said to me and trying to shine it up and make it Holy, right? Am I forcing something? Look at the fruit. What's the fruit? Is the fruit of what you're hearing in prayer, fear, anxiety, shame? Do you want to withdraw or hide? Or is the fruit love, joy or peace?

Encouraging You

Okay, so to sum it all up, right, I know that was a lot. To sum it all up, I want to encourage you that if you want more of God's voice in your life, if you want to experience more of His presence in your everyday life, get in the word, get to confession and meet Him in prayer every single day. Not because you have to, but because Jesus loves you and He desires to speak to you. *"My sheep hear my voice."* We hear His voice in prayer, in daily prayer.

God bless you friends. Happy, praying. Bye now.