

Deeply Rooted in the Discipline of Listening Prayer

Do You Have Selective Hearing?

When my kids were little they all had a similar problem. I would call to them when it was time to stop playing, but they weren't able to hear me. I would tell them it was time to clean up, and they didn't respond. When I asked the pediatrician about my kid's hearing, he smiled at me and simply said, "It isn't a medical problem. It is a self-will problem." My kids' ears and hearing worked just fine, physically. They were choosing to not listen. As the kids got older, the problem reappeared. I would call out into the house saying "Time for dinner" and no one came to the table. When I would angrily go up to the child and get their attention and tell them I had called them for dinner, their answer was usually the same, "Sorry, Mom. I didn't hear you."

Selective hearing is a human condition. We all choose what we hear and what we don't hear. In the Bible, the Hebrew word for "listen" is *shema*. *Shema* means to really pay attention, to act on a request. Listening is not merely hearing, but doing. *Shema* means to obey God's commandments. Listening is demonstrated by obeying and responding to what God has said.

The most famous character in the Bible who had a selective hearing problem was Jonah (you probably know the story). He clearly heard God tell him to go to Ninevah and preach the message of God. Jonah decided to not listen to God and chose to go in the opposite direction to Tarshish. A storm came, Jonah ended up being throw overboard, and swallowed by a large fish. In the belly of the fish, not knowing he would ever get out alive, he decided to respond to God with a yes. The fish swam to the shore of Ninevah, and spit Jonah out. God spoke to Jonah a second time, and this time he listened and did what God asked him to do. It would have been so much easier for Jonah to choose to listen to God and obey.

Now, I might not be as blatant as Jonah, but there are times I hear the Lord speak to my heart, and I choose not to obey. As I am reading His Word, there are things that "jump off the page" and hit me in the gut, convicting me of when I am not living up to what God's word requires. For example, if I read a verse about forgiving one another, and I feel uncomfortable, and instantly a person comes to my mind, that is God speaking to me telling me to forgive the person. I am ashamed to admit it, but sometimes I ignore the Lord's nudging and go about my way. (I know I am not the only one). I might as well be a little child who puts their fingers in their ears and says "I can't hear you." On the other hand, there are times that God speaks to me through His Word, and when I feel the uncomfortableness I respond to what God is telling me.

Eugene Peterson paraphrases James 1:22 this way: ***Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!*** What great advice. When God speaks, act on what He says! God wants responsiveness, not selective hearing.



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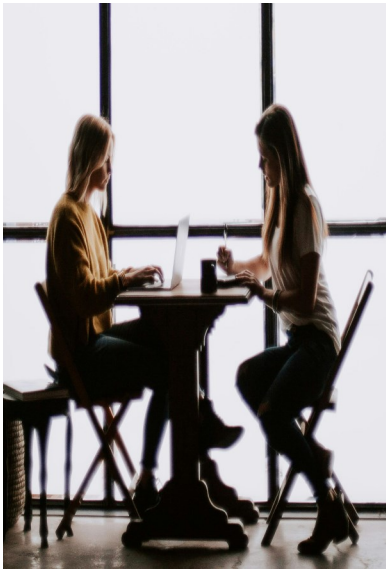
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Territorial Women's Ministries Department

Commissioner Colleen Riley—
Territorial President
of Women's Ministries

Colonel Genevera Vincent—
Territorial Secretary
for Women's Ministries

Major Beth Desplancke—
Territorial Women's Ministries
Program Secretary



Conversation Starters

Here are some conversation starters to help guide your discussion about listening prayer.

- ◆ What makes for a good conversation between you and another person? Are those same qualities evident in your prayer life with God?
- ◆ What is your greatest difficulty in the idea of listening to God in prayer?
- ◆ Are you comfortable with silence? Why or why not, and what effect does that have on your spiritual life?
- ◆ How much of your time with God is spent in listening rather than in speaking?
- ◆ How, where, and when do you listen for God's voice?
- ◆ How does God typically speak to you (through prayer, the Bible, worship music, other people, all of the above)?
- ◆ Think of a time when you've been sure you have heard the Lord. What made you sure?
- ◆ What do you feel like God is saying to you this week?

“What hinders me from hearing is that I am taken up with other things. I am devoted to things, to service, to convictions, and God may say what He likes but I do not hear Him.” Oswald Chambers

Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you be rooted in the discipline of listening prayer: <https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: This month's Bible study consists of *Prayer Stations*, to guide you in the Word and in prayer.

Blog: *Speak, for Your Servant is Listening* by Major Beth Desplancke

Devotional: Captain Irene Castro shares *11 Powerful Daily Prayers to Help you Start your Morning Off Right*.

Craft: *Haku Lei Making* by Lt. Helen Reyes

Listening Through Stillness

Often we think of prayer as a monologue. We come to God with our praises and petitions. We spill out our words to the Lord, and then quickly say an “Amen” and go about our day. It is interesting to note that the word “listen” and the word “silent” are anagrams. Both consist of the same letters, just placed in a different order.

Prayer is supposed to be a dialogue, where we talk and God listens, and then we allow God to talk and we listen. Emily Vanden Heuvel says, “Listening Prayer is simple: find a quiet place, read God's Word, sit silently and listen.” It may be simple, but it takes some practice. This month, before you have your prayer and Bible reading time, begin your time with God with stillness.

Find a quiet place, and silence any noise that you can. Sit in a comfortable position. Set you're a timer for 5 minutes (at first, this is going to feel like a really long time). Close your eyes and simply be still, and silent. Do not speak, look around, or wiggle. Just be still. When you mind wanders say to yourself, “Be still.” Let the word “still” fill your mind.

When the timer goes off, write down whatever thoughts or impressions came to your mind. Perhaps a word, a picture, a verse, or a song lyric came to your mind. Maybe you had a feeling, or a person's name came to you. Spend time praying about what the Lord laid on your heart. If a verse came to your mind, look it up, spend time reading and meditating on that verse. If it was words to a song, listen to the song, really think about the lyrics (looking them up helps).

As you get more comfortable with the practice of stillness, extend the amount of time you sit in stillness, and simply listen to what the Lord has to say to your heart.



God is speaking. Are you listening?

Flourishing in the Word

This month we are going to look at characters in the Old Testament who God spoke to directly. Note how they responded. What lessons can you learn from them about listening to God?

Sept 1	Genesis 2:4-25	Sept 16	Numbers 12:1-16
Sept 2	Genesis 3:1-24	Sept 17	Numbers 20:1-13
Sept 3	Genesis 6:1-22	Sept 18	Joshua 1:1-19
Sept 4	Genesis 7:1-10	Sept 19	1 Samuel 3:1-21
Sept 5	Genesis 11:27-12:9	Sept 20	1 Kings 17:1-24
Sept 6	Genesis 12:10-13:4	Sept 21	1 Kings 18:1-16
Sept 7	Genesis 13:5-18	Sept 22	1 Kings 18:17-46
Sept 8	Genesis 15:1-21	Sept 23	1 Kings 19:1-18
Sept 9	Genesis 16:1-16	Sept 24	Jeremiah 1:1-19
Sept 10	Genesis 17:1-27	Sept 25	Hosea 1:1-11
Sept 11	Genesis 18:1-33	Sept 26	Hosea 2:1-23
Sept 12	Genesis 22:1-19	Sept 27	Hosea 3:1-5
Sept 13	Exodus 3:1-22	Sept 28	Jonah 1:1-17
Sept 14	Exodus 4:1-17	Sept 29	Jonah 2:1-3:10
Sept 15	Exodus 4:18-31	Sept 30	John 4:1-11

Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

Anacortes, WA held their annual basket auction fundraiser and doubled their income from last year!
Clovis, NM participated in the 40 Days of Kindness (during the Lenten Season) and continued on with the practice.

Flagstaff, AZ holds a Ladies Tea every Monday night.

Grand Junction, CO played "Blindfolded Pictionary" and also did a Bible study on the names of God.

Ogden, UT has been doing a series "Grit, Don't Quit."

Port Angels, WA has been holding monthly Women's Night Out at different local restaurants (and ice cream parlors)

Prescott, AZ did a video Bible Study on *The Armor of God* by Priscilla Shirer.

Salt Lake City, UT had a program about making their faith goals SMART goals, choosing targets that can be achievable rather than just saying "reading the Bible more."

San Fernando Valley, CA made aromatic candles.

Seattle Temple, WA had a Women's Spiritual Retreat Day. They had women from other corps in the areas. It was a day filled with worship, fellowship, and study, all with the intention of deepening their relationship with Jesus.

How God Speaks

When we talk about listening prayer, we have to ask ourselves how God speaks to us. If we are expecting an audible booming voice every time, we are going to miss what God is trying to say to us. He speaks in a variety of ways, but the main two ways He speaks, according to Psalm 19, is through His works— His creation, and through His Word—the Bible.

Psalm 19:1 says, ***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands.*** Listening prayer can entail getting out in nature, admire the beauty and simply enjoying what God has created. Take a walk along the beach, stroll through the forest, stop and smell the roses, sit and admire a sunrise or sunset. Be still and listen to the birds chirping or the leaves rustling in the wind.

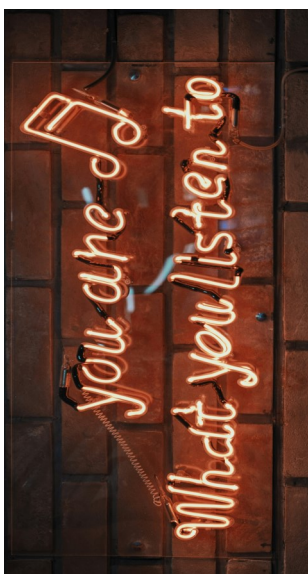
As you admire His creation contemplate what nature is telling you about God—His creativity, majesty and beauty. Spend time reflecting on who God is, and listen to what impression He leaves on your heart.

God also speaks to us through His Word, according to Psalm 19:7-11. God’s Word, the Bible, is His love letter to His children. He is speaking through His inspired Word even though the words are written on a page. When you read His Word, approach it with the expectation that God wants to speak to you through it. As you read, as verses, phrases or words seem to jump off the page, or stir your imagination, this is God speaking to you. Always read your Bible with pen and paper, and when certain verses seem to “speak” to your heart, underline, date, write notes in the margin or in a journal. If you don’t write it down, you won’t remember how God spoke to you and stirred your heart.



Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

Proverbs 8:32-34



Whose Voice are you Listening to Today?

God, as well as our enemy speaks to us. It is important that we differentiate between the two voices. Jesus said in John 10:10, ***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

God’s Voice

Stills you
Leads you
Reassures you
Enlightens you
Encourages you
Comforts you
Calms you
Convicts you
Instills hope
Is kind and gentle

Satan’s Voice

Rushes you
Pushes you
Frightens you
Confuses you
Discourages you
Worries you
Agitates you
Condemns you
Causes despair
Is cruel and harsh