Divine Understanding

by Commissioner Sue Betts

One of the joys I am experiencing during this season of life is that of grandchildren. I currently have three beautiful little ones who lovingly call me "Mammy." My two-year-old grandson, Eiden, will often ask his mom to FaceTime me so that he can tell me what is making him so excited in that moment. In all honesty, most of the time I do not understand what Eiden is trying to communicate, but I see the enthusiasm he shares as he expresses his thoughts, and it causes me to listen more carefully, watch his actions and ask lots of questions as I try to discern his words to me.

As I read scripture, I see countless individuals who took the same approach to understanding the divine words the Lord spoke to them, as I often take with Eiden, and frankly with God too. These are people who stopped to really listen for the word of the Lord. They are followers who watched the actions of God and sought where He was headed. They are believers who made it a priority to communicate in relationship with Him.

Listen Carefully

Samuel is an example of one who was asked to listen carefully for the Lord's voice and to what He was saying. We read in 1 Samuel 3 where the Lord called to Samuel several times, but Samuel didn't quite understand who was calling him. He didn't discern that the voice of God was speaking and had a word for him. It was Eli, Samuel's mentor, who told him to listen carefully because the Lord had something to say to Samuel. Of course, Samuel then focused in and listened!

"The Lord came and stood there, calling as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:10

We too need to do this as believers. We need to make space to hear when the Lord has something to say to us, and we need to be patient as we wait on what He is trying to convey. This is part of learning how to understand God… listening intently and patiently.

Watch His Ways

But listening is only part of it. As we read of the ministry Jesus had with His disciples, we see that it was a common thing for them to be confused and for them to not always understand what Jesus was saying or doing. The disciples had the advantage of physically watching Jesus in action though, and in turn, hearing His message through those actions. They came to know Jesus through watching the works of Him.

John 2:11 notes that by watching that first miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus' glory was unveiled to the disciples, which sparked their initial faith in Him. It also helped them

to recognize that Jesus was different… that He had a divine authority. His divine identity was further recognized by the disciples in Matthew 14:32-33 when the wind ceased as He stepped into the boat. The disciples responded to that miracle by saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Like the disciples, we can understand God more fully by watching His actions. The saying, "Actions speak louder than words" can hold true when it comes to our understanding of God as well. The things we see of Him help us not only believe more deeply, but to understand His words, His character and His direction. As believers seeking to understand God, we need to remember what God has done in the past and watch for what He is doing today.

Draw Near to Him

Listening and watching both lead us to the heart of it all, which is relationship. Psalm 25 is a prayer shared by David. David was a busy man who faced a lot of pressure, had to deal with his own life failings, and the chatter of many people who tried to counsel him in one direction or another as threats came at him, both from within his inner circle, and from his external enemies. David wrote this Psalm as a lament. Within it, we see David trying to listen for the voice of God, watch the direction God was taking, and ask questions of Him along the way. David was seeking divine understanding from his Lord amid life's noise, and he understood that it would only happen through relationship. He was asking God to show him, teach him and guide him so that he would understand God fully. He was seeking intimacy with God. He desired to draw near to God.

"Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Psalm 25:4-5

David understood that knowing God came through a deep relationship with the Lord, where he could listen, watch, and converse with God in love and dependence. Relationship was the key. And to be in relationship it takes more than just one person as relationships are never one-sided. It involves a back-and-forth of sharing and understanding between those involved. David knew this and sought it with God.

That is what those FaceTime calls with Eiden are teaching me. I may not understand every word he is trying to communicate, but because I love him…I lean in. I listen to him carefully, I watch what he is doing, and I keep asking questions. My desire is to know my grandson and grow closer to him. And to do this, I must do my part. He wants to share with me and I want to understand him. This is relationship, and this is how it grows deeper.

God longs for that same back-and-forth with us… that same kind of relationship. We may not always understand Him when He speaks, but as we listen carefully, watch His ways, and stay in relationship with Him, the Spirit of God helps us know His voice over our

own. And this same Spirit helps us gain a divine understanding of who our God is and how very much He loves us.