

## 4 Practical Ways to Discern the Voice of God

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*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (John 10:27)*

The **definition** of ‘discernment’ is “to examine, prove or test; scrutinize.” Biblical discernment **expresses a “close and distinct acquaintance with, or a critical knowledge of things.”** Nothing is more critical to test and apply to our hearts, minds, and lives than God’s word. He is not afraid of our questions and welcomes our seeking.

“Discernment is how we follow God’s leading through the process of spiritually sensitive application of biblical truth to the particularities of our situation,” writes **John Piper**.

### What Does the Bible Say about God's Voice?

*“For the Word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.” (Psalm 33:4)*

By His word, He governs all things (**Psalm 33:4**; NIVSB Notes). His Truth is the “agent of His purpose” (**Psalm 107:20**; NIVSB Notes) and it is everlasting (**Psalm 23:6**).

God sends heavenly agents (**Psalms 147:15**) and speaks through our ministries here on earth. On the winds of His tone is the gift of salvation; God’s voice redeems us. God spoke audibly to create the world, and us! We hear Him because He is our **Abba Father**. Like sheep hear the shepherd’s voice so we hear Christ’s.

God spoke directly to Abraham, Moses, Noah, and countless others. However, He also employs His army of angels to deliver His word and establishes His truth in us through the divine inspiration and interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus spoke on earth, it was the very voice of God! Jesus is the Word of God. His word is alive and active because Jesus lives. And now, He lives in us. Though it may not always be audible, we can know without a doubt God’s voice permeates the earth, our lives, and our souls.

“Hearing God’s voice gets at the heart of what it means to be human,” writes **David Mathis**.

Here are four things that will help you discern the voice of God.

#### 1. Study the Bible

*“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)*

##### Prayer

We can wrestle with what we are struggling to understand, asking God to answer and reveal things in prayer. Our connection with Him deepens as we dive into His Word. His voice will often pop right off the page with a direct answer to the stirring of our hearts.

Nothing is coincidental with our God. When we are intent on seeking Him, He is faithful to be found. Use the powerful tool of prayer, conversation with the one true God, to ask for wisdom in discerning His voice through Scripture.

## **Discipline**

Jesus awoke early in the morning to be with and talk to God. If He needed quiet time with His Father, we should be wary to walk out into the world unarmed.

There is no way around the discipline of studying God's Word. In order to hear His voice, we have to know what it sounds like. And to hear it, we have to quiet all other noise.

"For God's voice to sink into our minds and hearts, His words have to be there frequently, and they have to stay a while," writes **Liz Ditty**, highlighting the importance of meditating on God's Word. "Eastern meditation is characterized by clearing your mind," she explains, "but Christian meditation is about filling our mind with the words, thoughts and images of Scripture."

## **Repetition**

"Hearing the voice of God is about so much more than knowing what to do," **Cara Joyner** writes. "It's about relationship."

Studying God's Word isn't just a task we can check off each day; it's involving Him in our daily lives. When we repeatedly let Him into the cracks of our hearts, He starts to sweep them out and make them new.

Similar truths will start to wave flags of victory in conquered parts of our hearts. We will begin to remember and recall His faithfulness as He answers prayers and speaks to us through different seasons of our lives.

## **2. Interact with Others**

*"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26)*

### **Service**

Created in the image of the one true God, we are meant to honor Him in everything we do. A huge part of our faith is reflected in the way we treat and serve others.

Jesus said, next to the most important commandment to love God with all of our hearts, that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are placed in each other's lives to teach, encourage, help, and hold each other accountable. When we are actively living a life of faith, He will connect a passage we read in the morning to a conversation with a friend.

Seeking God isn't just absorbing scriptural truths; it's allowing Him to extract what He has put *in us* and use it in the community He's placed us in. The Bible tells us not to sit idle for good reason. When we move, our great God grows our faith and His voice becomes more recognizable.

### **Wise Counsel**

Mentors in the faith are important. They can be found formally or organically, and as we seek more of God, we will find those people.

Prayerfully ask God to send spiritual mentors who can help you recognize God's voice and even speak His words into your life. We don't need to seek out 'Pinterest-worthy' people; their lives will speak for themselves, and their knowledge of the word of God is vital. Their advice will come, not from their own prideful opinions, but from the truth of God's Word coupled with real life experience.

### 3. Look for the Good

*“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:14)*

When we diligently study the Word of God, praying for Him to reveal hidden things and involving Him in our daily lives, we stack bricks on a solid foundation of truth. As we diligently aim to know and live the truth, we are increasingly able to hear His voice.

“As we seek truthful things, we’re forced to confront our own falsehood,” writes **Hannah Anderson**. “As we pursue justice, we must grapple with our own injustice. And as we search for whatever is lovely, we learn to reject the tawdry and pragmatic for things of eternal worth and beauty.” The more we know God, the more we know how far we all fall short. Remembering who He is reminds us we are all forgiven and never loved less.

### 4. Reject Perfectionism

*“Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.” (John 7:24)*

Perfection is impossible this side of heaven. One man, Jesus, lived a perfect life without sin. The more we learn to own and learn from our mistakes the wiser we will be.

Discerning, hearing God and understanding what He’s trying to say to us, requires our attention. Nothing gets our attention like pain. Painful circumstances cause us to focus intensely on Him for help. When we run from our mistakes, we are cheating ourselves of hearing Him.

“Discernment requires time and effort,” says **Dr. Charles Stanley** “You can’t simply move through life, thoughtlessly reacting to situations yet never learning from them. Take time to reflect on your responses and observe the consequences of your actions and choices. If you feel convicted by what you notice, let that motivate you to begin a lifelong pursuit of the Lord and His ways.”

### Verses on Discernment

*“Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.” (Hosea 14:9)*

*“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

*“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)*

*“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.” (1 Timothy 6:3-5)*

*“So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?” (1 Kings 3:9)*

*“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)*

*“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)*