



## **LIFE WITH GOD: Are You a Good Communicator...Listener? By: Erica Marchino (Edited by Peter Bales) No. 25, April 14, 2024**

Are you a good communicator? What about a good listener?

There's a funny scene in the old Uncle Buck movie where he can't get a word in over the phone because his wife is talking so much and not listening. Can anyone relate to that? Perhaps you've been the person trying to get a word in—or maybe you are the person who has trouble listening? Communication is an important part of any relationship and requires both talking AND listening.

Communication is the sending and receiving of information. That's how we form relationships—it's how we get to know each other! Think of a young couple beginning to show interest in each other. They may spend hours on the phone telling stories or passing handwritten notes. This is a formative time for the relationship. Conversation is how you get to know someone. Spending time together, you find out who they are, what they like and dislike. These days we communicate through forms of social media or texting, which doesn't always make it easier to build healthy relationships.

### **1. What was your communication like when you were forming a new friendship or dating your spouse? How has that changed?**

We also learn to communicate and build relationship with God. One of those ways is through worship, which doesn't just happen on Sunday morning. We can turn a car ride or an afternoon walk into worship to God! Another main way that we communicate with God is through his Word- the Bible. As we do, we partner with the Holy Spirit and listen for what he is saying *though* the Scriptures. If we want to build a personal relationship with Christ, we must learn to be consistent in prayer and then learn to listen for a response and the Bible is our foundation.

Priscilla Shires' study *Discerning the Voice of God* explores how we hear God speaking to us. Knowing and hearing His voice can be difficult for people. How do we listen? Will God really speak to us? I think it helps to think about *who* you are talking to in prayer.

How do you picture God as you are praying? When you pray do you go into the throne room and pray to a mighty powerful God? Or are you on a walk or having lunch with a more informal Jesus that's wearing jeans and a t-shirt? Everyone is different on this. And it may look different to you on different days or in different situations.

- 2. How do you picture God interacting with you as you pray. What's he doing?**
- 3. What is hard for you about prayer?**

READ Exodus 3:2-4. God used a very unique way to communicate with Moses! In the Old Testament, God often spoke through prophets, signs, visions, or external forces. God has used many different ways to talk with us, but it's not like talking to someone on the phone.

God spoke to Abraham (he was still called Abram at this point) in Genesis chapter 15 through a smoking firepot. God wrestled with Jacob later in Genesis chapter 32. It says that Jacob was alone and wrestled with a man till daybreak. He spoke to the slaves as He led them out of Egypt in Exodus Chapter 13 through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night!

**4. What is the weirdest way that God has communicated with you? What is the main way he uses to talk to you?**

In the New Testament, God continues to use people, thoughts, and experiences as He did before, but after Jesus died on the cross and ascended to Heaven, he sent us a Helper—the Holy Spirit. In the OT the Holy Spirit was only given to a specific person for a specific time. We see David cry out in Psalms 51:11 “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” Can you imagine? No, we can't! The day we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior we had access to the Holy Spirit as he came to live in us.

The primary way God speaks to us still today is through His word. In *Experiencing God*, Dr. Henry Blackabee writes, “It is really very simple. I always read the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring me the mind and heart of God. When the Holy Spirit speaks through the Word of God, I always know that I have the will of God and can proceed.”

You might be wondering where to start? How do we become better communicators with God? The starting place is the Bible, so consider how you can partner with the Holy Spirit as you read. As you find things that God is saying to you, write the date beside it and write a note in your Bible. Keep track in a journal somewhere. Then go back and see how that situation turned out in life. How did God answer or work it out? Maybe you didn't get the answer that you expected, but perhaps God was still communicating with you.

Journalling can be an amazing way to hear God speaking. Write down what you think he's saying and see what happens. The key is to have a rhythm of communicating with God and keep practicing! Find time each day for quiet or a devotional but the key is to make listening to God a priority. In John 10:11, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.” He's speaking with us! We want to make sure we are listening and prepared to hear.

- 5. What are some of the ways God is still communicating with us? What's easiest for you?**
- 6. What is a spiritual discipline that helps you communicate with God?**
- 7. What is one small thing that might make a big difference in your communication with God?**