

Listening to God

“God is always coming towards us, at every moment, and in everything that happens. Our task is to be more attentive to his coming, to listen between the lines, to catch the silent music.” John Pritchard *How to pray*

As we endeavour to listen to God for ourselves and our wider church body, here are a few suggestions for ways to make ourselves available to God and give ourselves space to listen to God. Don't use them all at once!

1. Use a short passage of scripture to focus on, asking God to show you new insights and to speak to you afresh. Some of the shorter psalms are really useful for this or one of Jesus' parables in the gospels. If appropriate, try to imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story, or in the crowd, listening.
2. Print off a map of your area. Spend some time asking God to show you how to pray for your area, neighbourhood and friends. You might like to put your finger on the roads or large buildings as you pray and ask God how he wants you to pray for these.
3. If you are a creative person, or you have children who might find it difficult to sit silently without something to do with their hands, do some painting, drawing or make something with clay or play dough. Pray that God guides your creativity and see what happens!
4. Try some conversation starters. Remember Jeremiah 33.3 (“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”) then still your heart to focus on the Lord. Ask questions such as: What's grieving you at the moment? Why? What's exciting you these days? Why? What do you like about me? Why? What do you see when you look at me? When was the last time you wept over me? Why? When was the last time you laughed over me? Why?
5. Do a listening walk. Prayer walks are great but try walking around your neighbourhood, listening to what God has to say to you for your community. Don't just walk your usual routes – explore! You could do this alone or with family or friends.
6. Romans 1:20 reminds us that God speaks to us through his creation. Go for a walk in a local park or beach or forest. Stop, breathe and enjoy your surroundings, give space and time for God to speak to you there.

7. Prayer apps are helpful – lectio 365, prayermate, and C of E daily prayer are a few examples of apps you can get on your phone.

8. Try some more conversation starters – this time for someone else. Ask God: Who do you want me to encourage today? Why? What do you see when you look at them? Why? How do you feel about them? Why? What's one reason why you are pleased with them? What word of promise or Scripture verse could I share? Why do you want them to know this? Write the answers in the form of an encouragement letter.

9. Begin your time of listening with some worship music (youtube is invaluable for this). Allow the music to wash over you, and ask God to speak to you.

10. Use a picture or cross as a focus for your time of listening.

11. Try to cultivate God's presence in the everyday. Bring God to mind when you're washing up, hanging out the washing, driving to work, at the school gates. The more we invite God in to our ordinary lives, the more natural it will feel to hear him speak to us.

12. Practise times of silence – switch off your phone, computer, TV. Get comfortable with silence. As Elijah discovered, it is often in the silence that God speaks.

13. Ask the Lord whom you should picture before him today. Ask him where he would like to meet that person. Picture yourself taking that person to meet God there. Present that person to the Lord. Tell the Lord why you are burdened for that person and ask for his help.

Some of these ideas are taken from Brad Jersak's book "Can you hear me? Tuning in to the God who speaks". If you'd like to explore this whole topic of listening to God in more depth, Dan has several copies of this book for you to borrow. He has also published "Children, can you hear me? How to see and hear God".