

ARE YOU LISTENING?



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by [Kim Butts](#)

I work with many leadership teams, including pastors, prayer ministry teams, missions teams, etc. about hearing from God together for next steps...for decision-making and roadmaps into the future of kingdom work, etc. Of course, without each individual practicing the spiritual discipline of listening prayer first, the corporate exercise of listening cannot be fully realized. Lisa Swanson has defined listening prayer as "the practice of the Presence of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." The Apostle John fully understood the importance of listening prayer. It would follow that the one whom Jesus loved was the one who was most in tune with His divine heartbeat. John listened to the words of Jesus as He described

on multiple occasions how He discerned what to teach, say and do from the Father, just as we are to also hear from, and respond to the voice of the Father and the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit:

In John 7:16, Jesus says, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me." This was in response to the questions of the Jews, amazed at the profound teachings of Jesus, who had not been formally educated.

In John 5:19 we read: "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'" Seeing with the eyes of the Spirit can only be done when one spends time in silence and solitude before God. Jesus and the Father were in continual communication as Jesus moved through His days on earth, carefully representing the perfect will of God.

John also described how we, His people, are to listen so that we will be able to easily identify the voice of Jesus: "The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it" (John 10:3-5). This passage clearly shows how we can easily be led astray or confused if we do not take time to know the voice of our Shepherd.

Based on these Scriptures and others, we can assume that Jesus never acted independently of His Father and that His example should teach us how to relate more fully to God. Listening prayer will keep us in a posture of humility before God which will protect us from acting out of our own selfish desires. It enables us to be willing to lay down our own plans and

preferences in favor of God's kingdom purposes. The difficulty? It takes time to listen. The benefit? There is much fruit that springs from listening prayer. When we are willing to give up our agenda for the sake of His plans, He is pleased to move in and through us to accomplish His work. Most of all, the deepening of our relationship with God happens when prayer is not just words on our part. He is able to transform us when we are in a posture of listening, of seeking, of desiring more of Himself and the revelation of His character.

Simple Instructions for Listening:

1. Find a quiet space where you will not be disturbed.
2. If necessary to keep your focus, light a candle to represent the presence of the Holy Spirit, or put a picture of Jesus, the cross, or whatever will represent the One to Whom you are listening. If your thoughts begin to wander use these visuals to keep your attention on the Father.
3. Simply pray as Samuel was instructed to do: "Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening."
4. Don't have grand expectations as to what you will hear ahead of time. Come simply to be in His presence, loving and being loved.
5. Keep a journal and a pen handy in case there is something that needs to be recorded.

This process can also be done corporately! However, if each individual does not willingly submit to Christ through listening, unity in decision-making and reaching consensus and/or compromise is much harder to achieve. The spiritual discipline of listening prayer is not an easy one, but it will eventually bear the kind of fruit that will change you, your team(s) and your church in such significant ways that the world will know that God sent His Son for our sakes.



Biography

Kim serves as the Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries which she co-founded in 1993 with her late husband, Dave (1953-2022). Her ministry involves teaching/training and consulting as well as writing and developing resources. She is content coordinator for HPM's teaching platform, PrayerU.com

and also compiles and edits HPM's free daily devotional, [Connection!](#) as well as [Prayer Tip Tuesday](#).

Kim has written multiple books and has published articles in a variety of magazines and publications. She is a member of America's National Prayer Committee and serves as President of Gospel Revivals, Inc. (Herald of His Coming).

Kim has a BA in Psychology and a Masters degree in Spiritual Formation and Leadership.

Some of Kim's Books



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