

# *Distinguishing God's Voice*

By Dave Roberson

One of the most important aspects of a Christian's walk in the Spirit is being able to distinguish God's voice of your own thoughts and emotions, the voice of friends and family, and, on the darker side, the voice of tormenting or familiar spirits.

According to Jesus, we have been given the ability to distinguish His voice from every other voice that is not His:

“And when he [the Good Shepherd] putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice, And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. [John 10:4,5].

In the light of the security measures that have come into effect since September 11, 2001, and the alarming things that are being reported in the news on a daily basis, we really need to make sure we are hearing the voice of Jesus. Someday that ability could save our lives or the lives of those close to us. So let's talk about how God communicates with us and what we can do to isolate that part of us that hears from our God.

In my walk with the Lord, I have found that the Holy Spirit communicates with our spirits in four different ways. The foremost way is through the inner witness. Romans 8:15, 16 talks about this method of divine communication:

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

This particular method of communication is a continual process. There isn't a waking moment that the Holy Spirit doesn't bear witness inside me that I am His child., In fact, I can't remember the last time I was without that inner witness.

If the Holy Spirit can communicate and bear witness with our spirits that we are saved, He can certainly bear witness with our spirits that we are heading in a right direction or check us when we are heading in a wrong direction. And if there is ever a time that the Holy Spirit is unable to do that, it isn't His fault. We just haven't learned how to listen to the inner witness yet. The turmoil in our lives is so great that we cannot differentiate between the operation of our spirits and the emotional realm of the soul.

The second way God communicates with us is by revelation. This is when the Holy Spirit releases knowledge into your spirit in a milligram of a second. One moment you don't understand anything about healing, prosperity, or some other biblical doctrine. Then suddenly the Holy Spirit encapsulates an entire revelation, passes it over to your spirit, and releases it all at once. Suddenly you seem to understand everything about that subject! You wonder, *Wow! How do I know this?* I'll tell you how: God has communicated to you by revelation.

The third way God communicates with us is by plainly speaking to us inside our spirits in such a way that we can hear Him. If we know it is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, we can listen to Him and be instructed. However, too many of us can't differentiate between God's voice and our own carnal thoughts.

A lot of people can't tell the difference between their own imagination and the various ways God communicates with them, whether it is through the inner witness, through the Holy Spirit speaking to their spirits, through revelation, or through a vision (which is the fourth way God communicates with us). These people often bring reproach on the Gospel because they are always telling someone, “God spoke to me” when He DIDN'T speak to them, and therefore they create a big mess.

Now, that doesn't preclude the fact that God does speak to us. Our challenge is to learn how to listen and to distinguish His voice from our own thoughts and the other voices that vie for our attention in this world.

That is why I urge you to do all you can to understand this subject of distinguishing the voice of God and the various ways He communicates with you. Too many Christians who have the Holy Spirit cannot distinguish His voice.

Actually, this ought to tell us something about the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit has come for one purpose—to GUIDE us into all truth. He doesn't push us into the truth—He leads. He doesn't force us into anything we don't want—He guides!

Thank God, there is a way that He is able to get involved with my spirit and guide me in the affairs of life. The holy Spirit can take the counsel that comes from the heart of God in the form of His Word and reconstruct it in my heart in such a way that it becomes MY counsel. He can literally interpret the Word to me that I hear and then counsel me with what He has just taught me to understand. In this way, the Holy Spirit can give me the counsel I so desperately need, and I can avoid taking my counsel from the world.

So how do you prepare and edify your spirit in such a way that it becomes a haven for the Holy Spirit to operate in? There is a way you can do that, but it is certainly not embracing a social gospel. It takes a giving of your life to Him.

Let's take this a step further. The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place in your human spirit because it is your spirit, or your new nature, where all permanent change takes place. The inner man is also where the Holy Spirit communicates with you because of the born-again spirit's tremendous ability to receive. God can encapsulate a revelation and explode it in your spirit. You can understand a truth in a split second that would take God a month to get over to your mind.

Now, you may wish the Holy Spirit spoke more to your mind. You may want Jesus to walk in the room and talk to you more in person. But that isn't the way He normally communicates with people. The Holy Spirit has received this particular ministry of communicating with you, and He is the only One who can equip you for what God has called you to do in life. Therefore, He ministers to you continually on the inside of your spirit. All you have to do is familiarize yourself with His ministry and learn how to listen to Him.

How do you do that? Well, the-best way I know-is-to-pray much in-other-tongues. There are times when I put my Bible down, kick back, and pray for a couple of hours in the Holy Ghost. During that time of prayer, I do nothing but adjust my mind to listen to that place in me where He communicates, just in case He wants to get something over to me.

In order for me to do that, I have to take the time to shut my mind down. At times I literally have to tell my mind to shut up so it can learn how to become a listener and a servant to my spirit. Now, my mind may argue with me and say, "I don't want to shut down." But I just tell it, "For the next hour, you are just going to sit there, be quiet, and listen to the spirit—the part of me that God is communicating with."

I have found it is usually those quiet times of praying in the Holy Ghost when revelations explode and God begins to communicate with me. Why is that? Because the primary way God communicates is not with my brain but with my spirit. That's why I make sure there are times when I pray in tongues and do nothing with my mind on purpose.

Now, I also pray in tongues often while I'm driving my car or going about my daily business. During those times, the attention of my brain is demanded for the task at hand; yet I know that I am praying mysteries up before God and that my spirit is being edified.

But when I come apart to pray in the Holy Ghost and my body is not assigned to do anything else, these are the times my mind learns a new form of discipline and God is better able to communicate with me. I just shut down my mind for a couple of precious hours and close my eyes to block out any distractions—to anything that would take away from my ability to listen to the part of me with which He communicates.

You see, your mind is like gravity. Once you get it rolling, it does not want to stop. It wants to think about everything under the sun. Your spirit may be praying in tongues, but your brain is wondering how to fix this

problem or what to cook for the dinner meal. Or if you're a professional worrier, you'll find that even though your spirit is getting edified, your mind is performing its chosen profession of worrying up a storm!

This was quite a problem for me when I was first learning to pray. I was locking myself up in my prayer closet for extended hours of praying in the Holy Ghost, but my mind was going wild with boredom. One day I ended up walking down a riverbed, kicking every green rock. Just any rock would not do; I had to look for GREEN rocks. My mind was so bored that it just had to do something!

Before I started praying in the Holy Ghost for long periods of time, my mind was used to having its way all the time. It would run every minute any way it wanted to! At first, I tried to control my mind while I was praying in tongues. It would start thinking some distracting train of thought, and I'd say, "No, you don't! Come back here!" But after I'd bring my mind back, it would just start thinking about something else. Finally, I just gave up and I let my mind go exploring while I just kept praying in tongues.

But after a while, my mind began to stop resisting and start allowing itself to become a receptor. Some of the revelations I am preaching today were truths I received in those early days of prayer because I learned how to listen. Soon I got to the place where I could lie still and pray in tongues for up to six hours. The only part of my body that moved during that time was my eyes when they blinked. No longer did my mind dictate to my body that it needed to get up and wander around.

After my mind quieted down, I discovered that it was becoming receptive to more and more edification and revelation knowledge. More and more, peace came. And when peace came, rest came.

It is wonderful when peace begins to dominate your mind. When your mind is full of care and worry and torment, oppression can set in, robbing your mind of its ability to think clearly. But a mind that is full of rest and peace over a long period of time will begin to restore itself to wholeness. I'm telling you, if I were you, I would learn how to pray much in the Holy Ghost!

Another thing I so appreciate about the Holy Spirit is how He warns me when danger lies ahead in my life. He will do the same for you.

For instance, the Holy Spirit may have warned us in the past about a person we were associating with. This person may have been very charismatic, even overpowering in his deceptive personality. -We sensed a-quick little check in our spirits; nudging us to back off before we entered into a full-blown relationship with him. But we overrode that check and forged ahead anyway—and before it was over, that person made us wish we were never born!

When something like that happens, we remember back and think, I did have a check on the inside about that person. I don't know why I didn't listen to it. I'll tell you why we didn't listen—because we weren't sure that we were hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, so we let Mr. or Ms. Charismatic overpower us!

That kind of situation may seem all too familiar to you. You may say, "Brother Dave, you say that you shut your mind down so you can listen to that part of your spirit where you hear God. Would you help me isolate the ear of my spirit? Can you teach me how I can close my eyes, shut down my mind, and listen to my spirit in case the Holy Spirit wants to say something to me?"

Yes, I can. You see, we will never be sure what to do when we sense the warning or the guidance of the Holy Spirit until we first develop ourselves in our ability to distinguish His voice from all the other voices in the world. So let's go on and try to understand how to shut down our minds and learn to listen to the operation of the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 14:14 is an important scripture for this discussion. It says, For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. The part of your understanding that Paul is talking about is the ability of your physical brain to analyze languages. When you pray in tongues, your understanding is unable to understand the language that is coming out of your spirit.

Now, you may eventually understand the mysteries you have prayed before the Father, but with your mind you will not understand one syllable that comes out of your spirit because it is a language you are unfamiliar with. In other-words, - you will-not have the translation of what you are praying unless God gives you the interpretation.

The way God usually gives me the interpretation when I am praying privately in tongues is by exploding the mysteries and revelations on the inside of my spirit. At that point, it isn't necessary for my mind to understand every syllable or word that He passes through my spirit.

You may ask, "But isn't the Holy Spirit the One who originates the language of tongues? Then what is Paul talking about when he says 'my spirit prayeth'? Is it the Holy Spirit who lives in my spirit or is it my born-again, new-creation, human spirit that is actually doing the praying?"

The Holy Spirit is supplying the language, all right, but it is your human spirit that is doing the praying.

You see, we are a part of the Body of Christ, and Jesus is the Head. Wherever His Body is present in this earth, the Head has authority. When the Holy Spirit transfers that supernatural language to your human spirit, He also transfers the authority. Now you as a member of the Body of Christ are praying a prayer that the Holy Spirit gave you with the authority to change things on this earth.

The Holy Spirit says to you, "I need to teach you. I am searching your heart. I know the plan of God, and I am making intercession for you according to His will. There are many things I need to pray through you for your personal life and ministry, so I am supplying the prayer and the prayer language. You supply your spirit, and I will pass the prayer through it."

You know, it ought to be hard to fail when you have a Prayer Partner like the Holy Spirit! He is praying the perfect prayer through your spirit and will continue to do so as long as you will stay in there and keep praying in tongues!

Since it is your human spirit doing the praying, that means a transfer of power has to first take place from the Holy Spirit to your spirit. Somewhere within your human spirit, the Holy Spirit literally brings those tongues into existence, creating each syllable and each word of that supernatural language. If you find out where that process takes place, you will then know what part of your inner man to monitor when you want to know if God has anything to say to you.

Years ago something interesting took place in my life to help me find that part of my human spirit where God communicates with me. I had been in the ministry a couple of years by then and had spent much time locking myself in a closet and praying for hours in tongues. Over that period of time, I had learned how to shut down my senses long enough to learn how to listen to the Holy Spirit.

That morning I was in my prayer closet edifying myself in tongues. Suddenly it seemed like some kind of invisible dome settled over me, and I was in the Holiest of Holies. Everything got very quiet as I slid over into the realm of the Spirit. God was about to teach me some profound truths about distinguishing His voice.

In the Spirit I saw the physical anatomy of a man. Then I saw what appeared to be a glow on the inside of the man's body. I understood the glow to be the outline of the hidden man of the heart, which was encased by the outer man wall to wall, hands to hands, eyes to eyes, etc.

In that moment of revelation, I learned something I hadn't understood before about the spirit man. If I had the ability to stand before you right now and have my spirit man step out and stand next to my physical man, you would see that my inner man has hands, eyes, a nose, ears, hair, etc. He also has a brain that fits inside my natural brain. In fact, my spirit man looks exactly like my physical man, minus age and defects.

But I had more to learn. In this vision I saw the spirit man's mind. Then I saw the Holy Spirit literally creating tongues within the spiritual mind, which was bathed in that heavenly glow. The moment the Holy Spirit would create the tongues, they would come outward to the outer man's mind and then out the man's mouth. I realized that

I was seeing the part of the spirit from which the Holy Spirit spoke to me. This greatly interested me, for I had always been fascinated with the voice of God. I used to pester preachers endlessly who told me they had heard His voice. I wanted to understand where they had heard it.

Someone would say, "Well, He spoke to my spirit."

I'd ask, "Would you please identify the approximate region from where God talked to you?"

"Well, the Bible says, 'Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water' [John 7:38]. So God spoke to me way down deep on the inside of me, in my inner man." Then the person would pat his belly.

The truth of the matter is, the voice of the Holy Spirit does come from deep somewhere—so deep, in fact, that it seems logical to say, "Well, it came from way down here in my spirit." It appears to come from "way down there," but God actually communicates with the mind of your spirit.

That's what I came to understand through this vision. The hidden man of the heart, the spirit man, has a brain just like your physical body does. That spiritual brain fits in your natural brain. God does not move out of your spirit man's brain and go down to the belly button region to talk to you down there. He communicates with your spiritual mind, and that spiritual mind is in your head.

The spiritual mind, of course, lies beneath the natural mind. This explains why it appears that the voice of the Holy Spirit is coming from way down in the belly button region when it is actually coming from the deep recesses of your spiritual mind. My outer man gives my spirit man the authority to operate in a natural world.

Because I am "wearing" my physical body, I can contact physical things. In the same way, my physical brain allows my spiritual brain to operate in a natural world and translate what I am receiving in the spirit to a natural operation such as languages.

So your spiritual brain is the part of you with which the Holy Spirit communicates. The more you pray in tongues, the more you are going to familiarize yourself with the part of you where He actually creates that supernatural language. It is the same part of you where He gives the inner witness or speaks in your native language in such a way that you can hear His voice.

Now, let me help you isolate this part of your spirit. I suggest that you do what God instructed me to do during this time of prayer. He had me pray out loud for a while in the Holy Ghost; then He impressed me to stop. I stopped praying out loud, but the tongues did not stop because the Holy Spirit was continuing to create the words on the inside of my spiritual mind. When I didn't let the words come out of my mouth, they floated up to my natural mind and I could hear them. The Holy Spirit just kept creating the words, and I kept on hearing them.

If you respond to the Holy Spirit and say, "I want to pray in tongues," immediately He will supply the language. If you don't open your mouth, you will notice that you can hear those tongues being created somewhere on the inside of you. You are hearing God's voice with the ear of your spirit. What is God saying? Tongues. Where is He saying it? In your spirit.

So let me suggest that you forcefully pray in tongues for a few moments, then cut off the tongues immediately. In doing so, you will create a river that will continue to flow up to your natural mind even after you stop speaking. Listen to where this language is created in your spirit for a moment. Familiarize yourself with it, for that is the exact same part of you that you will need to monitor in order to distinguish the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The more you pray in tongues, the more the "siphon hose" will open up and the more familiar you will become with the course of the Holy Spirit's language and how He talks to you. So start learning to listen. Make it your highest priority to learn how to hear the voice of God. There is no better way to prepare yourself for the times to come. Whatever the future might hold for the world, YOUR future will be bright as you grow in close fellowship with him!