

HEAR

I am shaped
by the Word
and Spirit



Developing rhythms
in my relationship
with God

Hear *I am shaped by the Word and Spirit*

We are all shaped and influenced by the things and people we spend time with the most. In order to grow into the people God created us to be, we must remain open and lean in to hear God's voice. We must be quick to listen rather than thinking about what we want to say or receive. Mary sat at Jesus' feet as her sister Martha busied herself by trying to manage and control her world (Luke 10:38-42). In order to really understand the heart and wisdom of God, we must prepare ourselves to hear from Him by receiving His presence and direction. To hear God we can engage in a number of intentional practices that will allow us to foster a greater depth in our relationship with Him.

PRACTICES

WORD: God has chosen to speak primarily through His Word, the Bible. Finding a version that is both as accurate and readable as possible will assist us in our understanding. The English Standard Version (ESV) seems to strike the best balance here, although the New International Version (NIV) and even New Living Translation (NLT) will be more easily read without sacrificing significant accuracy. The Bible is best heard through reflection and interaction. This simply means we must take time to think about what we read and journal our thoughts, observations, and questions. God seeks to reveal His character and love through the true stories and counsel provided in His Word.

PRAY: While prayer is typically thought of as us talking to God, when practiced well it can also serve as an environment to hear. Prayer opens communication with our heavenly Father. We take time to think about the ways we've seen God provide, direct us and be with us, and thank Him for it. We acknowledge God's authority and priority and submit to His leadership. We share our own concerns, questions, and joys. We cry out in desperation for God's movement and help in our lives, and in the lives of others. We sit quietly at times listening for the voice of the Spirit.

SERMONS/TEACHING: By intentionally and consistently choosing to put ourselves in places where we can hear the Word of God taught, we grow in our faith. The key is consistency whether it be working through a series, a book of the Bible, a doctrine etc. Prepare your mind through prayer before listening, take notes, and then reflect afterwards. This begins at church, gathered in community with others, but there are also some very good podcasts and online content that can enhance your understanding.

SPIRIT: The Bible tells us that the primary presence of God in the life of every believer in Jesus is the Holy Spirit. He takes residence in our lives and reminds us of what God says, convicts us of sin and selfishness, leads us as we submit to Him, and speaks words of life into our heart and mind. We must be careful to not "quench" the Spirit by continually ignoring or resisting Him. Through continual practice we will learn to discern God's voice from the voices of condemnation and temptation that the evil one will speak to us.

DIG IN

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible and almost every single verse is about God's Word. Meditate on it and try to find the following in the chapter:

Find 5 things we can learn about the Lord.
(Example: verse 64 - *The Earth is full of God's love.*)

Find 5 actions the Lord takes regarding His Word.
(Example verse 21 - *He rebukes those who don't follow it.*)

Find 5 situations in life in which the Bible is helpful to us.
(Example verse 143 - In times of trouble and stress.)

Find 5 things the author asks of God.
(Example verse 169 - Give me understanding.)

Find 10 advantages to us for following His Word.
(Example verse 9 - Our lives remain pure.)

RESPOND

Of the 4 practices (Word, Pray, Sermons, Spirit) which comes easiest for you and which would you love to grow more in? Try engaging in that practice consistently for one month, and seek out further reading.

As you read Psalm 119, think about how you would describe his faith and connection with God? What aspects would you like to describe your own faith?

Choose a book of the Bible, grab your journal (buy one if you don't have one) and work through it in small sections each day. As you read, write down observations, questions you have, and concepts you discover. Feel free to use some of the questions we asked on Psalm 119 in your future studies. Consider reading different Bible versions or look up unclear terms to deepen your understanding. A number of free Bible Dictionaries are available online and in apps you can download to assist you in your study.

Reflect on what you wrote and invite God to speak to you, then record any further thoughts you have. Next, write one thing you learn about God, His heart/character/direction. Lastly, write a personal "take away" which could be an action to try, a concept to meditate on, a sin to confess, or an attribute to celebrate. Continue until you've completed the book and then share highlights of what you've learned with someone in your life.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Knowing God by J. I. Packer

Discerning the Voice of God: How to Recognize When God is Speaking by Priscilla Shirer

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller

Living By the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible by Howard Hendricks

FOR KIDS

Everything a Child Should Know About God by Kenneth N. Taylor



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