

Listening to God

Read [Psalm 46:1-10](#)

LESSON 5

HOW GOD GETS OUR ATTENTION

When we walk in the Spirit, our spiritual antennae alert to God, we hear what He is saying to us as a natural part of our spiritual walk. This is the Christian life, living keenly responsive to the voice of God in whatever fashion He may choose to speak to us. We can have our attention focused on a person, a chore, or an idea, but at the same time, we are so tuned to God's voice that if He speaks to us, we immediately turn our attention to Him.

Unfortunately, there are times when we choose to do things our own way. As a result, we are headed in a direction that will bring us to disaster or disappointment. God is speaking, but we aren't listening. We aren't tuned in to Him.

In these times, God often uses unusual means to get our attention. Prominent among them, from my experience and understanding of God's Word, are these four means:

1. **A restless spirit**
2. **An unsolicited word from another person**
3. **Unusual circumstances—both bad and good**
4. **Unanswered prayers**

When we look back at our lives, we nearly always can find examples of times in which God got our attention through one of these methods. His prodding may have been profound or gentle. Regardless of the intensity of His wake-up call, we awoke! And once awake, we were more than willing to hear.

As we begin this lesson, we need to be aware that although God uses these methods to get our attention, they don't necessarily have a meaning in and of themselves. In other words, we should not conclude that because we have a restless spirit, we are on the right track or the wrong track. I have met people who have concluded that if they have a certain amount of nervous energy about something, it must be right. I have also met people who automatically have decided that if they feel agitated in spirit, they are sinning. A restless spirit is an attention-getter. **The message that follows is what is important!** Certainly, the conscience may prick us about a matter so that we feel upset in our spirits, but the upset is not the message. The conscience is based upon our understanding of right and wrong, and that understanding is rightly based upon the truth found in the Bible.

Sometimes the Lord will prompt a person to say something to us that is exactly what we need to hear. The other person may not realize he is being used by God in this way, or he may be speaking to a group and have no idea he is speaking directly to us. The message, however, hits us right between the eyes. It gets our attention.

Unusual circumstances must be treated like a restless spirit. Great blessings are not an automatic message that God is pleased with you. The message that follows from such an outpouring in your life may not be that God is pleased; it may be that God wants you to do something very specific with the blessings. A tragedy is not God's curse on your life. Rather, you should perceive it as your opportunity to come before God to hear what He has to say to you in the midst of your need.

In the matter of prayer, sometimes we are so eager to hear the answer we want to hear that we fail to hear God's answer. We perceive in these cases that our prayer has gone unanswered. Although our perception is not accurate, it can lead us to question further, "Why am I not hearing from You, God?" Such questioning, done in an honest and soul-searching manner, can lead us to the position where we do hear God's voice.

Restlessness of Spirit

The sixth chapter of Esther has an excellent example of God using a restless spirit to get a person's attention. King Ahasuerus had been unwittingly duped by his prime minister, Haman. Haman hated all Jews, especially Queen Esther's relative, Mordecai. He tricked the king into signing an edict for the annihilation of the Jews. After he signed the proclamation, the king could not sleep. He had a restless spirit to the point that he **"commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king"** ([Est. 6:1](#)). The king discovered during that sleepless night that Mordecai had saved the king's life earlier by reporting an assassination plot. Instead of the Jews being killed, Mordecai was honored and Haman faced the gallows.

In my life, God frequently uses a persistent restlessness to direct me. When I look back over my life and ministry, I can see clearly that every time God moved me from one situation to another, He caused me to feel restless for several months beforehand. That restlessness drove me to seek God so that when the time came, I was ready to hear Him.

A restlessness of spirit is not a case of nerves. It's much deeper than that. This type of restlessness originates in the deepest aspect of a person's being as part anticipation, part uneasiness. It persists over time.

When you have that feeling, the best thing for you to do is to stop and ask the Lord what He is trying to say. Spend even more time in the Word and in prayer. Don't attempt to outrun this feeling or to throw yourself into some activity just to keep busy and to keep your mind occupied. Do just the opposite. Consider a time of fasting (food, activities, time, or a combination of these). Set aside a block of time—perhaps a weekend, several days, or even a week or two—to quiet yourself before the Lord so you can hear from Him clearly.

