

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**

A Word from Others

I don't know anybody who enjoys hearing a word of admonition. We may say that we appreciate words of correction or warning, but we usually feel uncomfortable when they come. We don't like to hear about sin or its consequences, especially if the person is talking about our sin.

King David was in such a position when the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent sin against Uriah. David apparently continued his reign without any visible evidence of a guilty conscience. And then in [2 Samuel 12:1](#) we read, "**Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him ...**" David desperately needed to hear what Nathan said to him, but it wasn't a pleasant experience for him.

Not all messages from others are negative, however. I can remember a person saying something to me that was very positive. I wasn't at all expecting a compliment or word of affirmation, although I desperately needed one at the time. The statement was not in response to anything that I had done or said to the person. The person's positive word, so specific and so direct, caught me off guard. When I questioned God about it, He let me

see that He cared so much about me that He used a person who was almost a stranger to tell me so, in order that He might startle me into paying attention!

Sometimes we lightly dismiss compliments and words of appreciation or approval. The words of blessing may also be God’s way of getting our attention off our pity party to see our true worth in His eyes. The person who cannot receive heartfelt thanks or affirming words is often the person who most needs such positive edification.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the person who cannot take criticism or reproof is destined for failure. That message is repeated often in the book of Proverbs.

In either case—whether with words of reproof or praise—you must be extremely careful that others do not lead you astray with their words. People can use flattery, veiled threats, or even Scriptures to get you to fulfill their desires or do their bidding, all in the name of God. When someone comes to you with a message from God, take a close look at both the message and the messenger. Carefully weigh what the person says. And then go to God’s Word and ask the Lord to speak to you directly. Count the praise or admonition of others only as an attention-getter that causes you to seek God.

Sometimes the message that comes to you is one of information. You may be puzzled, concerned, frustrated, or worried by what you hear. At these times, turn to God. See what He desires to say to you about the situation, about whether you are to act, and if so, in what way and when. That’s what Nehemiah did when Hanani, one of his brethren, came from Judah with a report about the distress of the people in Jerusalem and about the broken-down state of Jerusalem’s walls and gates. (See [Neh. 1:1–11.](#))

The word you receive from someone may represent a need in God’s kingdom, the plight of fellow believers, or a specific plea for help in extending the gospel. If your heart is touched by the matter, or if you can’t seem to shake the message that you have heard, take the matter before the Lord to hear what He has to say to you about ways in which you should become involved.

- *Has someone ever come to you with a “word from the Lord” about your life?*

- *How did you feel when that happened?*

- *What did you do? What was the outcome?*
