

# Listening Prayer

## 1. Stop in order to listen

God desires for us to have intimate conversation with him. And true intimacy with God requires more than just speaking to him—it involves listening as well. Listening prayer requires us to stop and to be quiet. Our prayer lives are sometimes a lot like a mountain stream; they can go on and on but they have little depth. Streams that run down mountain canyons are shallow even though they are very active. The water just keeps moving over the rocks and out of the canyon. Listening prayer is the act of slowing down and then stopping. Instead of talking and moving, we stop and listen. Listening prayer is like a dam built across a mountain canyon. The water is stopped temporarily and becomes deep. It holds back the active experiences of our prayer lives and allows us to gain some depth and to hear God. The importance of listening prayer is not in having the “right” prayers to pray, but in stopping for a long enough time in your day that you can hear the words of the God who loves you beyond measure.

## 2. What is Listening Prayer?

It is a form of prayer that takes seriously the God of the Bible who has always desired to communicate with His chosen people. Listening prayer acknowledges that God desires to communicate with His people, even more than we desire to communicate with him! He is the same God who spoke in the Bible, and He continues to speak to us if only we have ears to hear.

## 3. What Listening Prayer is Not?

Words God speaks to us are not intended to be an addition to Scripture or to contradict Scripture. Often God speaks to our hearts rather than in audible tones, though the exact way we hear differs from person to person. Listening prayer is not “self-talk.” Rather, those who hear God through listening prayer, have learned to distinguish between their own thoughts and his words to us.

## 4. How can I practice listening prayer?

**a. Come under God’s authority.** Pray something like, “God, I acknowledge that you speak to your children. I want to hear from you and I submit to your authority. Please send your Holy Spirit to guide me in hearing from you.”

**b. Be still before him.** Lamentations 3:25,26,28 says, “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him. It is good that he waits silently... Let him sit alone and be silent.” In this posture of stillness, we can more keenly hear him speak. We honor God by expressing our willingness to be still in his presence.

**c. Cease from asking.** We may find it difficult and uncomfortable at first to relinquish our needs-oriented approach to prayer. But, just seeking to be in God’s company, awaiting his presence can be a powerful, calming, and holy experience. When you practice listening prayer, do not ask for anything. Instead, allow him to express his love and joy over you.

## **d. If total stillness is difficult, try the following exercises.**

- After closing your eyes and stilling your body, think on a name of Jesus:
- Meditate on this name as you slowly speak it to yourself, reflecting upon all that it means; for example: Bread of Life, Good Shepherd, Master, Light of the World, the Vine, the Door, the Resurrection and the Life, Alpha and Omega.
- Meditate on the names of God: Deliverer, Rock, Strong Tower, Jehovah-Jireh (Provider), Jehovah-Rapha (the Lord Who Heals), I AM, Abba.
- Allow your heart and mind time to “declutter” by letting ideas, memories, questions flow out of you until they stop or “dry up.” Then, seek to fill your heart and mind with the presence of God.

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