

Hearing God's Voice – Learning to Listen



God is always inviting us closer to Him, but our lives are filled with noise, distractions, opinions, and competing voices. How do we learn to recognize the voice of God and respond when He calls? This lesson explores how Scripture, prayer, conscience, and the life of Jesus help us become better listeners.

Theme: Listening to God, discernment, prayer, obedience

Length: 45–50 minutes

1. Entering the Silence

Opening Prayer

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All: Lord God, quiet our hearts so that we can hear You. We bring before You the noise, worries, distractions, and questions that fill our minds. Teach us to recognize Your voice and give us the courage to follow where You lead. Help us to listen with humility, to test what we hear against Your truth, and to respond with faith. Speak, Lord, for Your servants are listening. Amen.

2. What Voices Are Shaping You?

Every day we hear countless voices.

Friends tell us what we should do. Social media tells us what we should want. Fear tells us what could go wrong. Pride tells us that we need to prove ourselves. Anger tells us to react. Our own desires can tell us to choose what is easiest.

And then there is the voice of God.

Activity: “Whose Voice?”

Read each statement and decide which voice it most resembles:

- “Everyone else is doing it, so it must be okay.”
- “You need to get revenge.”
- “Nobody will ever forgive you.”
- “You are not good enough.”
- “Take a moment and pray before you decide.”

- “Choose what is right even if it costs you.”
- “You don’t need anyone else.”
- “Go and make peace.”
- “You can trust God even when you don’t understand.”
- “If nobody sees it, it doesn’t matter.”

Discuss:

Which voices are easiest for you to listen to? Which are hardest to ignore?

3. “Speak, Lord” — 1 Samuel 3:1–10

First Reading — 1 Samuel 3:1–10

During the time when the boy Samuel was serving the Lord under Eli, the word of the Lord was scarce and vision infrequent.

One day, Eli was asleep in his usual place. Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. The lamp of God was not yet gone out.

The Lord called Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.”

He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.”

“I did not call you,” Eli said. “Go back to sleep.”

So he went back and lay down.

Again the Lord called, “Samuel!” Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, “Here I am. You called me.”

But he answered, “I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.”

At that time Samuel was not yet familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him.

The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am. You called me.”

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the youth. So Eli said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’”

When Samuel went back to his place, the Lord came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, “Samuel! Samuel!”

And Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Discussion Question 1:

What do you learn from Samuel about being willing to listen to God? Why might learning to recognize God’s voice take time?

4. Learning to Listen

Samuel did not immediately recognize who was calling him.

That is important.

Learning to hear God is not usually about waiting for a dramatic voice from heaven. God often works through quieter ways: Scripture, prayer, wise Christian counsel, circumstances, the teachings of the faith, and a properly formed conscience.

But listening requires something we do not always like:

silence.

Take two minutes of complete silence.

Put away phones and distractions.

Do not try to force yourself to “hear” anything.

Simply sit before God and pray silently:

“Lord, I am here. Teach me to listen.”

Afterward, discuss:

Was silence easy or difficult? Why?

5. How Do We Know It Is God?

Not every thought or feeling we experience comes from God.

A strong emotion is not automatically God's direction.

A sudden idea is not automatically God's will.

And something we really want is not automatically something God wants.

When trying to discern God's direction, ask:

Does this agree with Scripture?

Does it lead me toward love, truth, humility, and holiness?

Does it encourage me to become more like Christ?

Would I be comfortable bringing this decision honestly before God?

What do mature and trustworthy Christians say about it?

Am I being driven primarily by fear, pride, anger, or selfish desire?

Discernment is not simply asking, **“What do I want?”**

It is learning to ask, **“Lord, what do You want?”**

6. The Shepherd’s Voice — John 10:1–10

Second Reading — John 10:1–10

Jesus said:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”

Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out and find pasture.

A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

Discussion Question 2:

Jesus says His sheep recognize His voice. What are some practical ways a Christian can become more familiar with Jesus' voice?

7. Discernment in Real Life

Break into small groups.

Give each group one scenario.

Scenario 1

You are offered an opportunity that could bring you money and recognition, but accepting it would require you to compromise something you believe is right.

What voices might be competing inside you? What would listening to God look like?

Scenario 2

You are angry with someone and want to send them a message immediately.

What might pride or anger tell you to do? What might patience and Christian love tell you to do?

Scenario 3

You feel called to take a step of faith, but you are afraid of failing.

How could you distinguish healthy caution from fear that is keeping you from doing what is right?

Scenario 4

Your friends encourage you to participate in something you know is wrong because they say, “It’s no big deal.”

What would it look like to listen to God’s voice instead of the crowd?

Afterward, have each group explain its scenario and response.

8. Your “Samuel Moment”

Take a sheet of paper and complete these three sentences:

“God, I think You may be inviting me to...”

“The biggest thing making it difficult for me to respond is...”

“One step I can take is...”

Do not worry about having everything figured out.

The goal is simply to become more attentive.

Then spend another minute in silence.

Pray:

“Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.”

9. A Week of Listening

For the next seven days, try a simple practice.

Spend **five minutes each day** in silence with God.

Use this pattern:

1. Be still.

Put away your phone and distractions.

2. Read.

Read a short passage from one of the Gospels.

3. Listen.

Ask, “Lord, what are You showing me?”

4. Respond.

Write down one action you believe God is calling you to take.

5. Act.

Do something concrete with what you have learned.

At the end of the week, look back at what you wrote.

10. What Is God Asking From Me?

Gather together for a final reflection.

Think about your life right now.

Is God asking you to **stop** something?

Is He asking you to **start** something?

Is He asking you to **forgive**?

Is He asking you to **trust**?

Is He asking you to **serve**?

Is He asking you to **be patient**?

Is He asking you to **step forward in courage**?

Or perhaps He is simply asking you to become quiet enough to hear Him.

Spend one final minute in silence.

Then pray together.

11. Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Lord Jesus, You know us and call us by name. Teach us to recognize Your voice in the midst of the noise of the world. Give us wisdom when we are uncertain, courage when we are afraid, and humility when we want our own way. Help us become familiar with Your Word and attentive to Your presence. Protect us from voices that lead us away from You. May we always seek Your truth, follow Your will, and trust where You lead us. Make our hearts quiet enough to hear You and brave enough to obey. Amen.

Leader:

“The Sacred Heart of Jesus for the World!”

All:

“The World for the Sacred Heart!”