

LISTENING TO GOD'S QUESTIONS

God created us for a personal relationship with Him. In the opening chapters of the Old Testament we read that God created humanity in His own image, breathed life into His supreme creation, and was pleased with His creation:

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (*Genesis 2:7, NRSV*).

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (*Genesis 1:27, NLT*).

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (*Genesis 1:31*).

Early in Scripture we see God in relationship with humanity. His conversations with His created beings give us insight into His desire for fellowship. The questions He asks, placing Him in control of the conversations and expecting the listener to reply, are intriguing:

“Where are you?” (*Genesis 3:9*).

“Who told you that you were naked?” (*Genesis 3:11*).

“Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?” (*Genesis 3:11, NLT*).

“What is this you have done?” (*Genesis 3:13*).

God not only sees our actions; He also expects us to confess them to Him.

God spoke to Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, in *Genesis 4*. Once again He asked pointed questions, expecting a response and revealing that He’s aware of our emotions and what’s in our hearts.

To Cain, God asked, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?” (*Genesis 4:6*).

Cain would have been wise to listen and heed God’s advice: “You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master” (*Genesis 4:7, NLT*).

After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God continued to question Cain: “Where is your brother Abel?” (Genesis 4:9). “What have you done?” (Genesis 4:10).

God’s next word is “Listen!” (Genesis 4:10).

In prayer, an emphasis is often placed on confession, asking, praise, thanksgiving, intercession—the part we ourselves play in the conversation. Listening is frequently neglected or sometimes even ignored.

It’s obvious from these conversations in Genesis that God expects us to listen to Him and that disobedience to His instructions is serious and reaps consequences.

It’s also clear that God continues conversations even when His creatures disappoint Him.

Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

But the LORD said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden (*Genesis 4:13-16*).

Might Cain’s story have ended differently had he listened and heeded God’s warning?



Our friend’s life was spiraling downward. He had once been active in church, serving in leadership roles. Now his marriage was crumbling. He was having an affair with another woman and was rebellious toward God. Months into this lifestyle change, his family had lost hope, and he had no intentions of changing. He tells that one day as he was traveling in his truck, he sensed a voice saying to him, “Don’t go down that hill!” He believed this was a divine warning. He turned his truck around, went immediately to the other woman, told her the affair was off, and returned to his wife. Years later, his wife confirmed that he immediately repaired his relationship with God, with his family, and with her. I asked him once if he ever went down that hill.

“Absolutely not—I was afraid to!” he said. This was a man who, unlike Cain, hearkened to God’s warning.



Recently in my listening time, after reading the account of Jesus healing the blind man in Luke 18:35-43, I sensed God asking me the precise question he had asked the blind man: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Luke 18:41). That question opened the door for me to pour out my heart to the Lord. I have learned through my listening times that God asks probing questions, gives sound advice, and lets me know that He not only expects obedience but is also waiting to listen to my heart cries and questions.

This month, practice asking and answering questions as you read and pray.

- Asking questions as you read is an excellent retention skill.
- Asking questions during dialogue keeps the conversation alive.
- Asking the question *Are you saying what I think I hear you saying?* helps clarify and aids communication.

Most of the “Listen through Scripture” passages are the words of Jesus. Watch for the questions He asks, and underline them. Probe the depths of your heart to see how you might have answered each question. Ask yourself what emotions Jesus or His listeners might be experiencing. Put yourself into the scene. What would you be feeling?

Do you recall your first conversation with God?

What are some questions God has asked you in the past?

What question is He asking you today?

Listen to and answer God’s questions to you.

Respond to questions you read in Scripture.

Ask yourself, *What is this saying to me?*

Following each scripture will be a short reading, “What I sensed God saying to me,” that came through my personal listening times over the years. There is then a space to write what you sense God saying to you as you wait quietly in His presence. If you’ve never practiced listening as a part of your prayer and devotional time, I invite you to start today.

Focus for the Month:

Genesis 1-4

John 1; 5-15

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 1:1-5, NLT:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Face the New Year with confidence and expectation. I will renew your strength for the assignments I give you. The year lies before you like an open book filled with mystery and curiosity as to how it will end. The pages will unfold chapter by chapter, day by day, week by week. I am the God of eternal renewal. The New Year holds new adventures, new insights, new treasures! Explore and hold dear each one as I, the Creator, paint the landscape and details of your journey.

What message is God giving you?

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 5:24 AND 6:40:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (5:24).

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (6:40).

What I sensed God saying to me:

I have given you eternal life. I came to give you abundant life; to reveal truth to you; to set you free from the bondage of sin. Rejoice! Victory is assured.

What message is God giving you?

Listen through scripture:

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty (6:35).

What I sensed God saying to me:

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 7:37-39:

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

What I sensed God saying to me:

My Spirit lives in you. I am a holy God. Be holy and follow my example. As you seek my face and obey my instructions, you will reflect my holiness.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 8:31-32, NLT:

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

What I sensed God saying to me:

It is my desire for you to be a person of truth in all your dealings. Renounce immediately anything in your spirit that you would be ashamed for others to see—envy, jealousy, selfishness, unkind thoughts.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 10:27:

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

What I sensed God saying to me:

The more you listen for my voice, the easier it will be to recognize it. I want to lead you and your loved ones. You are mine. Look to me, and I will help you have peace.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 12:25-26, NLT:

Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Follow me. I have led you before. I am sufficient for all your needs. You also found my joy in difficult circumstances. Other times you have followed me down paths that looked rosy but discovered rocky roads and hard times. Look back and see me providing and walking with you through the darkest times. That is why you can follow me confidently, knowing I have been with you in the past, assured that I will walk with you into the unknown.

What message is God giving you?

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 13:12-17:

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

What I sensed God saying to me:

I have called you to be my servant. Remain alert for opportunities to love and show a Christlike spirit. Show courtesy to all, even the evil, ill-mannered people you meet. Keep a positive outlook. Look for the good in all people created in my image.

What message is God giving you?

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 14:1:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Bring your troubled heart to me. Treat today as a holy day, for it is. Sing and pray scripture, and, of course, live it. Each time you feel a gentle breeze or hear the wind blow, think of me, the divine Holy Spirit who lives in you.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 14:9-12:

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

What I sensed God saying to me:

Your faith will be strengthened. You will see. Listen in silence before me.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

Listen through scripture:

If you love me, you will obey what I command (14:15).

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.

If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they be-

Continue to read the Word prayerfully, probing, digging, listening for truths from me to enlighten your own heart and to share with others. This is how you learn what I desire from you.

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 14:27:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Breathe in my peace. Give today to me. Be benevolent, friendly, gentle, and kind. I love you even when you aren't perfect. I know and understand your heart. Take my peace with you into your world today.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 15:9-11:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Your word today is joy. Receive my joy and spread it. Do not let any person or any situation rob you of joy.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

TODAY IS _____

Listen through scripture:

JOHN 15:16:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

What I sensed God saying to me:

Have you noticed that I often repeat messages to you? Take my words seriously. Keep my face ever before you, and I will fill your mind with guidance and help you control your thoughts, attitudes, and responses. I know the plans I have for you. Don't lose hope or your zeal for my work.

What message is God giving you?

[illegible]

[illegible]

Take a few minutes to read again some of God's messages to you. Did He ask you any questions? Have you answered His questions and thanked Him for His loving companionship? Continue the practice of watching for God's questions in scripture, and listening in your personal quiet times as you move ahead to the emphasis of the next section: "Listening with an Obedient Spirit."