

Section 5

Additional Hints

Many people find it very helpful to write what they hear every day, and then look back over a week to notice the patterns that come up. Can you listen to others and hear course corrections? Do some testing of your perception. Is this God speaking? Are you becoming more compassionate? Does what you do and hear fit with the stories in scripture?

Your prayer may be

Shouting at God for justice, asking why.
Adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.
Listening, paying attention.
Being prayerful during the day, open in mind, heart, and will.

You can try practicing this through the day, in ways such as

- Being intentional about taking in a breath and letting go. Remember to let go, lighten up, let come.
- When you are caught by something—defensiveness, anger, lust, anxiety, fear—Stop. Step back and look. Listen to God’s truth. You are loved.
- Let your brain and nervous system react for 90 seconds, and then stop, look at it, and choose to let it go, and decide what is appropriate now.
- Let your body pray. Lift up your hands to heaven, spread them out like Jesus offering himself up. Raise them up with the Spirit emerging in generosity. Kneel.
- Walk. Play.

There are some styles of perceiving God

To those whose preference for noticing is with their **mind**, God may be revealed through their open mind. Not just analytical thinking, but a shift to more intuitive thinking. This pattern usually sees the whole picture. There is an “aha” moment. The traditional language for this is “the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit” – a connection between inner and outer. Our ego is in second place to scripture, a play or movie, life. They “speak.” It may also be a “small voice” within: a hunch, a glimmer of an idea.

For those who perceive with their **hearts**, God may appear in belonging, having one’s heart touched. God appears in music, passion, connection. This may be subtle or quite dramatic (usually preferred). When this pattern of knowing is in dialogue with someone else, real or in the

imagination, there is a connection, something more alive than usual. People move from the old way of knowing things from their feelings alone.

There are those who find out, learn through **action**. They “know” something as they do it. Just thinking is not enough. They know love when they are serving, giving, being cared for, literally touched. Jesus says “Take, eat.” Baptism is real and tangible. Yes, they know, upon reflection, that the tangible is simile or metaphor for an inner or spiritual reality. But God is there when they play with their dog, take a walk, dance. God may call them to step out in faith.

There are those who perceive things by **being** together. God is in a relationship of friendship or love when two people are quiet and look in the same direction. Or people may be doing something, but aware of the link between them. Sometimes this is done in silence. God “speaks” in the silence. A favorite text is “Be still and know that I am God.” Increased compassion is the result.

Most of us are aware of all of these modes. For decision-making or discernment of God’s will, this is a suggestion:

- **Open Mind:** What are the facts? What is going on? What are the ideas about reality? What does scripture say?
- **Open Heart:** How can we tell our stories and listen to those of others, go behind the ideas to the living person? What may God be saying in and through people?
- **Open Will:** Where can we let go of our preconception of reality, our feelings, our insistence that we are right? Where can we let go? May God speak through, in, the silence with a nudge, the glimmer of a new approach?
- **Open Action:** How can we learn by doing things, one step at a time? No big long-term vision, but a day-by-day walking with God, getting directions.

And for daily practice, the “Stop, Look, and Listen” encourages the use of all four styles or patterns.