



## At Seek Well, we believe that listening to Jesus is the lost art of our faith.

It may sound extreme, but ask yourself, “when is the last time you sat still for 20 minutes just to listen to Jesus?” For most of us, it has probably been a long time. We call this the lost art of our faith for a reason. As a general rule, Christians have forgotten about this practice. We are so busy doing, that we forget to just BE STILL and LISTEN to Jesus.

We are on a mission to reclaim this lost art. We believe that this simple and powerful discipline has the ability to change your life and the lives around you. Before you get started, let's make sure we are all on the same page. If you have never done this before, don't worry! We are here to guide you on this journey.

## What is listening?

God communicates in a lot of different ways. To name a few, He speaks through scripture, through people, and through our circumstances. He also desires to speak to us intimately, as a father to a child, often through a whisper. But here's the thing, if we want to hear that whisper, we have to lean in and quiet ourselves long enough to hear it.



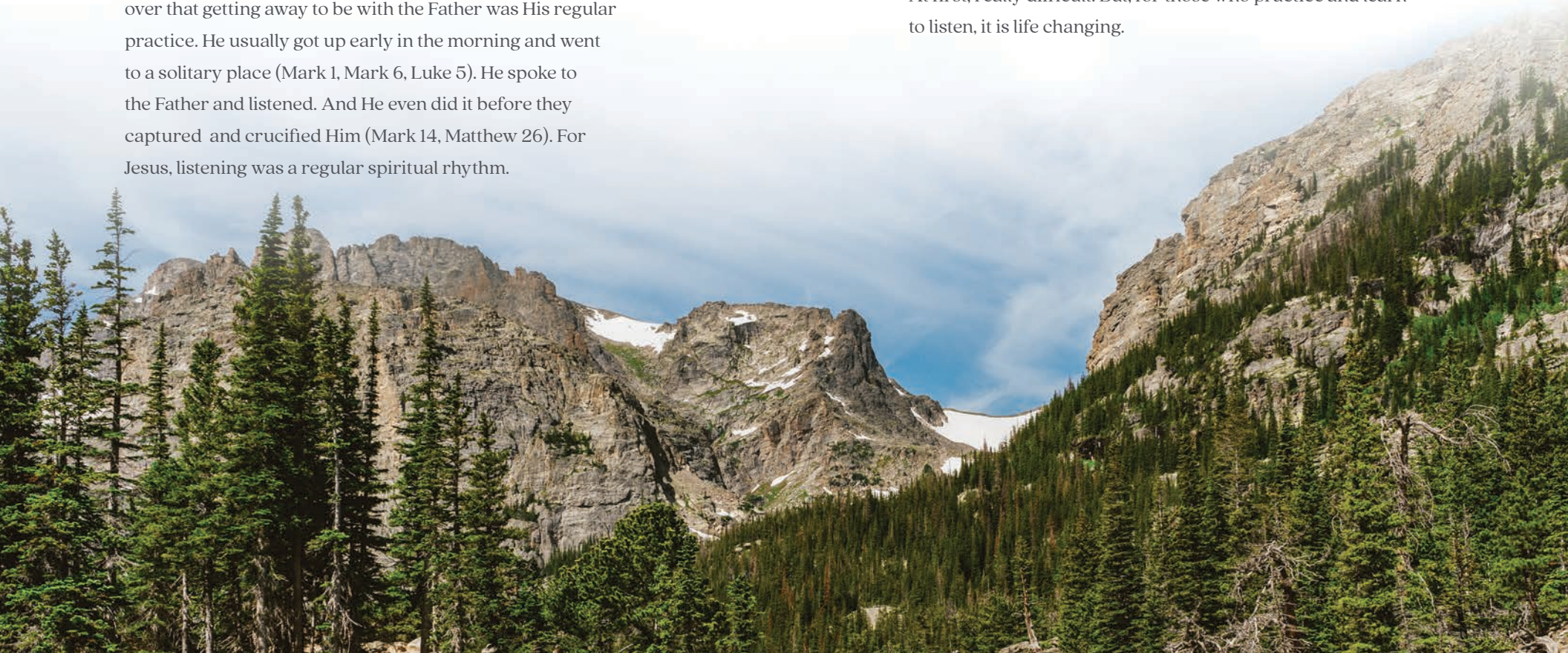
Listening is not just hearing; it is paying attention and giving consideration to what you hear. Have you ever had a conversation with a friend or family member, and before they finished their statement, you were thinking of your response? That's hearing, not listening. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. Listening requires intention and involves putting down our thoughts to sit with and contemplate what we are hearing. It takes surrendering our agenda in order to move beyond hearing to listening.

Scripture is filled with examples of how to slow down and listen. Jesus is our best example. He showed us over and over that getting away to be with the Father was His regular practice. He usually got up early in the morning and went to a solitary place (Mark 1, Mark 6, Luke 5). He spoke to the Father and listened. And He even did it before they captured and crucified Him (Mark 14, Matthew 26). For Jesus, listening was a regular spiritual rhythm.

Did you know that Jesus wasn't the first one to practice listening? Throughout the Old Testament, we find men and women who would enter into silence with the Creator to seek His voice. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Elijah and all the prophets; they all communed with the Father, listening for His voice, to shape them and guide them.

Listening is not talking to God. It is not journaling, reading, or singing. Listening is being attuned to the voice of God in your life, and being present enough to take notice.

This spiritual practice is a lost art for a reason. Tuning out the rest of the world to be fully present with Jesus can be difficult. At first, really difficult. But, for those who practice and learn to listen, it is life changing.



## How do I listen?

Let's get down to the practical. Listening takes a mixture of creating the right environment, some knowledge and practice. It takes time, so don't get frustrated if you don't hear anything at first. Give yourself some grace. Keep pressing into the silence and wait patiently for His voice. He will speak as we surrender our agenda for His.

Over the years we've learned a lot about what it takes to listen. Here are a few key principles we've incorporated into our own listening.

**1 Get a time and place.** When we look through the Bible, we see listening spots everywhere. For Samuel, it was the tabernacle at Shiloh. For David, it was the cave of Adullam. For Elijah, it was Mount Carmel. For Daniel, it was an upstairs window facing Jerusalem. For Jesus, it was often the Garden of Gethsemane. When we survey Scripture, we see God showing up in specific places, at specific times, and in powerful ways. We don't think anything has changed. Most often listening doesn't happen by default; it happens by design.

You have to learn to be still and enter the quiet on purpose. It really helps if you set a time and find a regular place. It can be a closet, a park, an office or a walking path; just be intentional and consistent.

**2 Settle and eliminate the noise.** Have you ever wondered why God often speaks in a whisper? When someone speaks in a whisper, you have to get very close to hear. In fact, you have to put your ear near that person's mouth. By nature, it is intimate communication. We lean towards a whisper and that is what God wants. He speaks in a whisper because He wants intimacy with us and to be as close as divinely possible!

There are a few practices that will help settle your soul. These meditative tips will help you eliminate the noise so you can listen.

**Shut off all technology.** The last thing you need is a text message or phone call during your listening time. So put the phone and laptop in the other room!

**Pay attention to your posture.** Sit in a comfortable position, eyes closed and relax. Listen to what is around you. Pay attention to the details of your environment. When you are ready, incline your heart towards God.

**Take a few deep breaths.** Breathing has an amazing way of calming the soul. As you settle, breathe in deeply through your nose, hold your breath for 4-5 seconds, then slowly exhale through your mouth. Try this for a few minutes. Think only about your breathing.

**Brain dump.** Sometimes when you try to get quiet, your mind can race. "I have to take out the trash, pick up the kids, or send that email." This is completely normal. Have a pad of paper ready during your time of listening. Then when those thoughts pop up, write them down so you won't forget. You'll be amazed how good this makes you feel, and you can get back to listening.

**3 Invite God in.** As you settle into your listening place, don't forget to invite Jesus into the conversation. As you settle your mind and heart, pray a simple prayer that opens your heart to God. Something like this:

*"Jesus, I'm here. I invite you to speak to me; clearly and loudly. Silence the other voices that are competing for my attention. Eliminate the distractions and noise in my life, so that in this moment, I can clearly hear your voice. Speak Lord, I'm listening."*

We call this a **listening prayer**. It is simple, but essential. Don't forget, there is an enemy who would like nothing more than to keep you distracted. It is critical that you invite Jesus into this moment so that you **ONLY** hear the voice of God.

**4 Read scripture.** Now that we are settled and have invited Jesus to speak, scripture is an incredibly powerful tool to set the tone for our time with God. However, we would encourage you in this experience, to read scripture different than you have in the past. Don't read it for content; read it for soul connection. Try reading two to eight verses, allowing the scripture to wash over your soul. Read it four or five times, slowly, and hang on every word. Then, as you key in on a phrase or word, let it begin to marinate in your soul.

**5 Ask questions, then listen.** The key to good listening is listening. Often, we want to do the talking. We come to Jesus to tell Him what we need. Listening is a type of communication with God that involves active passivity. We like to say that listening should be 10% speaking and 90% listening. It is ok to ask good questions like "why am I feeling this way?" or "what do you want me to know right now?" But choose to be actively passive. He has a lot to say if we would just listen.

One more thing... our temptation is to quit listening when there is an extended period of silence. The stillness can be intimidating and a little uncomfortable. But, it is in these moments that we become vulnerable to who we are and recognize our own brokenness. So, don't move! Stay still and persevere through the silence.

**6 Write it down.** There is something powerful about processing what God is speaking to you. It is hard to explain, but the continued contemplative posture of journaling after you listen can be healing. As you finish listening, take five minutes and write down anything that sticks out to you. We think you will be surprised how impactful this can be.

**7 Practice.** It may be new and awkward, but the only way to learn this lost art is to practice and make listening a part of your daily rhythm. This simply has to be a priority in your life. If you are intentional about this spiritual discipline, Jesus will meet you where you are and transform you into the person He created you to be. We promise. We've experienced it. But, it takes time. It takes showing up, often to the same place, ready to hear from God.

What happens when  
I hear something?



Ever have a premonition that turns out to be utterly wrong?

We've been there too. Sometimes, when we listen, we get a feeling, a word, a picture, an emotion, a memory or a scripture verse that God is speaking over us. Often, it can have profound meaning that produces a deep change in our heart. And, sometimes, it is clearly bad pizza. How do we know the difference?

**When we hear something from God, first, we need to run it through the lens of scripture.** If it lines up with the character of God and His word, then there is a good chance He is speaking. As an example, if God spoke, “son, I love you” as an encouragement or “love your wife” as a rebuke to a married man, both of those line up with who God is (1John 4:16) and His word (Ephesians 5:25).

**Simply put, nothing you hear, feel, or see in a listening time can ever contradict scripture.**

The Bible is God's written and definitive word about who He is and who we are to be in this world. Second Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV) says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The Bible is our anchor, foundation, guidepost, and our authority that vetts our emotions and experiences. Anytime we are in a listening posture, we must submit what we hear to God's revealed Word. So, if it doesn't line up with scripture, it is not from God.

**Second, write down what you are hearing.** Then, come back to it in a few days. It is amazing what a little perspective can do. A lot of times it gives us the ability to see clearly or gain discernment. When we sit for a while with something we believe God said, it often causes us to go back to God and ask for clarity.

**Still not sure?** Seek wise counsel. Scripture teaches us that we should seek wise counsel to gain understanding (Proverbs 1:5). There is incredible wisdom in asking for help as you try to discern what God is saying to you. If you are not sure how to interpret what He is saying or impressing upon you, ask someone a little older and a little wiser than you. One word of advice — the character and spiritual maturity of the person giving the counsel is critical. Make sure you pick your counselors carefully!

