

The Other Side of Silence

by Mark Virkler

"My sheep hear my voice," (John 10:27) said Jesus as He ministered in Judea. He Himself lived out of His Father's voice, and said, "I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear I judge" (John 5:30). And what did Jesus hear? "The will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30).

Today God earnestly desires His sheep to clearly hear His voice, and to experience intimacy with Him. He places His Spirit within us so that we might experience the tenderness of "Abba [Daddy], Father," and know the "witness of the Spirit within" (Rom. 8:15,16). However, in an age of rationalism, many Christians, including myself, have struggled desperately to break through to the other side of silence and experience two-way dialogue with God. To set aside the world of cognitive thought and begin moving in the world of spirit impressions is not an easy task for most Westerners. However, this is what God is calling His Church to experience as He once again draws them into spiritual intimacy with Himself.

I hope we all agree that God desires and is able to communicate with His children. What Father doesn't? God proves His earnest desire by communicating with His chosen throughout every age. He then tears the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19-22), so that all may enter into the innermost chamber, alone with Him, and share concerning the things which are in their hearts. In this way God makes us all a "holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5), so that each of us has the opportunity to commune with Him.

He wanted so much to commune with us that He sent His Son to die so that spiritual fellowship could be re-established with His children. And what does the God, whose most pervasive characteristic is *agape* love, want to talk about? You guessed it— His unconditional and unending love toward every one of His children and every part of His creation. So what do we miss when we miss the intimacy of spiritual communion? We miss the experience of being "built up" by unconditional love (Jude 20-22; 1 Cor. 14:3).

But now comes the problem: How can one move into clear, inner two-way dialogue with Almighty God? Let me lay out four simple biblical truths which I have found have paved the way for me, as well as hundreds of others, to enter this new dimension in their Christian lives.

First of all, it is important to have a clear understanding of what His voice, spoken within us, sounds like. I have found that the thoughts from my *mind* are *meditated*, while thoughts from my *spirit* are *spontaneous*. Thus to move into the spirit dimension, I must go beyond simple cognition to spontaneous, effortless flow. The Hebrew word for intercession is *paga*, which literally means "to strike or light upon by chance," or "an accidental intersecting." Putting this literal definition of *paga* together with the idea of intercession, we come to a beautiful biblical example of Spirit-to-spirit communication which is familiar to almost every Christian. Can you remember a time when you suddenly had the impression that you should pray for someone? You had not been thinking about them; the thought just came out of nowhere. That was *paga*. You were experiencing God's voice as a "chance idea" that intersects our minds, not flowing from the normal, meditative process, but simply appearing in our hearts. A chance idea. An idea from God lighting upon our hearts and being registered in our minds as a spontaneous idea.

Now the best way to pass from *cognition* into *Spirit flow* is through the *use of vision*. I have found that vision opens the door to the Spirit world. God granted vision to His children again and again, from Genesis to Revelation. John "looked" for a vision in Revelation 4:1 and found that "Immediately [he] was in the Spirit" (Rev. 4:2), with an unfolding panoramic scene which included dialogue with God. So if I want to tune myself to the Holy

Spirit, I open up the eyes of my heart (Eph. 1:18) and “prime the pump” by “looking” as John did in Revelation 4:1. Then I too find myself “*in the Spirit*” as John did in Revelation 4:2. The most effective vision I’ve found for communion with God is a vision of Jesus and me sitting or walking together, talking. As I gaze at the inner picture, looking into His loving gentle form, I find, as John, that the picture comes alive and a flow of spontaneous ideas and impressions begin pouring forth.

As a final step, I begin writing down these impressions, as the Apostle John did, or as David the psalmist did, or as Habakkuk the prophet did; and I find that the door is thrown open for two-way dialogue with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Out of the meditation of my mind, I may ask Him questions, and from the spontaneous thoughts and impressions of my spirit/Spirit, He answers back. I find with an incredible thrill that I have broken through to the other side of silence, and I have begun dialoguing with God! Hallelujah! What could be more precious, more life-giving, more fulfilling than to commune with God concerning the things that are on His heart, concerning the things that are on my heart, concerning the love that is in both of our hearts. Now the purpose of life is complete. Now the fullness of redemption is realized, as God and I are joined through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

Now let us look a bit more closely at some of these steps. I believe that it is through the *combination* of all of these steps that communion occurs. They work as a package deal. Consider Habakkuk 2:1-4. *First*, Habakkuk went away to “*stand at his guard-post.*” In other words, he had a quiet place to which he went when he wanted to hear God speak. *Secondly*, “*he kept watch to see.*” In other words, he opened himself up to vision by watching for it. *Thirdly*, he heard God “speak and answer” through the flow from within his spirit. And *finally*, he wrote it out as the Lord spoke to him and said, “*Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets . . .*”

I have found that writing it down, *journaling* as I call it, is of incredible value. Before I began journaling, I would wait quietly for God to speak, and as soon as the first impression came I would immediately begin testing it. Now, to “test” is to “doubt” and to doubt is to “jam the receiver” of intuition, because “*he who comes to God must believe*” (Heb. 11:6). So my instant testing (doubting) was cutting off the spirit flow almost as soon as it began. *Now*, I can “write in faith” knowing that when I am done I will have all the time I need to test it personally, as well as submitting it to others for confirmation or adjustment. So now the flow can continue unbroken for thirty minutes, an hour, or even more, as I dialogue with my wonderful Savior.

What does this all mean? It means that I have entered into the Holy of Holies and experienced my God in spirit-to-Spirit communication. This is exactly what Jesus experienced as He flowed only out of the Father’s initiative (John 5:30). He repeats it over and over: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing*” (John 5:19). “*I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear I judge*” (John 8:26). “*I speak the things which I have seen in the presence of my Father*” (John 8:38). If Jesus needed to live this way, and took the time to repeat it over and over to us, is it not so we too will learn to live this way?

Look at the Apostle John’s life. “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet, saying, ‘Write in a book what you see’*” (Rev. 1:10,11). You notice several things: 1) It was the Lord’s day, a day John had set aside to quietly seek Him. 2) He was sensitized within (i.e., to spontaneous impressions from his spirit). 3) He heard a *voice*. 4) He journaled, wrote it down. And so vision was incorporated into the experience—“what you see.” May I again repeat: if you will use *all* the above ingredients, you will find that you too can break through into spirit-to-Spirit communion.

For a journal, I recommend a simple spiralbound note pad (or something fancier if you wish). Simply write the date of the entry, what you want to say to Jesus, and what He says back. You may wish to skip a line between your words and those of Jesus. You will find that as you go back and review your journal, you will be impressed at the wisdom and love of God flowing through your pen.