

Hearing the Voice of God

By Mark E. Moore, PhD

How can Christians hear the voice of God? Perhaps we ought to first ask how *have* Christians heard the voice of God? The list accumulates fairly easily. While there is obvious overlap in some of the items and perhaps other items that could be added or reworded, this list is enough to demonstrate that God has spoken in many ways in the past:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture and its interpretation 2. The person and story of Jesus 3. Prophecy 4. Dreams/visions 5. Audibly, “Word from the Lord” 6. Prayer/answers 7. Fasting 8. Life experiences and circumstances 9. Testimony of others 10. The testimony of history 11. Internal conviction or prompting 12. Guidance of the Holy Spirit 13. Conscience 14. Numinous experiences | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. <i>Imago Dei</i>: Reason, intuition, instinct etc. 16. Discipline/reconciliation 17. Visual arts 18. Music 19. Liturgy 20. Creeds 21. Creation 22. Natural Disasters 23. Through the poor, outcast, ‘other’ 24. Family relationships 25. Mentors 26. Elders 27. Sacraments 28. Spiritual Gifts |
|--|---|

Given God’s manifold means of speaking, and his obvious desire to communicate with his people, why are we having such a hard time hearing? The following chart, though artificial and awkward, might suggest something valuable. These twenty-eight items will be placed in one of nine boxes. The column on the left represents means of speaking that are the most objective. That is to say, God gives us a specific content message, the kind of thing that can be reduced to writing. Those on the right represent more experiential teaching, the kind of rules of life you learned in kindergarten. The column in the middle contains those items that are somewhere in between. The top row represents ways of God speaking that are the most individualistic whereas the row on the bottom contains means of communication that take place corporately.

	Objective	Somewhat Objective	Experiential
Individual	Dreams/visions Word from the Lord	Prayer/ Answers Fasting Holy Spirit conviction/guidance Conscience	Numinous experiences Life Experiences Failure Silence
	Scripture	Jesus Visual Art Imago Dei Discipline/Reconciliation	Music History Disasters Poor, outcast, other Creation Testimony
Corporate	Spiritual Gifts Discipline/Reconciliation Sacrament/Creeds Prophecy/Tongues/Interpret.	Mentors Liturgy Elders	Family relationships Testimony of others

Because, in the modern Western world have privileged individualism and objectivity (a) we have severely limited the means of hearing God’s voice and (b) distrusted those means that are in the box we prize the most, i.e. dreams, visions, and a ‘word from the Lord.’ Perhaps a reevaluation of multiplicity of God’s speaking would enable us to hear more what God is trying to say to us.