

## **Section 26: The 'Listening To God' Service**

Biblical passages stressing the importance of listening to God, ascertaining His will or wishing to make active use of spiritual gifts may be read aloud, providing a firm foundation to any discernment ministry.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis of this session is upon listening to, rather than speaking to God, with the express aim of discerning His will for a particular situation.

**1) P1:** Dear fellow believers, let us [by divine grace] begin this time of listening to God by reflecting upon the [symbolic] representations of the Holy Spirit, as portrayed in God's Word<sup>2</sup>

**2) P2:** This we will do, Amen

**3) P1:** Thank you Lord for the many and varied representations of the [your] Holy Spirit, which are as follows: -

Clothing (Luke 24:49)

**4) P2:** The Holy Spirit's protective covering, guarding us from sin and temptation

**5) P1:** Dove (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:32 & John 1:32)<sup>3</sup>

**6) P2:** The Holy Spirit's gentle peacefulness, consoling and soothing us

**7) P1:** Guarantee (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5 & Ephesians 1:13-14)

**8) P2:** The Holy Spirit's pledge or promise, guaranteeing our glorification in the afterlife

**9) P1:** Fire (Matthew 3:11-12 & Acts 2:3)

**10) P2:** The Holy Spirit's sanctifying presence and judgement, empowering us to witness effectively to the gospel

**11) P1:** Oil (Luke 4:18 & Acts 10:38)

**12) P2:** The Holy Spirit's anointing, consecrating<sup>4</sup> us for service, providing us with both healing and enlightenment

**13) P1:** Seal (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13 & 4:30)

**14) P2:** The Holy Spirit's stamp of security or ownership, confirming that we have God as our Father

**15) P1:** Water (John 4:14 & 7:38-39)

**16) P2:** The Holy Spirit's cleansing and removal of sin, enabling us to begin afresh

**17) P1:** Wind (John 3:8 & Acts 10:38)

**18) P2:** The Holy Spirit's mysterious life-giving direction and guidance prompting us to follow Christ

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<sup>1</sup> A discernment ministry sets out to ascertain (discern) what God may be saying and doing at a particular moment in time. It also exposes errors which may have arisen within the Church.

<sup>2</sup> A good outline of the information (presented here in liturgical form) will be found in the very helpful study manual of 'The New Life Seminars,' attended by the writer during March 1977. These were conducted by Ian Leitch, working under the auspices of the Heralds Trust both still ongoing today (July 2009). These seminars were immensely helpful in stabilising writer in the Christian faith and also in igniting his interest in Bible doctrine. He is indebted to all who encouraged him in his earlier days as a Christian.

<sup>3</sup> These scripture passages assume that all of those attributes manifested by Christ are equally manifested by God the Father and the Holy Spirit

<sup>4</sup> Meaning to be 'set apart' or 'dedicated' to God's service

**19) P1:** [Having completed this reflection] let us now [by divine grace], take time to listen carefully to what God is saying through the sacred person of His Holy Spirit (Isaiah 49:1)<sup>5</sup>

**20) P2:** He is the eternal Holy Spirit who glorifies Jesus by always acting in full accordance with the teachings and practices of Holy Scripture; we reject the view that He is an impersonal force, power or influence (like electricity) (Hebrews 9:14)

**21) P1:** He will never in any way, act [or say anything] contrary to Scripture (John 10:35)

**22) P2:** Because He is the inspirer of God's Word, the Holy Scriptures (1 Peter 1:11)

**23) P1:** For Him to act [or say anything] against scripture would not be possible because He is the Spirit of truth – who boldly confesses that, "*Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*" (John 14:17 & 1 John 4:2b)

**24) P2:** He loves to gather people of all nations and backgrounds to Christ in order to delight our Heavenly Father (Revelation 7:9f)

**25) P1:** He does not exalt Himself but, with great humility, chooses always to direct attention to God the Father and God the Son (John 16:14). Yet He is God the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity [Echad Unity], possessing [to the fullest degree] all of the attributes of deity (Genesis 1:2 & Psalm 139:1-12). Like God, He can be blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31) and like God, His proven guidance is given to be obeyed (Acts 7:51-54, & 1 Thessalonians 5:21a)

**26) P2:** Out of love, the Holy Spirit chooses to subordinate Himself in order to glorify the Father and the Son. However, in no way does His willing subordination lessen His own deity

**27) P1:** Although not hostile to genuine expressions of human emotion, the Holy Spirit does not drive people into a frenzy or cause them to lose their self-control (1 Corinthians 14:32)

**28) P2:** He does not reduce people, (created in the image of God), to the level of beasts by provoking them to make animal noises, or to behave with wild abandonment (Genesis 1:27)

**29) P1:** Should these things continue to happen, it is a sign that the Spirit has withdrawn His presence. [Any subsequent behavioural manifestations will not have originated in the Holy Spirit but will be completely worldly and bereft of the Spirit's blessing]. (Genesis 6:3a & Daniel 4:28f)

**30) P2:** Lord, we beg you, do not cast us away from your presence and "*take not Your Holy Spirit from us,*" (Psalm 51:11). Rather, may your Spirit guide, bless and direct us always, Amen.

**31) P1:** May we now give our careful attention to what Scripture has to say about the Person and work of the Holy Spirit

Appropriate scripture passages may now be read, either by the Presiding Participant alone or together with the whole gathering

**32) All:** These are the teachings of Scripture to which the Holy Spirit would always adhere

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<sup>5</sup> It is strongly recommended that a thorough confession of sin be made before time is given to listening to the Holy Spirit. This should ensure that believers are less vulnerable to the wiles of Satan. If time is short, there should be a jump from Section 4 to Section 26. However, a sincere affirmation of doctrinal orthodoxy would encourage greater receptivity to the Holy Spirit's workings. Also, just as satanic influences tend to work in a situation where heresy is prevalent, so the Holy Spirit is most actively at work when those truths He has recorded in scripture are sincerely reiterated and re-affirmed. Also, just as heretical statements allow for the possibility of an incorrect lifestyle, so reiterated doctrinal truths allow the Holy Spirit to quicken and enliven a believer's lifestyle.

**33) P1:** He is the Spirit of truth – were He to contradict God’s word He would be contradicting Himself - thereby showing Himself to be a Spirit of confusion. Furthermore, it is expressly promised that: “*God is not the author of confusion but of peace, power, love and of a sound mind*” (1 Corinthians 14:33a & 2 Timothy 1:7b)

**34) P2:** “*Speak*” to us Lord, your servants are listening (1 Samuel 3:10)

**35) P1:** However, to receive anything of the Spirit of God we must first of all be true believers in Christ, otherwise the workings of His Spirit will be meaningless to us, (1 Corinthians 2:14a). Moreover, even as [regenerated] children of God, we can only receive the Holy Spirit if we go directly to our Father through our priestly mediator the Lord Jesus Christ, (Luke 11:13b & 1 Timothy 2:5). The Holy Spirit is not to be ‘*called down,*’ neither is He to be ‘*invoked*’ – these practices are completely contrary to scripture. Remember, the Holy Spirit’s first love [strong desire] is to point people to the Father and to the Son rather than to Himself. Therefore, every attempt to ‘*invoke*’ the Holy Spirit alone betrays a serious ignorance both of His character and of His work

**36) P2:** “*Abba Father,*” let Your Holy Spirit show us more of Jesus, Amen (Romans 8:15c)

**37) P1:** Following the one correct way prescribed in scripture, may we [as a body of believers] ask the Father to send His Holy Spirit upon us. In particular, let us make our prayer through His beloved Son, our sole mediator; trusting that it will be answered in whatever way God sees fit

**38) All:**

1. Heavenly Father, (Luke 11:13)
2. Through your only begotten Son, (John 3:16)
3. The Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians 12:3c)
4. Our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14f)
5. And sole mediator
6. Between you and ourselves (1 Timothy 1:5)
7. We humbly ask you,
8. As undeserving sinners, (Romans 3:9)
9. Saved by your grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
10. To send the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup>
11. In order to communicate your will to us,
12. And to guide us (as a group)
13. Grant us the wisdom
14. To make important decisions
15. And to discern your will (James 1:5)
16. Abba Father, (Galatians 4:6)
17. Outpour your Holy Spirit
18. So that we can bear good fruit (John 15:1-6)
19. And be effective servants (Matthew 25:20)
20. Pleasing to your Son,
21. The Lord Jesus Christ, Amen

Pause

**39) P1:** As the Holy Spirit draws us into the presence of Jesus [and our Heavenly Father] let us remind ourselves that He is:  
*“The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the [reverent] fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11:2)

**40) All:** In addition, we are to be very aware that each one of us has a responsibility to “*Believe not every spirit, but (to) test the spirits to see whether they are of God,*” (1 John 4:1a). Also, we

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<sup>6</sup> Again, the only scriptural route to receive a blessing from the Holy Spirit is to go to the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit is not to be addressed independently.

are to *"Quench not the Spirit, [nor] despise prophesying, [rather we are to] prove all things; [and] hold fast to that which is good."* (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

**41) P1:** In relation to spiritual matters and for our own safety we are to avoid total unbelief at one extreme and a gullible acceptance of everything done or said in the name of God [and Jesus] at the other.

**42) All:** We are to act upon Christ's injunction to be *"As wise as serpents and as harmless as doves"* (Matthew 10:16b)

**43) P1:** Bearing these teachings in mind, we must remain alert and *"Listen carefully to what the Spirit is saying to"* us, His Church [in N.] (Revelation 2:7)

**45) All:** <sup>7</sup>

He is the Spirit, who does not throw us into seizures,  
He is the Spirit, who does not obliterate our personality,  
He is the Spirit, who does not rant, rave or retch,  
Far be it from Him to  
Entice us into a trance-like state or  
To cause us to convulse, roll around or laugh hysterically on the floor

Instead, He is a Spirit  
Of self-control,  
Of sound mind,  
Of wisdom, power and knowledge,  
Who broods gently over a believer,  
Filling their heart with love and  
Enlightening their mind with truth –  
Giving clarity to prayer and, when needed,  
Imparting a fresh vision to show  
A direction which should be taken

Through Him, we revere the written word,  
Through Him, we understand the scriptures,  
Through Him, we are given the strength to apply them,  
He is the author of God's Word,  
And will speak only the truth

He empowers us with many gifts,  
He helps us bear much fruit,  
He grants us courage to  
Witness boldly to the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
For He is the Spirit of holiness,  
Who cleanses, sifts and purifies,  
He is the Spirit of wisdom  
Who guides, directs and illuminates  
He is the Spirit of God  
Who comforts, helps and strengthens –  
He openly testifies that  
Jesus Christ came in the flesh  
To offer a perfect sacrifice for our many sins

He proceeds;  
From the Father and  
Through the Son  
He flows into

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<sup>7</sup> Originally entitled '*Spirit*,' this meditation was written on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2007 in the aftermath of a retreat in which the Holy Spirit had been very present. It describes the effect the Holy Spirit can have on a Christian believer during a time of prayer.

All of Creation,  
Making effective the will of God  
Through Him all things are held together and  
Preserved from chaos

Be submissive to this Spirit,  
Be filled with this Spirit,  
Be zealous in this Spirit,  
Pray in Him,  
Rejoice in Him,  
Worship God in Him;  
For in this Spirit are many blessings  
Follow Him and you will  
Enjoy eternal life

**Pause**

**46) P1:** If anyone has a song, a teaching, an utterance in an unknown language, (along with its interpretation), a [prophetic] disclosure of special knowledge and information you are now [very] welcome to share it – but [please do so] one at a time and in a self-controlled manner that will edify all of us, (1 Corinthians 14:26)

If appropriate, the rest of 1 Corinthians 14 can be read

**47) All:**

Speak to us Abba Father,  
Speak to us through your Son  
The Lord Jesus Christ  
Speak to us by your Holy Spirit  
For we are listening, Amen

At this point, the formal liturgical part of this section closes and time is given to the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself through the spiritual gifts (listed in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14 & 27f). The congregation are free to speak and act as the Holy Spirit leads. However, to prevent any disorderly conduct, the procedures of 1 Corinthians 14 should be rigorously adhered to.

Scope may also be given for the application of Ephesians 5:18-19, Colossians 3:16-17 & James 5:13-15. Near the end of this session, the Presiding Participant should briefly sum up (in point-by-point order) what he believes the Holy Spirit has been saying and doing within the assembled group. This is extremely useful in providing a sense of clarity and may also be a great help for those with a slower understanding. With the summary completed, the group may disperse or a communion celebration begun, (Section 31).