

How Can I Discern if God is Speaking to Me?

Test #1 – Does it Agree with the Bible?

God will never contradict his written word. Luke 21:33 says, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away*”. God’s truth is consistent. He’ll never tell you something that doesn’t line up with the Bible.

Example: the Bible says we shouldn’t marry someone who doesn’t share a personal relationship with Jesus. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 says *Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?* (NLT) If you think God is telling you to marry someone who doesn’t have a relationship with Him, you can be confident you’re not hearing that from God! *If you want to recognize God’s voice, start by asking the question: Does it Agree with the Bible?*

Test #2 – Does it Make Me More Christ-Like?

God says *...our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus* – Philippians 2:5. God’s number one purpose in your life is to make you act, think and speak like Jesus. So the second filter is to ask: “Does it make me more like Christ?” God is never going to tell you to do something that’s unChrist-like. But He will tell you do things that are what Jesus would do. They may not be things that you’d normally do or want to do, but they’re what Jesus would do.

Test #3 – Do Mature Believers Affirm It?

Proverbs 11:14 says: *For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.* Or as the King James Version puts it: *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

If God is speaking to you He will confirm it through other mature believers. That’s one of the purposes of the church, to help confirm if what you think is God speaking to you, actually is. If you don’t like the idea of even asking somebody else about your idea, that should be a huge red flag that the idea did not come from God.

The reason God tells us to get advice is because he wants to save us from a lot of things. Proverbs 11:9 says: *...through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.* (NKJV). Advice from other mature believers can save you from wasting time and money and from making mistake by doing the wrong thing. One of the main reasons people mess up their lives is that they have no godly friends to give them feedback or to speak into their lives. That is why it is so important to be in a small group with fellow believers who can hold you accountable and give you advice.

Test #4 – Is it Consistent with My Life? (with how God made you)

Ephesians 2:10 says that “*We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” God has given you spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, a unique personality and personal experiences that are all part of God’s preparation for you to fulfill the purpose God has for your life. God will never lead you a way that is inconsistent with who he’s made you.

Example: If you have a musical ability, you should use it. But if you’re tone deaf and can’t carry a tune, you shouldn’t try out for American Idol—God certainly won’t tell you to!

It’s possible to have a passion for something but not have the talent for it. You can love something and not be good at it, or called by God to do it. If you think God’s telling you to do something that is completely contrary to who you are, then it’s unlikely to be from God.

Test #5 – Is It My Responsibility?

When Jesus told Peter that he would die a martyr’s death, Peter responded by asking about John—he said, “*Lord, what about him?*” (John 21:21). Peter wasn’t satisfied with God telling him what was going to happen in his life, he wanted to know about John’s future as well. Jesus responded by saying, “*If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me*” (John 21:22). Sometimes we think we’re hearing from God about what someone should do when really it’s just our own personal conviction or worries in our head, but we spiritualize it and tell people what we think God is saying to them. Every believer has a direct line to God and God can and will speak to them directly. Yes, there are times when we are to speak a prophetic warning into people’s lives. We’re responsible to warn lazy people (1 Thessalonians 5:14), and people who have wandered from the truth and are sinning (James 5:19-20). But God isn’t into playing whisperers.

Test #6 – Is it Convicting or Condemning?

Romans 8:1 says that *there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* If what you think you’re hearing from God is a conviction then it’s likely to be from God—but if it makes you feel condemned, it’s either from Satan or your own insecurities. So many Christians live with feelings of condemnation and guilt and they think it’s from God. It’s not! Conviction comes from God but condemnation comes from Satan. This is one way you can recognize Satan’s voice.

The purpose of conviction is to correct you on a specific issue in order to bring a change in your life, and it’s motivated by God’s love. Because God loves you, when he sees an area in your life that needs change—a relationship, a habit, an attitude—he will nudge you and say, “You need to work on this thing that’s out of whack in your life.” And as soon as you start to confess and change, you will no longer feel the conviction.

But the purpose of condemnation is to criticize and make you feel guilty, often in a vague way. If you’ve ever felt guilty but you couldn’t point to anything specific, or if you’ve ever had a feeling of worthlessness, that is condemnation from Satan. And condemnation doesn’t go away no matter what you do. It’s Satan’s way of making you feel worse and worse.

God will never attack you; he will never say you’re worthless or unlovable. In fact, in Revelation 3:19 God says, *...The people I love, I call to account — prod and correct and guide so that they’ll live at their best.*

Test #7 – Do I have a Sense of God’s Peace about It?

Philippians 4:6-7 says, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

If what you think you’ve heard from God measures up to God’s Word, if mature believers agree and it’s passed the other tests, but you still feel confused or anxious, then it isn’t from God because *God is not a God of disorder but of peace* – 1 Corinthians 14:33.

It’s possible that God is speaking to you but He doesn’t want you to do it yet, so that’s why He’s not giving you a peace about it. So you should be able to just relax, and wait patiently until you sense God’s peace, confident that if you’ve got it wrong God will speak to you again, or He’ll make it clear when you are to do it.