

HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S VOICE
Learning to Hear God's Voice - Part 3 of 4
I John 4:1 (Living Bible)
Rick Warren

1 John 4:1 (LB) *"Don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God; test it first to see if it really is!"*

From myself?	<i>Pr. 14:12</i>
From God?	<i>Job 33:14</i>
From Satan?	<i>2 Cor. 11:14</i>

7 WAYS TO TEST AN IMPRESSION

1. DOES IT AGREE WITH _____?

"Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away." Lk. 21:33 (GN)

"Even if an angel should preach a different `gospel' than this let him be eternally condemned!" Gal. 1:8

2. DOES IT MAKE ME MORE _____?

"In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus." Phil 2:5 (NCV)

"If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition. . . such `wisdom' doesn't come from heaven. . . but is of the devil. The wisdom that comes from God is . . . pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, impartial and sincere." James 3:14-17

3. DOES MY _____ CONFIRM IT?

"God's intent is that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known." Eph. 3:10

"The wisdom of the righteous can save you." Pr. 11:9 (GN)

4. IS IT CONSISTENT WITH HOW GOD _____?

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." Eph. 2:10

"God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. . ." Rom. 12:6 (LB)

5. DOES IT CONCERN _____?

"We will all be judged one day, not by each other's standards, or even our own, but by the judgment of God. . . it is to God alone that we shall have to answer for our actions." Rom. 14:10, 13 (Ph)

6. IS IT CONVICTING RATHER THAN _____?

"If we confess our sins to him, God can be depended on to forgive us and cleanse us from every wrong." 1 John 1:9 (LB)

"Satan is the accuser of believers." Rev. 12:10

The differences between ...

CONVICTION	vs.	CONDEMNATION
from God		from Satan
"you've sinned"		"you're worthless"

7. DO I SENSE _____ ABOUT IT?

"God is not the author of confusion." 1 Cor. 14:33

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." Col. 3:15

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We're continuing in our series on Learning to Hear God's Voice. Last week we talked about four ways you can hear God speak. One of the ways is God gives us impressions in our mind. I told you we would come back to this today and finish up the message because it causes a lot of confusion. If God gives me impressions, how do I know when they're really from God. How do I know I'm not just talking to myself. Do you ever do that? I like to talk to myself. I like to have somebody intelligent to talk to. So I talk to myself all the time! I've found it very easy to confuse my desires with God's will. The Bible says Satan can talk to us. We can read things and they get put in our mind and we think that it's God, but it's just *Time* magazine.

So how do you know when it's really God? This may not be a big issue if you're just trying to decide what restaurant to go to after church. But if you're talking about who to marry or a major career change, this is a major issue. You need to hear from God. God wants to talk to you. So how do I know when it's really God speaking to me?

I John 4:1 *"Don't always believe everything you hear just because somebody says it's a message from God. Test it first to see if it really is."* Circle "test it." The Bible says we must learn to distinguish God's voice. We've got to figure out if it's really God or not.

I want to give you the seven ways to test an impression. Seven ways to know if it's really God talking to you or not. They form a filter and they're all inter related. You can't pick and choose. If an impression does not pass all seven of these tests you know it's not from God. You can disqualify it.

On the other hand if you apply these seven tests to an idea or impression that you've got and it passes all seven, you can know with absolute certainty you've heard from God.

As we're going through this series, it would take us about five minutes to explain these seven things but we thought we'd have some fun and we want to dramatize the most common mistakes that people make when they're trying to hear God.

1. DOES IT AGREE WITH THE BIBLE?

God never contradicts His written word. Luke 21:33 *"heaven and earth will pass away but My words will never pass away."* God will never tell you to violate anything in this book. Never. God will never tell you to ignore or disobey anything in this book. He doesn't say one thing one time, and another thing another time. God is consistent. If He said it in the past, He's going to say it in the future. He is always consistent. He is never inconsistent. The Bible tells us very clearly, "Pay your taxes" so God is not going to give you the impression... "the government wastes your money anyway so just cheat, lie about it because they're not going to use it the right way anyway." God would never tell you that. We always get into trouble when we doubt God's word, when we don't listen to what it says.

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Johnny: Tracy, I want to talk to you about something. You know I've ben struggling at work lately...

Katie: Have you found a job yet?

Johnny: I've found something I think God really wants me to do.

Katie: Great! What is it?

Johnny: It's got great hours, great money. I get to work with a lot of interesting people. The only thing is I won't get to go to church anymore or read my Bible, but I think it will be OK.

Katie: What is this job?

Johnny: I'm going to work for the Maffia!

Katie: Are you crazy? Psalms 1 says not to hang around with crooks and people like that.

Johnny: But that was written a long time ago. I really think God wants me to take this job. Besides, they made me an offer I couldn't refuse!

God will never tell you to do something inconsistent with what He's already said. Most of God's will for your life is already right here in this book. You don't even have to pray about it. Just do what it says. Some asks me "Do you pray about getting up in the morning and going to church?" No, I don't. I just get up. I don't pray about tithing, I just do it. I don't pray about telling other people the good news, I just do it. Because it's right here in God's word. When you build your life on this book, you're going to ask the right questions. If you don't build your life on this book, you're going to miss God's will much of the time.

So the first step is to check it out. It's better to memorize it. Then God can bring those verses to mind.

2. DOES IT MAKE ME MORE LIKE CHRIST?

Philippians 2:5 *"In your lives you must think and act like Jesus Christ."* Jesus is the standard by which we measure everything we do. God says very clearly in the Bible that His goal for your life is to make you like Jesus. Not to be a god but to be godly. To have character, to have love, joy, peace, patience, all the qualities that Jesus had -- in your life. He would never tell you to do anything that contradicts or would hinder you from reaching that goal.

A practical application of what Christ likeness is in James 3 *"If you harbor envy and selfish ambition, such wisdom doesn't come from heaven* In other words, you know that impression doesn't come from God if it causes bitterness, envy or selfish ambition. *The wisdom that comes*

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from God is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, impartial and sincere." These are filters that you can test the idea. God's wisdom is not selfish ambition. If you get an idea of how to promote yourself in a better way or how to achieve instant fame, instant wealth, instant comfort it's not from God. God doesn't give you ideas for self promotion, self serving, selfish ambition.

On the other hand, if the thought is pure then it's from God. If you get an impure thought that one obviously isn't from God.

His wisdom is peace loving. Ideas from God promote harmony rather than conflict. If you get an idea that's going to promote conflict it's probably not from God. It's considerate. You have to think what would this idea do to other people? Would it hurt them or harm them? Would it build them up or tear them down? Encourage them or discourage them?

If an idea is genuinely from God, the Bible says it's considerate. It's considerate of how other people think. A lot of people say, "God told me to do this" and they just bowl over everybody and don't care how it hurts anybody. Because "God told them to do it." God didn't tell them to do something like that. The Bible says God's wisdom is considerate. So you don't be dogmatic.

It's submissive. If you've really heard from God you're not going to be arrogant and bragging about it. Some people think they've heard from God but their behavior shows they really haven't because they're self righteous, egotistical and always putting everybody else down. "God told me this and therefore you're nothing!"

God's wisdom is full of mercy. If you've really heard an idea from God it's going to cause you to be more gracious towards people rather than judgmental. If after I've heard from God, it makes me more judgmental, and put you down, and tell you what you're doing wrong and always criticizing you, you didn't hear from God. That's not the way Jesus lived. Jesus is our model.

Ask this question: Would Jesus do this? First, does it square up with the Bible? Second, Does it make me more like Christ? Would Jesus do this?

Johnny: Come on, you can do it! Daddy needs a new pair of shoes!

Katie: I'm not comfortable about being here. Would Jesus be here? I don't think so.

Johnny: Relax! It's just a horse race.

Katie: I still don't feel right about being here. I don't think this is a good idea.

Johnny: Look! God told me to come here today! He woke me up and said, "Bet on Lucky Lou in the fifth race!" Why would He tell me to do that if He didn't want me to come?

Katie: Are you sure that was God who told you to do that?

Johnny: Well, it was either God or my buddy Jim. But we're here now so relax.

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Would Jesus do it? That's the second way to test an impression.

3. When I'm trying to figure out whether I've got this idea from God or not, I need to ask **"DOES MY CHURCH FAMILY CONFIRM IT?"**

When you become a believer, a follower of Christ, you not only get a new relationship to God, you get a new relationship to other people. It's called the church, the family of God. You become a member of the family.

God never meant for you to make a major decision in life on your own. He wants you to get help and advise from wise mature Christians, other believers who are grounded in the faith and have a little more Bible under their belt than maybe you have. Check it out over and over. The Bible says, *"Smart people get advise. Fools don't."* Fools just think they know the right thing to do and act on their own intuition without ever checking it out with anybody else who is a mature Christian.

The third question you need to ask is, Does my church family confirm it? Ephesians 3:10 *"God's intent is that through the church the manifold wisdom of God who should be made known."* If God has genuinely spoken to you, you've got an idea, an impression, He's going to confirm it through other believers. The biggest reason people mess up their lives, Christians, too, -- is they try to live their life without any accountability to anybody else, without any support, without any confirmation, any council, any guidance. The Bible says, *"In a multitude of counselors there is safety."* When we try to live a Lone Ranger approach to the Christian life we're going to fall flat on our face. Because this is the third way God works. We need to be open to the checks, the counsel, the correction of mature believers, pastors, Christian leaders, other people in the church who have been believers longer than we have. We ought to check it out. When in doubt, check it out.

If you don't do this then typically you're going to make a lot of unnecessary mistakes in life. Your stress level will be much higher than it needs to be. It doesn't have to be there. You will fumble and fall, waste time, energy, and money on decisions you should never have made in the first place. You need to check it out.

Johnny: Welcome to the small group. I want to ask you a few questions. You've been a Christian longer than I have. I'm getting my hair cut the other day and talking to my barber about politics like we always do. I'm talking about how bad the government is doing and he goes, "Right, like you could do better?" I really think God spoke through him saying, "You can do better!" So I think I'm going to run for president. What do you think?

Katie: Are you crazy? What makes you think you could be president?

Johnny: I was treasurer of my fourth grade class.

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Katie: You're my friend and we're in a small group together but I think you ought to rethink that plan.

Johnny: I think I'll ask someone else. Hey! Susan! I've got a question for you. I think God wants me to run for president. What do you think?

Susan: You've never even taken a political science class. What do you know about politics.

Johnny: So... what's your point?

Susan: Maybe you should ask somebody else.

Johnny: I will. Tracy! I've got a question for you. I think God wants me to run for president. What do you think?

Tracy: President of what?

Johnny: The United States.

Tracy: Since when did they start electing losers to the presidency.

Johnny: I don't need anybody. It's just me and Jesus. The Lone Ranger Christian rides again!

Check it out with other believers. If you don't, you're going to get in trouble. Isn't it typical that what we often do is start asking for advice and we keep asking until we find somebody who will agree with what we want to do anyway? As a pastor, I want you to know, that's happened often to me. A couple will come to me and ask me for advice that clearly God doesn't want them to do and I tell them "Don't do it!" so they go to another church. They find a pastor there but if the pastor is grounded, he'll tell them No, too. I've actually been in a small group of pastors in this area where we've talked about couples or individuals who have been to five or six different pastors trying to get the right answer but nobody will tell them what they want to hear.

Another reason why we don't like to check out major decisions with other believers is because we don't want to be told we're wrong. But it's better to be told you're wrong before you waste the time, energy and money than it is after and you have all the heartache and hurt from a stupid decision. If you've heard from God, really heard from God, other Christians are going to confirm it.

Proverbs 11:9 *"The wisdom of the righteous can save you."* Save what? Money, time, reputation. It is safe to ask mature believers to evaluate impressions. You need to get people who love you enough to level with you.

If you have an idea and you've wondered, Is this really from God and you check it out with other mature Christians, if other mature believers question it, you should too. I'm not saying not do it,

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I'm saying a red flag ought to go up, a yellow warning light ought to go on that says, Maybe I'm not getting this right. If other mature Christians question it, you ought to also. If you get an idea and you think it's from God and you can't find any mature believers (you might find an immature one -- a brand new Christians or someone not walking with the Lord to agree with it) but if you can't find any mature Christian to agree with the decision, don't do it. Drop it! The Bible says God speaks through His word, He speaks if it makes us like Jesus, and He speaks through the body as a whole. We need each other. That's why you need to be in a small group. You can check things out with your small group.

4. IS IT CONSISTENT WITH HOW GOD HAS SHAPED ME?

Ephesians 2:10 *"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance [circle this] for us to do."* Before you were born God planned your life. God made you for a purpose. You're not here by accident. You're here for a reason. That reason is a purpose and God designed you specifically for that purpose.

Example: A chair is designed in a certain way. It has a back, a seat -- the design was made to fulfill a purpose. The purpose of a chair is to sit in. A microphone has a very different design. It fulfills a different purpose. Chairs were designed to sit on. You weren't designed to sit on a microphone. You speak through microphones, you sit on chairs. Not vice versa.

The design reveals purpose. Design reveals purpose. The same thing is true of you. You were designed a certain way. We call that SHAPE. God has shaped you for a career, a ministry, for life involving your spiritual gifts, your heart (your passions, desires -- some things turn you on, some things you could care less about; some things you love to do, some things you hate to do; some things you're interested in and some things you're bored to tears with). Where do you think you got that emotional makeup. God gave it to you. He gave us all different make ups. Different hearts. Why? He wants all the work in the world to get done. Some people love to do accounting and some people can't stand accounting. Some people love to do mechanics, some people can't stand mechanics. Some people love to cook, some people hate to cook.

He's given you Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities. You may be good with words. You may be good with numbers. You may be good with animals. You may be good with people. You may be good with mechanical things. Then He's given you a Personality. You may be extroverted or introverted. You may like routine or you may like variety. You may like to work all by yourself or you might like to work in a team. Who do you think gave you your personality? God did. He was designing you for a purpose. Then He gives you Experiences -- vocational experiences and spiritual experiences and educational experiences and painful experiences. All of these things shape your life.

Just as the design of a chair reveals its purpose, the design or shape of your life reveals your purpose -- what God wants you to do. For instance, why would God gift you as a great musician and then tell you to be a mechanic. He wouldn't. That would be a waste of the shape He's given you. On the other hand, if you're tone deaf forget trying to become a concert pianist. If you're good at planning then your ministry in life will involve planning. If you're good at art or writing

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or with numbers or leading, then your life, your career, your ministry, your place, your niche in this world involves what God gave you.

When you get an impression from God you ask "Is it consistent with how God's shaped me?" If God were to say to me, "I want you to resign Saddleback and become a math teacher." I would know without a doubt that is not from God because I flunked math. I didn't but I don't know much about it! So God would not have me do something He had not shaped me to do. A lot of God's will for your life has to do with looking at your design. What are you good at? What do you love to do? If you get an impression from God like Johnny's impression of God wants him to be president although he has no shape for it, he's not supposed to do it.

God says you can discover a lot about His will for your life by just looking at what you're good at. Romans 12:6 *"God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well."* God's voice will not contradict how He shaped you to be.

Johnny: I found out what God wants me to do in ministry at Saddleback church.

Katie: Great! What is it?

Johnny: Single Women's Ministry. I feel it fits my heart and my SHAPE.

Katie: Excuse me? What are you talking about? How does the Single Women's Ministry fit your shape?

Johnny: I've been working out lately and I've got the perfect shape for it.

Katie: You said it fits your heart too. How do you figure?

Johnny: I love single women. What could be more fitting?

Katie: You don't even know how really out of shape you are.

God's will for your life will never contradict how he has basically designed you. If you ever sense a leading in your life that is contrary to your basic shape, your personality, your experiences, ignore it. It's not from God.

5. The fifth test is this: DOES IT CONCERN MY RESPONSIBILITY?

If it's not your responsibility why in the world should God talk to you about it? In John 21, Jesus is talking to Peter and He tells him how he's going to die. He explains that he's going to have to suffer for being a Christian. Peter, very inquisitively, turns around and points to John the Apostle and says, "What about that guy? How's he going to die?" Jesus says (Warren translation) "It's none of your beeswax! Don't worry about it"

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I only have to worry about what's going on in my life, I don't have to worry about God's will for your life. I can't figure out my own motives most of the time, much less figure out yours. If God is going to talk to you, you need to ask "Is He really talking to me or is He talking about something else? If it's somebody else, does it concern my responsibility?" When you listen for God to speak to you, you need to listen for God to speak to you, not your son or your wife. You need to say, "What is God's will for me?"

Romans 14 *"We will all be judged one day not by each other's standards or even by our own, but by the judgment of God. It is to God alone that we shall have to answer for our actions."* When you listen for God's voice, listen for yourself, not for somebody else.

Johnny: I'd like to have a word with you for a minute if I could. Last night I was praying and God spoke to me.

Katie: Again? What did God tell you to do this time?

Johnny: Nothing. This time it was about you. God told me your secret sin.

Katie: God told you my secret sin? If I know it and He knows it, why would He want you to know it?

Johnny: I guess he just figures I should know everything about the woman who's supposed to marry me.

Katie: Marry you? What's this all this marrying stuff?

Johnny: Oh, yes. God told me you are supposed to marry me. You can try to fight it but God told me it would happen.

You need to be very careful when you think God's told you about something, somebody else should do. It's very dangerous. A lot of well meaning Christians, well intentioned but also presumptuous, have caused enormous amount of damage because they thought God was talking to them about what somebody else should do. For instance, God told me to tell you that you're going to get well. God told me to tell you that you're supposed to invest all your money with me. God told me your secret sin.

Why would God have to tell you my secret sin. I know my secret sin. God knows my secret sin. We all have direct access to God. God can speak directly to each of us through Jesus Christ, His son. You need to be very, very careful about saying "God told me to tell you to do..." Every believer has a direct access to God and you have enough difficult time handling your own sins much less worrying about anybody else's. God can take care of that.

Does God ever speak to me about other people? Yes, He does occasionally. But three qualifications:

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1. God will use you to confirm what He's already said to them. It's very unlikely He's going to tell you first. God will use you to confirm what He's already said. I've had God speak to me many times but I wasn't really sure I'd heard from God or not and then another person would say, I really feel this is happening, and it would be a confirmation.

2. If God speaks to you to help somebody else, He'll usually do it without you knowing it. That way your ego doesn't get in the way and you start taking pride and thinking you're some super saint. He will usually use you without you knowing it. Many times He will talk through you and you're not aware that what you said is meeting a need much deeper than you could possibly have imagined in their lives.

3. Trust God to speak to that person first before you talk to them.

Katie and Johnny were talking about "God told me that you're supposed to marry me" -- that actually happened in my case. God told me that I was going to marry Kay Lewis four months before I took her out on the first date. Four months! But I did not even mention that to her. I never told her until several months after we'd been engaged and I was sure she was going to take me. Why? It would have been manipulation.

I was speaking in Kay's dad's church in Fresno. Kay was playing the piano for that service. As I got up to speak I looked over and as clear as night and day God told me, "You're going to marry that girl!" I immediately doubted it. Three reasons: God doesn't usually speak that clearly to me. Second, I wasn't in love with her. And third, she was in love with another guy. Just a few minor problems! So I promptly dismissed it. I made no attempt to date her. I thought if that was it, God would work out the details.

My prayer partner, Danny, and we used to pray for an hour every morning. We'd go out between 5 and 6 to a baseball dugout at the college we were going to and pray for an hour. Sometimes we'd stay up all night and pray. At one of those all night prayer sessions, about 2 or 3 in the morning, Danny said, "I feel really impressed that you're going to marry Kay Lewis." Again, I made no attempt to date her. But in a series of circumstances she broke up with the "jerk" she dated and I took Kay out on our first date and eight days later we were engaged. I don't tell that for you to spread to your kids. That's not a model I'd recommend. We married about a year and a half later because right after we were engaged I moved to Japan as a missionary and she moved to Birmingham, Alabama as an inner city missionary and we were apart most of our engagement period. But I didn't tell her what God had told me until long after God had already spoken to her and we had been engaged. Otherwise that would have been a manipulation.

6. IS IT CONVICTING RATHER THAN CONDEMNING?

Conviction is from God, condemnation is from the devil. Conviction points the way to change, condemnation just makes you feel bad. When God convicts you of sin in your life it is always specific. He says, Here's an attitude, behavior, or something in your life that needs changing. He'll be very specific and put His finger right on it. "You're blowing it in this area." He will be very specific.

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On the other hand, condemnation which comes from the devil, is very vague and very general and basically says, "You're bad. You're no good. You're worthless. You stink. God could never use you. Forget ever trying to be a Christian." He's very general.

So if you have this very general sense of guilt that's condemnation. When God speaks to you about something that needs changing in your life, He's very specific.

Conviction always leads to an action to change; condemnation just makes you feel bad. When God is speaking to you, He'll say, "Here's what's wrong in your life and here's what you need to do." He'll give you specific things. The result is it always leads to confession, repentance and then forgiveness and the feelings leave.

On the other hand, condemnation is the devil saying to you, "You're worthless. You call yourself a Christian? Who do you think you are? You should give up trying to live for God because you can't do anything. You just keep falling and falling." He's always putting you down. Conviction comes from God, the Holy Spirit. Condemnation comes from the devil and you need to recognize the difference. Too many Christians, mistake their low self worth for God speaking. What they do is they've taken the voice from their past of an unpleasable parent who, no matter how much you tried it was never good enough, if you got C's they wanted B's, if you got B's they wanted A's, if you got A's they wanted straight A's. You've taken that voice of an unpleasable parent from your past and put it on your heavenly Father and you think God is mad at you all the time. He's not. God is not out to beat you up.

Katie: It's not that bad!

Johnny: It is that bad!

Katie: What's the big deal?

Johnny: I'm scum!

Katie: You are not scum!

Johnny: You're right! I'm not scum. I'm pond scum. I'm not even that good. I'm the fish that feeds on pond scum.

Katie: You are a great guy!

Johnny: No I'm not. If I were a tube of toothpaste, nine out of ten dentists would not recommend me.

Katie: What are you talking about? What have you done that is so bad?

Johnny: That's the thing. I can't put my finger on it. God is just making me feel guilty all the time. I just feel bad about everything! Doesn't it say guiltiness is next to godliness?

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Katie: God does not make believers feel guilty. It's all been forgiven and paid for. Maybe you should look at where that guilt is coming from.

Johnny: You're right. I'm scum!

If you are a Christian, if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ and asked Him to forgive all your sins and asked Him to be your savior and Lord, it means this: Everything you've ever done wrong is forgiven. Not just the sins of your past but the ones you're going to do today. And the ones you haven't even thought about tomorrow. They were all nailed on the cross. That's why Jesus said, "It's finished! It's paid for! It's done!"

Should a Christian ever feel guilty? Yes! For about one nano second. That's about how long it takes to realize "I blew it!" and you come and confess to God and He instantly forgives and it's taken care of, it's wiped away. Many people think that to be spiritual you should walk around all the time feeling "I'm so guilty! I've really let God down!" No, you don't let God down because you're not holding Him up. He holds you up. You can never even disappoint God because God already knows every sin you're going to commit. He already knows.

So what you do, when you've done something wrong, you immediately breathe in God's Spirit (Say, "God fill me with your Spirit") and breathe out your sin. It's just that quick. You get instantly back into the fellowship. God does not want you carrying around guilt all the time. Say, "God, I blew it. I was wrong! Help me change!" then get on with it. Keep short accounts with God. Don't let it stockpile.

Conviction from God leads to confession, repentance, and forgiveness -- 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins to him, God can be depended on to forgive us and cleanse us from every wrong."* He wipes the slate clean. God does not hold grudges. On the other hand, if you still feel guilty about something you've admitted to God that was wrong and you've asked Him to forgive you for it and you still feel guilty after you've confessed it, that guilt is not from God. It's from Satan. Satan minimizes your sin before you do it, "It's no big deal!" and after you do it he goes "Look at what you did!" He wants you to walk around in constant guilt because guilty Christians are worthless in serving God. He will maximize it after you confess it. If you have confessed it and it is forgiven, any guilt you feel after you've confessed it is not from God. It's from the devil. Revelation 12:10 says Satan is the accuser of the brethren, believers. That means God never tells you that you're worthless. And God will never tell you that you're hopeless. Is it convicting rather than condemning and you'll know whether it's God or not.

7. DO I SENSE GOD'S PEACE ABOUT IT?

1 Corinthians 14:33 *"God is not the author of confusion."* So if you're feeling confused that confusion is not coming from God. It may be coming from yourself or other people, but it's not coming from God. If you feel pressured and overwhelmed and driven to make a hasty decision, a major decision in life, and you're very pressured to make it, question it. That's not the way God

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works. There's not one single example in the Bible where God says, "Rush!" to a major decision. Not one. So question it. The Bible says God is patient. God would rather have you make the right decision than have you make the quick decision. We even say that when you're considering coming to Christ. Take the time to make the right decision. I believe if you listen to what God has to say, you will inevitably come to the right conclusion that you need to give your life to Christ and live your life the way God made you to live, fulfilling your purpose.

If you're pressured, if you're stressed out, that pressure and stress are not coming from God. Not at all! It's coming from inside you, or from the devil, or from some other source. Do you want your kids to feel stressed out, pressured? No. Neither does your heavenly Father. The only time you're going to feel stressed out and pressured is when He's told you something to do and you don't do it. That's going to create stress in your life. That's going to create pressure -- when you know the right thing to do and you keep procrastinating. Satan drives us compulsively while God's spirit draws us compassionately, gently.

Colossians 3:1 *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."* If God is genuinely speaking to you and you think this idea is from God, it's going to bring peace to your heart IF you follow it. God's Spirit produces a calm spirit. Worry and anxiety are never from God. Never. In the Bible it says, "Don't worry!" We are commanded not to worry! If you get an idea that is a worry, it's not from God! What if? and you start worrying about it then it's not from God. God would never give you an idea that He's commanded you not to have. You need to look for His peace.

Johnny: God, I feel that You're giving me direction right now but help me with my financial troubles.

House payment!

Johnny: And God, help the kids get better grades at school.

Failing grades!

Johnny: And God, help my wife and I to get through this tough time we're having.

BIG Fight!

Johnny: And God, help me at work.

Gonna get fired!

Johnny: God, I don't know about this whole peace thing. If this is peace it sure doesn't feel like it to me!

I once talked to a lady who every week kept coming up to me and saying, "God told me this!" And every week it was a scolding. Every week it was something she was doing wrong. Every week it was a hyper sensitive conscious. Many of those things weren't even wrong, just

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questionable. She was always beat up. One day I said, "Does God ever say anything nice to you?"

Some of you have taken the voice of an unpleasable parent and put it in the form of God and you think all God does is set around and beat you up and tell you everything you're doing wrong. You don't understand grace if you think that way. You don't understand that it's all been paid for. It's been forgiven! You want to live for Christ not because God is constantly beating you up saying "Do better!" That's not the way God treats His children. He says I've already forgiven every sin in your life and you're on your way to heaven and in gratitude you want to live for God. I want to live for Jesus because He loves me that much. I want to do it not because He's beating me up and making me feel bad, but I want to do it because the peace that comes when I'm in a relationship with God and there's harmony between us.

There is nothing more vital in your life than you hear from God. Nothing. Because you were wired and made to have a relationship with God and if you miss that you miss the purpose you were made for. It may not be a big deal if you miss God on whether you buy Kiks or Cherrios -- that's not that big of deal. But there are many major decisions in your life that you need to hear from God about and if you're out there making decisions without taking the time to listen and saying, "God, what do You want me to do? What's the next step?" and you're checking it out with other Christians and you're reading the Bible and you're doing these seven steps, you are setting yourself up for failure after failure in your family life, in your business, in your parenting, in your finances, in your health and in every other area of your life. It makes sense to listen to your creator.

God does not want to play games with you. God is not trying to confuse you. It's not a cat and mouse game of "Let's see if you can figure out God's will and let's see how hard I can make it!" And God sits up there in the sky and laughs at the maze you keep knocking your head into. That's not the way God acts to His children. He wants you to know His will, so much that He's given us these seven keys in which He says "Here are some ways that you can filter out and know if it's you or is it God talking to you?"

The secret to hearing God clearly is get to know Him better and better every day. The more you understand Him, the better you know Him, the easier it is to hear His voice in a split second when He wants to talk to you. Get to know God better and better every day.

You may think you've never heard God speak to you. That's a good indication that you don't have a relationship to Him. John 8:47 "*He who belongs to God hears what God says.*" The reason you don't hear is that you don't belong to God. If you've never heard God it means you need to establish a relationship to Him. And that's real easy to do and I can lead you in a prayer this morning that will help you take that step.

Others of you are believers and in the past God's voice was very clear to you at different times but right now it's been a little fuzzy, a little distant. Maybe there's some static on the line and you haven't heard from God in weeks and maybe months. What's happened? How come you don't hear God as clearly as you used to? You've allowed sin to block the channel in your life. There is something that is wrong in your life that has come between you and God and until you deal with

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that, the channel is blocked. Your heart has grown hard and you're not as sensitive to God as you used to be. Come home to Jesus Christ. Come home and say Jesus, "I want that relationship that I had before. I want to be able to talk to You and hear You and I want You to lead me and guide me and help me avoid all these mistakes in life. Direct me in the right way." Come home to Jesus.

Prayer:

If you've never opened your life to Christ, pray, "Dear Jesus Christ, I want to hear Your voice. I need it. I need to know the direction You want me to go, God. I want to establish a relationship with You through Your Son, Christ. I ask You to come into my life the best as I know how and put Your thoughts in my mind and Your love in my heart. Help me to start growing spiritually in You. I don't understand it all but as best as I know how I open my life to You."

Others of you have Jesus Christ in your life but you haven't heard His voice in a long time because your heart has grown cold and your ears have gotten stopped up. God doesn't have laryngitis. He's still speaking. The problem is on your end. Would you say, "Jesus Christ forgive me for allowing sin to come between me and You. Things I knew were wrong but I've allowed them anyway in my life. I ask You to forgive me and help me to deal with these issues so I can change and make things right where possible. I want to hear Your voice in my life on a daily basis. Speak to me. Help me to sense Your love. Forgive me for having false images of the way You are. You not a god who wants to beat me up but You want to guide me and love me. I want to love You and follow You. In Jesus name. Amen."