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How to Know if You're Hearing God's Voice

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One day a man named Jaker asked if I would pray for him—he suffered from a congestive illness that had plagued him for years. Before answering his question, I asked about his name. He said his parents planned to name him Joker, but they wrote an “a” instead of an “o.” I considered asking why they wanted to name him Joker, but figured the answer would open too many doors to walk through in a phone call. Instead, I asked if I should call him Jake or Jaker. He said he didn’t care, so I went with Jaker. I think it’s a cool name which I’ve never heard before.

“I’d be honored to pray for you, but you’ll need to set aside two hours.”

“Okay,” he said.

Cowboy Boots and a Dirty Boy

The night before our meeting, I asked the Lord to show me something that would help Jaker. And then I listened. After a short while I saw an image of a child’s cowboy boots and a boy covered with dirt.

The First Test

Unsure if the image had come from God, I considered whether there was anything about it that would violate a biblical command or principle. Based on my experience, that's the first test in determining whether a thought, word or image is from God. The Lord certainly isn’t going to communicate something that doesn’t align with the Bible.

Of course, nothing about a pair of boots or a dirty boy seemed inconsistent with Scripture.

In addition, it's also important to seek confirmation from others when discerning whether God has spoken. I don't consider myself a biblical prophet and I'm guarded when people speak as though they are. That's why I never use the words, "The Lord told me . . . ."

Yet there have been many instances when I sensed a word or image while praying for someone which, when shared, resulted in not only a profound spiritual experience, but emotional and even physical healing. However, there have also been instances where the word or image carried no meaning at all. That’s why confirmation is necessary. And that's what I planned to do the following day.

Jaker at the Door

The next morning Jaker rang my door bell. I opened the door and met a 5’8” middle-aged man with a slim build, blond hair, and a warm smile. I led Jaker to my office and we sat in two leather chairs opposite to one another. After he briefly recounted his history, I said, “Jaker, I prayed for you last night and saw two things. I have no idea if they are from the Lord, but you may.” I then told him about the boots and dirty boy.

Astonishment lit Jaker’s face. “When I was a little boy I always wore a pair of cowboy boots. I mean, I wore them everywhere. One night while camping I left them by the fire and they burned up. I haven’t worn boots since.”

He then told me that a couple years later, he and some friends dug a tunnel into a massive sand pile in a lot behind his house. He was playing inside the tunnel when it collapsed. If his friends hadn’t dug him out, he would have suffocated.

So the boots and dirty boy reminded him of two childhood traumas.

Because of these images, our discussion leaped forward and we were able to surface some deep wounds. As we prayed toward the end of the meeting, Jaker sensed God's healing power in his life.

Had God Spoken?

After Jaker left my house, I asked myself the only natural question: had God spoken to me?

I suppose you could chalk up the boots and boy to coincidence. After all, if I said the same thing to enough men, some of them would likely have a boot story. And who hasn’t gotten dirty? On the other hand, those two images reminded him of two episodic childhood events.

So did God speak to me? I can tell you this: Jaker thinks so. But what do you think?

This is Part Four in a continuing series on Hearing God’s Voice. Read Part One, Part Two, and Part Three.