**Listening to God**

There is a difference between hearing what someone is saying and really listening to what they mean. In any conversation we must listen as well as speak. A vital element of prayer is allowing time to listen to what God might be saying. That means being willing to pay attention.

Jesus teaches us that listening to God is to be a natural part of following him. ‘My sheep listen to my voice: I know them, and they follow me.’ John 10.27.

The more we listen for God’s voice the more we will recognise Him. Just as we instantly recognise the voice of a loved one with whom we have spent time.

For the next few weeks plan to make some time to begin to listen more to God.

**Beginning to listen**

**Choose a time when you are not in a hurry**

Find a time and a place where you can be free of distractions. Some people find it helpful to choose a special place, a particular chair or room, that becomes associated with listening to God. When you have found your place make sure you are able to sit comfortably and put away electronic equipment.

**Still your mind**

Begin by simply sitting in silence and asking God to speak to you. It is good to find a comfortable, upright position.

**Be aware of distractions**

To keep your mind directed towards God. Some people find it helpful to hold a short verse of scripture in mind: “Be Still and Know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)

When you are listening in silence at the start your mind may be full of stuff, but don’t get anxious, if you find lots of things flooding your mind, write them down and put them to one side. Sometimes you might find that some of the thoughts direct you to pray.

**Recognise God’s voice**

God can speak in many ways: thoughts, feelings, Bible, experiences or even what’s around us.

If you find your mind wanders to a specific word, Bible passage or picture, pay attention and later test whether God might be speaking with a friend.