

Are you Listening?

Headphones are great inventions, aren't they? I love that they can allow us to listen to any kind of music we want and we don't distract anyone else. I suppose though, they can often be a distraction to me. When I'm listening to my music, I can't hear anyone else. I'm completely consumed and distracted by my own little world. It can be like that with the world and God. What I mean is, we can be distracted by everything that we see and hear on earth. Those things become all that we are listening to and seeing. Yet God is trying to get our attention. He's doing and has done everything He can do to let us know that He is speaking and wants to speak with us. Yet we have a choice. Will we keep the headphones on, or will we take them off and listen?

I believe that we can hear God speak because I believe I have heard His voice in a variety of ways. God usually speaks thru Scripture, but God speaks in many other ways as well:

- through dreams
- through visions (like a picture in your head while awake)
- through a song or Bible verse remembered at the exact right moment
- through a whisper in your heart

But being reminded of Scripture passages isn't the kind of listening I'm talking about. I'm talking about hearing actual words or pictures in your heart or mind, words that come from God, not ourselves.

You might be wondering...is listening to God's voice Biblical? Perhaps you were taught that God ONLY speaks through the Bible. But if God only speaks through the Bible, how did the people IN the Bible hear and know God? Did God speak to people for a few thousand years, then suddenly decide He was going to stop?

There really isn't anywhere in the Bible that says, "I, God, will speak to you in words that aren't in the Bible." I believe that Scripture shows us that God speaks to people in various ways.

From reading about the real encounters that people had with God (as recorded in the Bible), from my experience and the experience of many others, I believe God still speaks in the same ways he spoke in the Bible.

If we're talking about actually hearing God's voice as words or picture in our hearts, minds, or even (rarely) our ears, you may be wondering: what does God's voice sound like?

You won't be the first person to ask that question! I think that most Christians have asked it at some point in their lives. Here's the problem: of all the competing voices in our heads and hearts, how do we know which one is His?

God's voice will always sound like love; love for yourself as an individual and love for humanity. In fact, the most common thing I hear spoken to my heart, and to the hearts of children, is "I love you."

Has God ever spoken to you before? A lot of people claim that God talks to them and tells them things, sometimes it is true and sometimes it's made up. God does speak to us though! When God speaks to us usually the clouds don't roll back and we hear this loud booming voice from the sky. It is a quiet voice that we hear inside of our soul, however it is not always easy to hear. We have to really tune in and listen to hear what He is saying.

Here is a story of when God was heard, but they didn't listen to what He was telling them. It's the story of Adam and Eve and the First Sin.

God took some clay from the ground and made the shape of a man. Then He breathed gently into the shape. The man's eye's opened and he began to live. God called him Adam.

The Lord made a beautiful garden for him to live in. The garden, called Eden, was full of many wonderful things. Beautiful flowers grew everywhere. Birds sang in the trees, streams flowed through the valley and animals roamed across the fields.

God had made the man in His image to keep Him company and look after the world. God brought all the animals to Adam one at a time to be given their names. "Elephant", he would say, or "Tiger", or "Porcupine".

But God felt sorry for Adam. "None of these animals is really like him," thought God, "he needs someone to share his life. Someone who cares for him and who he can care for."

That night, God took a rib from Adam's side and made a woman. When Adam awoke the following morning, he found a wife, Eve, lying asleep beside him. Adam was so happy. He took her hand and she woke up. She looked up at him and smiled.

God told the man and woman that it was their job to take care of their new home. God blessed them, saying, "All this is for you. Help yourself to anything you like. But never touch the tree in the middle of the Garden. That tree gives knowledge of good and evil. The day you eat its fruit, you will die."

God did not mean that Adam and Eve would drop down dead the moment they ate the fruit from the tree. He meant that in time they would die without His Spirit dwelling in them.

One day, Adam and Eve were gathering berries for dinner when she heard a silky voice behind her. "Has God told you that you can eat the fruit from all the trees?" the voice asked softly. Eve turned around to see a snake talking to her. "God has told us we can eat all the fruit except for what grows on The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," Eve told the serpent.

"Oh come now, that's silly! I hardly think such a lovely fruit would do you any harm," the serpent lied. "God knows that if you eat from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you'll become just like God, and will be able to decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong."

The woman looked at the fruit and thought how tasty it looked. She thought how wonderful it would be to be as wise and powerful as God. She believed the serpent's lie and ate the fruit and also gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he took a bite as well.

She felt a strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. She fidgeted and wondered what was wrong with her. Suddenly she realized that she was feeling guilty -- she had disobeyed God and knew she'd done something wrong.

As soon as they ate the fruit a change came over Adam and Eve. They became unhappy and fearful of God.

Adam and Eve heard God calling them. Without thinking, they dived into the bushes, but God knew where they were. When God asked them if they had eaten from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that He had told them not to touch, they blamed each other for their sins.

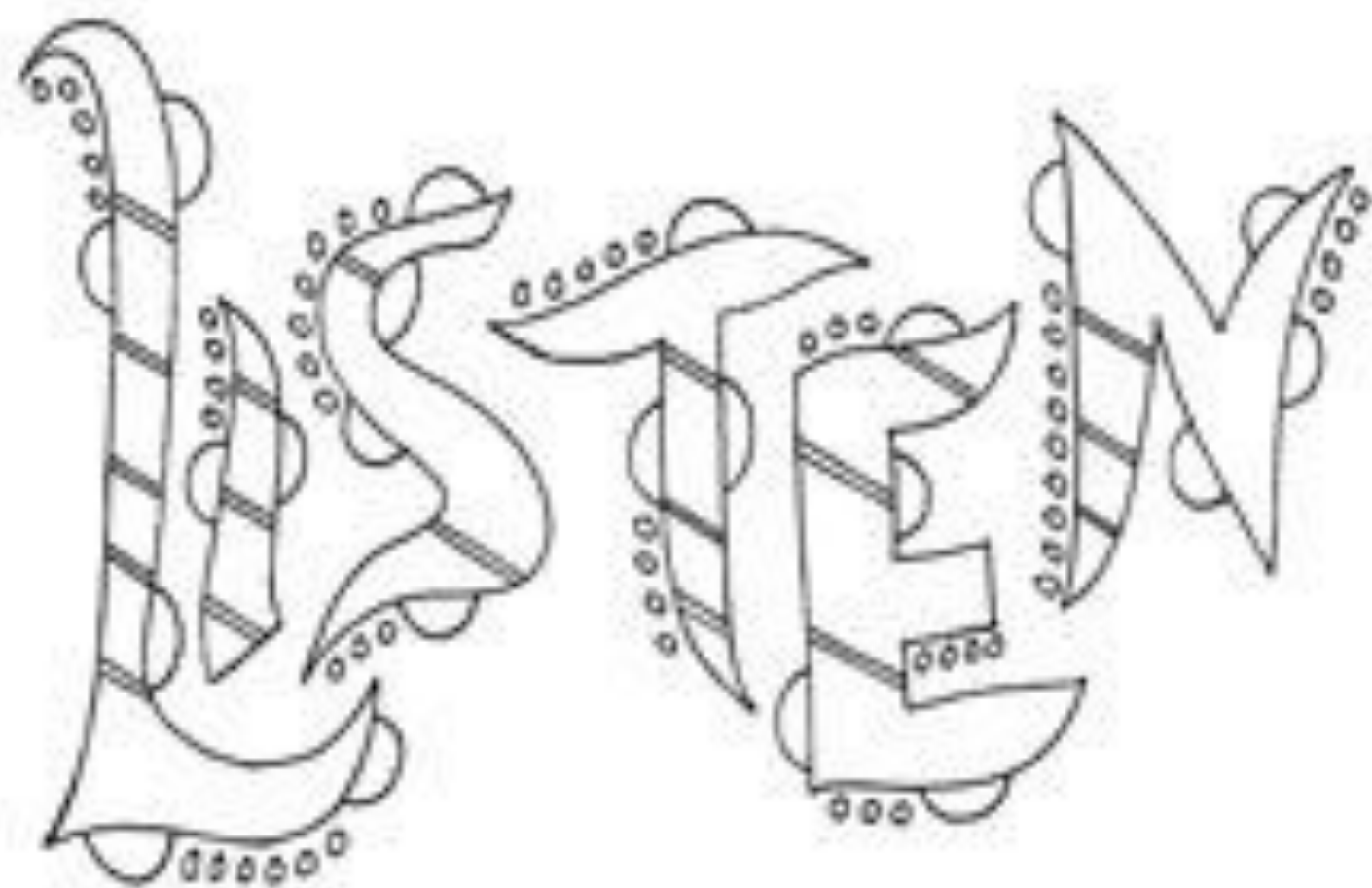
God was sad that Adam and Eve had disobeyed them. He told them that they had to leave the Garden of Eden, "From now on you'll have to scratch a living from the soil. You'll need to make clothes and grow food. Nothing will come easily -- not even childbirth. And one day, you will die."

Could Adam and Eve do anything to fix their broken relationship? No. In fact, God had to punish them. They didn't listen. They had to leave the perfect garden. Because of the sins of Adam and Eve, pain and disease entered the world. It's not always sin or disobedience that keeps us from hearing God. Sometimes, we are just too busy to listen. We are so busy going about our daily lives that we don't take time to slow down and listen to His voice. We have friends, sports, school, homework, church, family, TV,

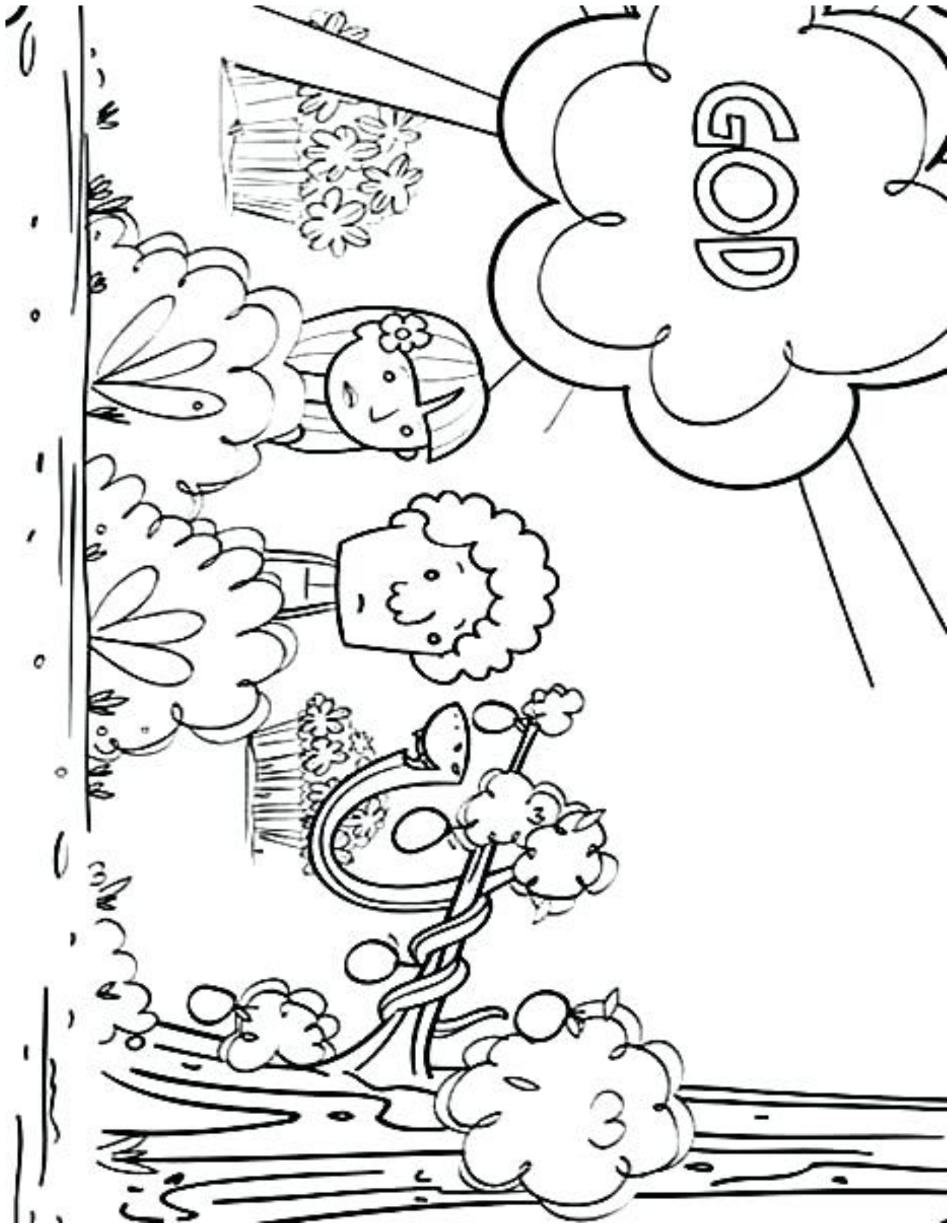
music - all kinds of things fighting for our attention. We can't hear God's voice because there are too many other things going on.

Yet God truly wants to communicate with us, guide us and share with us His will. There are many distractions in this world that may keep us from hearing the voice of God, but the biggest distraction of all is simply not taking the time to listen. This week take a few extra minutes to pray, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear. Then listen for the still, small voice of God. For God wants nothing more than to talk with you, but you have to be ready to LISTEN.





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GOD

The Garden of Eden

Use the code to find the names of two special trees in the Garden of Eden.

E E L E S L L L S
 F F S L

E E L E S L L L S
 H J L F F L U O L
 L S O L L U J J U
 L F F F



A	D	E
F	G	H
I	K	L

N	O
R	T
V	W



Which tree did God tell Adam and Eve not to eat from?

People Disobeyed God Word Search

Find the words on the list that are hidden in the puzzle. The words can be left to right, up and down, or diagonally.

L	I	T	N	U	S	L	A	E	D	E	N	D
U	G	A	R	D	E	N	T	V	E	R	I	T
L	E	R	S	E	R	T	E	I	D	I	T	O
G	O	O	D	C	P	N	S	L	Q	U	I	S
N	S	E	Q	U	E	S	C	F	L	L	A	N
E	V	E	L	E	N	E	R	I	R	I	U	R
L	A	E	M	O	T	O	R	S	I	U	E	R
S	I	T	E	N	D	R	E	T	A	T	I	E
K	N	O	W	L	E	D	G	E	S	M	O	T
T	N	S	E	D	E	U	G	V	A	M	V	E
L	R	Q	D	I	S	O	B	E	Y	E	D	E
T	D	E	L	O	R	E	D	E	L	I	Q	U
Z	T	E	E	F	E	U	G	A	A	D	A	M

ADAM
DISOBEYED
EAT

EDEN
EVIL
EVE

FRUIT
GARDEN
GOOD

KNOWLEDGE
SERPENT
TREE



Tree Maze



Find your way through the tree.

