

LISTEN TO THE LORD



Alisdair Fyfe, a retired paediatric surgeon and a CMF Pastoral Carer, explains why listening to the Lord has transformed his life.



'The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon...They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green'. (Psalm 92:12 & 14)

These words from the Lord have continued to encourage me over the years, before and after retiring from the National Health Service (NHS) in 2013.

What is the best advice one can give to a Christian who is pursuing a career in medicine or nursing; advice that will last throughout their careers and even into retirement?

In 1983, as a paediatric senior registrar, these words from Genesis 18:16 struck me with unexpected force: *'The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"'* The Almighty Creator, wanting to confide in his friend, Abraham! An amazing thought!

I remember praying, 'Lord, please make me into the kind of man with whom you want to share your thoughts and purposes'.

It is 40 years since that prayer, and the Lord has graciously spoken with me countless times, most often through reading his Word, sometimes through the quiet inner voice of the Holy Spirit, through the words of others, and through the unpredictable circumstances of life. Since that day, when opening his Word to read, I have prayed, 'Lord, through your Spirit, speak with me, please, and help me recognise your voice'. I have come to expect him to speak to me every day, and he does. The key seems to be, am I open to hearing his voice? Do I believe that the Lord wants me to hear his words?

His message comes to me in different forms. Sometimes it is an encouragement, a needed reassurance and comfort; at other times it is a wee gentle word of rebuke, or an instruction for something he wants me to say or do.

Once, when very distressed about a matter, as I cried out to the Lord in my despair these words came, unbidden, into my mind, 'It is I, don't be afraid'. The peace that accompanied these words was immediate, and supernatural.

As I approached my fiftieth birthday, I sensed that the Lord wanted me to retire early, at 60, to allow me to concentrate on directly serving God's people through church ministry. Whilst my retirement was an emotional one, it afforded me the opportunity to give away 60-plus New Testaments to my close colleagues, nursing, and medical staff, each with a personal message. That led to many conversations about faith, and many opportunities to pray with my former colleagues.

On retiring from the NHS, one is tempted to feel that 'the best days are over'. But actually, I have discovered that the best days are still coming!

Those words from Psalm 92 have continued to encourage me over the years, particularly around my retirement from the NHS in 2013, and my subsequent retirement from church eldership ten years later.

In our village, through practical involvement, we can bring the light and love of Christ into the community, and that is a blessing. In our church, my wife and I serve in Alpha, and we heavily engage in pastoral work, helping to strengthen people who are struggling in a variety of ways. Preaching in our church, and in others, is a delight, bringing God's word into people's hearts as he transforms and heals.

Serving as a pastoral care person in CMF has also been a new area of service that the Lord has opened to me in recent years. Face-to-face, and through zoom calls, the Lord continues to meet with us and graciously speak with us, bringing his peace and comfort in the storms of real life.

So, my best advice is to be open to the Lord's voice above all others and expect him to speak with you each day. And he will keep you, guide you, and ensure that you are fruitful all your days, long into retirement and old age.

'He calls his own sheep by name...his sheep follow him because they know [recognise] his voice.' (John 10:3-4)

Please make this your daily prayer, *'Lord, make me into a person who hears your voice, and follows you, all my days'*.

There is no better advice. God be with you. ●

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