

# Hearing God's Voice When Feelings Are Big

Marti Wibbels, MS, LMHC



Sometimes our feelings silence our faith. Feelings can be so big that they're all we hear: friends fail you. A loved one is gone. You can't find what you need (a job, a home, a friend). While it's important to notice our feelings and not suppress them, it's essential to see them as information and not our GPS. Some feelings can be the biggest liars in the universe.

Are your fears so loud that you can't hear the still, small voice of God? In Exodus 14:10, the Israelites *were terrified and cried out to the LORD* when they saw the Egyptian army in position to attack. Moses communicated God's response: *Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.* We know the rest of the story—God brought His people through the Red Sea on dry ground. He kept them safe.

But sometimes the “Red Sea” doesn't part, and problems can seem endless. For over two decades, life as a missionary in Turkey with his wife Norine had been fulfilling— starting churches, helping refugees, and hosting a house of prayer. Then the government of Turkey falsely accused Andrew Brunson of terrorism, resulting in 735 days of imprisonment.

Dr. Brunson told Open Doors USA that his “two years in prison were marked by what I would call the silence of God. Because my past experience with Him was really rich, to have that intimacy removed led to a fence around my heart toward God.” The only Christian in prison, visits from his wife Norine provided his only Christian contact. After breaking physically, spiritually, and emotionally during his first year in prison, he experienced God rebuilding him during the second year. He explained, “In my weakness, at the bottom of my pit, I knew I might only be able to turn slightly in His direction, but **even if I turned one degree toward Him, that was all the difference in the world than turning one degree away.** That mindset positioned me into a place where He could begin to rebuild me...It was a decision of the will to pursue Him. And... persevering into certain disciplines that, as I practiced them again and again, rebuilt me.”

**The first discipline:** dancing, applying Jesus's words *Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and falsely say all kind of evil things about you on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* He said doing that day after day, even though he had no feeling, helped him focus on Heaven more and built a stronger obedience.

**A second discipline:** worshipping God, even though he didn't feel like doing so. He says, *as I worshipped, it ended up building in me a commitment to worship in all circumstances.*

**A third discipline:** prayer with his family at the same time each day, from the three countries where they lived.

**A fourth discipline:** fasting two days a week.

**A fifth discipline:** sharing a daily Bible reading plan with his wife.

In his book, *God's Hostage: A True Story of Persecution, Imprisonment, and Perseverance*, Dr. Brunson describes imagining a high-tech safe with a hand scanner on the front: “God and I were the only ones able to open it. I took each of my questions and doubts and deliberately placed them in that box,” he wrote, adding his prayer, “God, I am locking these questions away. **I am not going to demand answers. I do not understand, I am confused, and I am hurt. But these questions and doubts will remain in this box until a different time.** You can open this box if you want, but I am leaving it sealed. **I don't need to know the answers in order to continue my relationship with you.**”

## What additional disciplines can help us hear God's voice?

1. Tune out clamor, choosing quiet during our unique storms. Then we can experience *the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God* (1 Peter 3:4b, NASU).
2. Turn up the “volume” of Truth, focusing on God's Word. *The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing* (Zephaniah 3:17, NKJV).
3. Trust God to rebuild and restore you as He *leads...beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake* (Psalm 23:2-3).