Listening to the Holy Ghost is kind of a play on words. You don't really listen with your ears, you feel with your heart. This might best be demonstrated with a Bible story and a modern-day story.

Elijah

The Old Testament prophet, Elijah, was told to go to the mountains because the Lord wanted to talk to him. In the Old Testament, especially when there was no temple to go to, the prophets went to the tops of the mountains to communicate with God. So off went Elijah to the mountain tops to speak with the Lord.

Mountains can be dangerous places, and this was no exception. For safety reasons, Elijah hid himself in a cave while he waited for the Lord to call him. During his wait in the cave there was a strong wind that broke the rocks of the mountain then a big earthquake. Elijah knew that the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake. Next there was a great fire that raged and roared, but Elijah knew that the Lord was not in the fire. Finally, there came a still, small voice. Elijah recognized this as the voice of God. He left the safety of the cave and went out to present himself to the Lord. 1 Kings 19:11-13

> 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:
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> 12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.
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> 13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. ...

Joseph Smith

The modern-day story took place in the 19th century. When Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon. His scribe saw the wonderful way in which Joseph received the inspiration to translate and wanted to be able to do translating like that too. He asked Joseph if he would ask God to give him (Oliver Cowdery) the gift of translation as well. Joseph asked, and the Lord said yes. Oliver promptly sat down and waited for the inspiration to come to him. He got frustrated because nothing was happening. Finally, he went back to Joseph and complained because he couldn't translate a single word. Joseph went back to the Lord with this problem and the Lord taught us all a good lesson. In the book called, the Doctrine and Covenants, in Section nine, verses 7-9 the Lord says Oliver was mistaken.

> 7 Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.
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> 8 But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.
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> 9 But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; ...

Oliver thought that just by asking, God would give something as great as the gift of translation to him, but that isn't how the Lord works. Oliver needed to study the problem out in his mind, come to a decision, and then take it to the Lord and ask if he was correct. Then and only then would the Lord confirm to his soul that he had it right. The Lord told Oliver that he obviously wasn't ready for this gift yet, so it was left up to Joseph to finish the translation of the Book of Mormon, but the Lord said it in a nicer way than that.

The counsel given to Oliver Cowdery was that when he studied a problem out and came to a conclusion on his own, then the Lord would tell him if he had gotten it right or not. If he was wrong in his conclusion then the Lord would cause a stupor of thought to cause him to forget the wrong answer. If he was right then the Lord would cause his "bosom to burn within him." By this burning in his bosom he would know that he had the right answer.

The Holy Ghost

Ask any member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints what it means to have a burning in your bosom, and just watch them struggle for words to describe something we have all felt. This is NOT heartburn. What it is, is what Elijah felt in that cave, the still small voice. Jesus is known as the Prince of Peace. His influence that we feel through the Holy Ghost brings a sense of inner peace. When the Holy Ghost "speaks" to us, it comes in several ways, but all of them involving a sense of peace. Okay, so there are some times when His voice comes as a voice of warning, but usually we feel His promptings with a sense of rightness or peace.

1. A warmth in our chest that causes joy, like that sensation you get sometimes when you suddenly feel that all is truly right with the world, and that everything will be okay.

2. A peace that soothes away all the fears and concerns, leaving you knowing that you have found your path, and can go ahead with all the confidence of true sight.

3. Sometimes it is a confirmation that something is right and comes with a physical sensation that is so intensely gratifying, that your heart overflows with joy and you are left weeping with gratitude for what you have just been given.

4. Sometimes there is just, as Joseph Smith taught, a flash of pure knowledge that seems to flow into you from the top of your head to the soles of your feet, and you just know something that you didn't know a moment before. You can't explain how you know it, but you cannot deny it. That knowledge has been, for lack of a better phrase, woven into your soul so completely that you cannot ever again say that it is not true.

5. And perhaps one of the most difficult forms of communication to pinpoint is when He gives us "promptings." A prompting is simply a thought that you should do something. Often these thoughts seem to come from out of the blue. I had a relative who had new tires on his car, so when he thought twice that he should pull into a gas station and check his tires on his way to work, he ignored the thoughts. Fortunately, when his car began to wobble on the freeway he pulled off and went directly to a gas station. When he checked his "new" tires he found that one of them had been severely punctured. If he had gone much further on the road his tire could have had a blowout at freeway speeds. He learned a lesson to listen to these seemingly random thoughts, because now he recognized that it had come from the Spirit.

These are just a few of the ways that the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit "speaks" to us. How it comes depends on the situation. Sometimes we aren't even asking a question, we just get a witness. Sometimes we are struggling with something, trying to find a path through a thorny difficulty, and suddenly there is clarity and resolution where there had been none a moment before. And sometimes, as my mother always taught me, the Holy Ghost gives us an inclination to do something good. And when we learn to follow that inclination, no matter how odd it may seem at the time, the Lord is able to work miracles in the lives of other people because we have learned to be lead by the Spirit to do God's work.

At the end of the great Nephite history in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni, the son of Mormon, who compiled the records named after him, was writing to the people of our day. His people were almost all dead, slaughtered in a great genocide before his face. He was in hiding for his life, and had been wandering the land for years. He found that he had a chance to write one last piece of advice to those who would receive his father's records in the latter days before the second coming of Christ, and these are his words of advice to us.

Moroni 10:3 - 7

> 3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.
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> 4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.
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> 5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.
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> 6 And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.
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> 7 And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

Notice that Moroni doesn't tell us how the Holy Ghost will manifest or show us that what we have read in the Book of Mormon is true, he just promises that through the Holy Ghost you can know the truth of all things. We have to exercise faith in God that He can and will speak to us. This is not just a truth that applies to the Book of Mormon, this is an eternal truth. Testifying of Christ and the Father, and revealing truth is what the Holy Ghost does as a member of the Godhead. That is His role. He is our teacher, the one who leads us to Christ and to God the Father. It is the Holy Ghost's responsibility to teach us as one Spirit speaking to another spirit. He communicates with us on such a basic level that once we know the truth of something He has taught us, we can never again truthfully deny it. We know it in such a way that the Lord will be able to judge us on that knowledge, because it goes beyond any human's ability to trick us. The Spirit only deals in absolute truths.

As you read the scriptures, Bible or Book of Mormon, don't forget to take the next step in your learning. Ask for the confirmation from the Holy Ghost if what you are reading is true. Once you have the gift of the Holy Ghost, through baptism into Christ's Church, by those holding God's priesthood, you will have an enhanced ability to receive direction and answers through this process we call listening to the Holy Ghost.

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How Do I Listen to The Holy Ghost?