



HEARING GOD'S VOICE
COURSE WORKBOOK

Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Retreat Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE



Dedication

To my wife, Linda, who fully enjoys hearing God's Voice and encourages me and others to remain Abiding by hearing His voice—all the time, since apart from Him we can do nothing. She knows that God speaks all the time, and that we are then called to be in such intimacy with Him that we are hearing all the time—and that we receive that the God of the Universe speaks to us personally as He guides and directs us. She encourages all to learn to hear His voice, since we all are His sheep who hears the Shepherd's voice; and that this is a normal and beautiful spiritual characteristic of our life with God. And as we do, we too learn what she has learned—that God delights in this personal relationship as we learn to dialogue with Him on all elements of life.

We together also wish to honor our family who have all learned to hear His Voice—it makes for a vital life of sharing what we are hearing and then processing to Unity as He directs us into truth and His marvelous and supernatural will.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all of the leaders of our Ministry: **Abide Ministries**. These leaders all hear God's voice and teach others how to also hear His voice. They freely share and give away what we ourselves experience. Their dedication and faithfulness have meant so much to the growth of the ministry and to Linda and I; It has produced endless testimonies and encouraging stories of transformation and lives being effected through what they "walk out" themselves.

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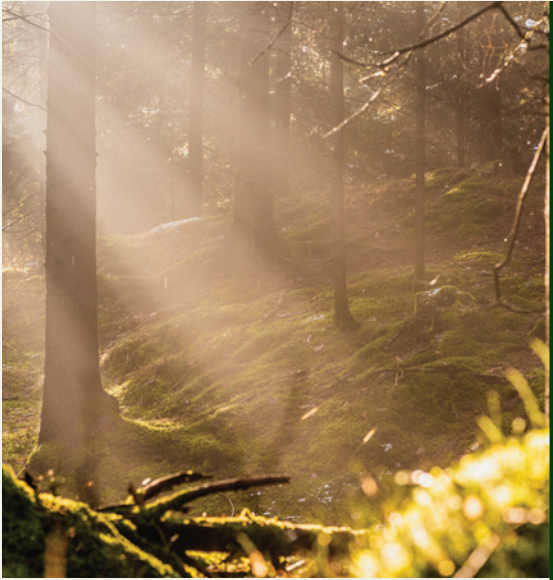
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LESSON 1

THE PRIVILEGE OF HEARING GOD'S VOICE



“We have resident within us the Holy Spirit who is given to guide and direct us, and all believers who seeks the truth will hear His voice.”

Welcome to our course, *Hearing God's Voice*. This is an exciting study for us to share with you because it addresses a question that resonates with everyone. Larry Collett, the co-author and co-teacher of this course, is a board member of Abide Ministries. One particular day, he and I were discussing what we were working on. He said he was working on hearing God's voice. I, too, had been working on that same thing. We decided to work on it together, walking with God to have him guide us to the best way to communicate this. Larry and I both teach abiding. In fact, my wife, Linda, and all of our leaders teach abiding, too.

During our initial abiding retreat, we had 100 percent success as each and every participant heard God's voice. It was spectacular for them to hear it, particularly the first time when they hadn't thought it was available to them. When the retreat ended, one question remained: How do I develop this further? Everyone heard His voice, but they were not used to hearing it. So, how do they develop the skill so that it grows and grows as part of their Spiritual walk? Larry and I are both committed to teaching this exact thing. This course is specifically geared to answer that question. What does this look like in a biblical way—and in a practical way?

Why do most Christians say they don't hear God's voice?

1. They don't even know it is possible. Since they don't know it is available, they don't look for it or recognize it.
2. They have observed people who claim to have heard God's voice, but what they say does not line up with Scripture. They could see that there was no truth in what was being said, and it all seemed hokey or not real.
3. Some said they heard God's voice, but things did not work out the way they thought it would so they must have been guessing or it must have been wishful thinking.
4. Their church and other Christian churches do not teach this. It is much safer to stick to intellectual theology and stay away from the notion of hearing God's voice. It is easier to go to Scripture and be obedient to Scripture even though failure is the likely outcome. At least they can give it their best effort.

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This course is going to present that God is always speaking. We have resident within us the Holy Spirit who is given to guide and direct us, and all believers who seeks the truth will hear His voice. It is biblical truth, and we are to learn this truth by the obvious—by hearing His voice. This is the most significant component of abiding in Christ. To abide, we must hear His voice, which He promises to us.

Read John 18:37:

³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose, I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Jesus made an interesting statement to Pilate as He was being put on trial before His crucifixion. Everyone who desires the truth, who has a heart for truth, does what? Hears His voice. If Jesus said that, then what must be happening? He is speaking. Everyone who is of the truth hears His voice. In order for people to hear His voice, He must be speaking. Does He limit this to only some people? Perhaps only the highly spiritual people, or the seminary graduates, or those who are deemed special? No, this is for everyone. Everyone who is of the truth is going to hear His voice.

Read Hebrews 3:7–15; 4:12:

A Rest for the People of God

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today, if you hear his voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

⁹ where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.

¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;

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they have not known my ways.'

¹¹ As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'"

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

These verses clearly say that today, you will hear His voice. Today is now. When you hear His voice, what are you not to do? Harden your heart. What does it mean to harden your heart? It means to turn away from hearing it, ignoring it, not believing it is possible, or rejecting what you hear.

Consider the simplicity of this. If your heart is hardened, where does your heart go? Where does your mind go? To your own selfish desires, to your own circumstances. This also means you do not walk with Him and instead go to the flesh—to the self-will. If you harden your heart and you can't hear God's voice, by definition, what are you doing? Walking away. In doing this, your heart will get harder and harder, leading you to the conclusion that this is the way life is going to be. Life is just full of trouble and you will never get any great answers anyway. But God says the opposite. He says that His word is powerful—down to the bones and marrow. What does that mean? It gets to the core of your very being that is both physical and spiritual. The Word penetrates that deeply.

When God speaks, as He did in the beginning (Genesis 1), what happens? Real things happen, real things are created, real things are done. In these verses to us, He says that when you are listening, when you are not hardening your heart, when you are not in rebellion or provocation, when you are hearing Him, He is going to operate in the core of who you are, into your very life. When will this happen? Today, every day, all the time. This is our privilege of walking with Him.

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Read Revelation 3:20–22:

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

If you hear Him speaking, you are called to open the door, and He will establish intimate fellowship together. In this fellowship, we can then dialogue with Him and hear, understand, and receive His will. He does not say: If you follow all the law of the Scripture, you will be good. Rather, He says that the condition to receiving the life of relationship with Him is what?

Hearing His voice. Again, in order to hear His voice, He must speak to you. It is the biblical imperative. He is there all the time, speaking. He asks you to listen and allow Him to have dialogue with you. He will lead you to overcoming. We cannot overcome on our own. We cannot resolve our struggles and battles on our own by attempting—in our own power—to be obedient to the Scripture. Rather, the victory comes from Him as we join Him in His work by hearing His voice and opening the door to sweet fellowship.

Read John 5:24:

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

With the Father, His words are life. Hearing and believing God ushers in eternal life, allowing us to escape judgment and to conquer death. The church teaches that believing is a ticket to heaven, which it is, but it is not everything of His life. He wants us to receive and live the abundant life of the Covenant that He promises. This comes through hearing His voice and receiving the full life of God—which is His best for us.

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Read Mark 4:21–25; 33–34:

A Lamp Under a Basket

²¹ And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²² For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." ²⁴ And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵ For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Jesus said that if we hear what He's telling us, it will translate into life—the life of blessing. As He spoke, His disciples wanted to know more. They asked for and received explanation, understanding, clarity of the truth. How? Through dialogue. Jesus spoke and the disciples heard what He said. This is how it works—hearing and processing together, so that the life of God is translated through our life.

Read Proverbs 23:12:

¹² Apply your heart to instruction
and your ear to words of knowledge.

This verse stated that we are to listen and receive knowledge. How do we get instruction? By listening. Seems straightforward enough. Listen to His dialogue with us to understand instruction and knowledge—this is what He wants us to know, it is everything that He wants us to know. Our desire is to have Him just give us the punch line—get to the point so that we can take it from there. But His life for us is more than just single answers that we take control of. Rather it is the fullness of life and all the elements of life which come through hearing and processing the ongoing dialogue with Him—step by step.

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Read Isaiah 30:18–21:

The Lord Will Be Gracious

¹⁸ Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.

¹⁹ For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. ²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

He says He is waiting for us. What is He waiting for? He is waiting for us to come to Him and hear what He has to say. He waits for us because He has much to say. Are you willing to hear? He then says that we are to wait for Him. What are we to be waiting for? To hear, to dialogue, to listen to what He has to say and follow His instruction. He waits for us to listen, and He waits for us to receive his message.

He further says that if you do receive it, you are walking forward, When you walk forward, what do you try to do? Make decisions. You come to forks in the road all the time where you have to decide if you should go one way or the other. In previous courses, we learned that as we consider the decisions before us, we tend to look at the first 10 feet of a 100-mile path. While those first 10 feet might look pretty good, God doesn't want us to rely on what we see. What we see is very limited, but He sees the whole thing.

Consider this example: You take your children to a corn maze. You take them to the entrance and tell them to try to get out. As they wander through the corn maze, you climb up onto the platform above the maze so you can watch your children. From your vantage point, you can see the whole maze, the whole picture, and you can see all of their bad choices. Their bad decisions were not intentional but resulted in lots of bad turns. How can you help them? You can talk to them and tell them which direction to go—turn right or turn left. They are limited by what they see in front of them. They can't figure it out on their own, but they can listen to you because you can see it all, and they trust you.

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God says that as you walk forward, trying to make your way through the maze of life, you will hear a voice from behind. What is the voice saying? His voice tells you to turn left or turn right, go this way or go that way. He tells you to pay more attention to what you hear rather than what you see. Why? Because He knows the way. His voice comes from behind you, which means you can't rely on what you see.

If I blindfolded you and walked you outside to your car, you would trust me to tell you to stop when you needed to stop, or take a step to the right or to the left. You would follow my voice and do exactly what I told you. Why? Because you want to get to the car, but with your eyes covered, you cannot get there on your own. You can't figure it out, but you know that I have it covered. God says we alone can't figure life out. There are too many choices to make, and we can't see the whole picture. Since He can, we need to listen to what He says over what we see. He will lead us to the best and none better. Listen, listen, listen. He will give the answers. He will give directions.

Read Ezekiel 44:5:

⁵ And the Lord said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I shall tell you concerning all the statutes of the temple of the Lord and all its laws. And mark well the entrance to the temple and all the exits from the sanctuary.

I need as much guidance and direction as I can get, and any guidance and direction I have on my own isn't going to work. We are better served to listen and understand the intentions and instructions of the Father. We are just to listen, stay with Me. The needed understanding will come with the listening. You will receive clarity.

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Then, Psalm 107:19–21:

- ¹⁹ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
- ²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from their destruction.
- ²¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!

Why are they calling out trouble? They have a problem—an infirmity, complications, adversity, things that aren't working. *Father, I'm in trouble.* God hears what you have to say, and then He sends His Word. He brings healing and deliverance to your problems. This is how He created the physical world. He is superior to the circumstances, and He will speak to it and bring deliverance, bring healing, bring answers, bring resolution. The key is to call out to Him expecting that an answer is forthcoming. He doesn't wish us good luck, He brings us resolution. He tells us what He is going to do and gives the instructions for walking with Him to resolution.

Read Colossians 3:16–17:

- ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

In John 15:1–5, Jesus reiterates that we are to abide in Him—remain in Him, which is the ongoing relationship where we always hear His voice. This is how we will experience the life of God in our life. This is the key to living in His name. What is He saying? He says to stay with Him and process His Words into our heart. Let them rise to the level of priorities so that He fulfills the life for us—where He resolves all things and delivers us from the world of trouble.

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This is particularly true when we are in a place of discouragement, where nothing is working and we just can't figure things out. We can't find a way out of the mess no matter how hard we try. Call out to God and ask Him for help. He will help. He will answer. Listen to Him and do all in the name of Christ, teaching and admonishing each other in His Word, in His name. It requires a heart of listening all time—in everything we do. When we walk with God—listening, talking, receiving, and processing—we learn to trust what we hear.

Read John 8:31; 8:47; 10:16:

The Truth Will Set You Free

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,

⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.

These verses address the issue of believers not hearing God's voice, including the idea that God doesn't speak. While this is the experience shared by many people, Christ said that the reason is because they are not in fellowship with God, and, thus, are not of God to hear. Further, if you abide in His Word, you are His disciple. A disciple hears His voice. We are to adjust to the truth of what we hear, adjust our lives to that truth. We are to believe it and want to live out this truth in real life. We are to want nothing but His Word and truth in our life. In addition, He says that if you are not hearing, then you are not His disciple. So, the difference between being a disciple and not being a disciple is what? Hearing His voice.

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Consider the example we have in Scripture: What did the disciples who were with Jesus do every day? They walked with Him, dialogued with Him. When He spoke, they heard His voice. Prior to Jesus, as Jews, they were focused on the law. Their bent was on the law. Through hearing His voice, they were willing to let Jesus change their paradigm and learned the way of Christ. On the other hand, consider the Pharisees. They were not willing to spend time in fellowship with Christ, listen to His voice, process His truth, or allow a change in their paradigm. Jesus said there is a line. If they had a heart to listen at all, they could become His disciple. The same is true for us. If we don't have a heart to hear His voice, we will not receive the life He brings us. A true disciple is one who hears His voice, willing to learn, process, and dialogue with God to receive truth.

Read John 10:27; 12:49–50; 17:8:

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

The Father speaks, and He brings truth. His sheep hear His voice. His sheep hear what He has to say so we can follow Him and understand where He is taking us. He speaks His truth to bring us into His wonderful will. Because hearing His voice is necessary, He gives us the ability to do just that. Hearing His voice is a wonderful privilege that He provides.

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Read John 3:21; 8:12; 8:32; 8:37:

²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

I Am the Light of the World

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

If we do not have the truth in us, it is because we are not listening, not pursuing the light, the truth. We are not hearing. If we want the ability and freedom to walk in truth, what do we need to be doing? Listening and hearing. It is not just about studying the word, which tends to lead to following the law under the guise of truth, resulting in judgment and division. There is no heart to listen and process together. Rather, we are to stay in the light—understand the truth and move out of darkness—through hearing and processing.

Read John 12:47–48:

⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

Jesus said He did not come to judge us. What does judge us? His Word, what He speaks to us. This is the reason it is critical for us to listen, and to be willing to receive it. The Word is truth. The truth stands on its own. It is an arbitrary thing that stands on its own every time, all the time. Just because He forgives us does not mean we can ignore what is true for us to follow. The church says it doesn't matter,

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but His Word says that it does matter and we will experience the consequences of not following. The truth that He speaks is going to judge you. Either you will get the favor as you receive and follow—or you will experience the consequence of not following.

Consider this example: I spend time with many Christian executives who make a good income. When they come to me, one of the biggest issues they experience is financial trouble. I tell them that God guarantees that He will resolve it. I don't say how or when, but He will resolve the issue if they have a heart to hear His voice and follow His instruction. After they tell me about their specific financial troubles, I ask them if they are tithing? If they are not, I ask them why they aren't. It is not uncommon for them to say that they can't afford to. They make a lot of money but can't afford to tithe because they spend more than they make. They believe that if they tithe, they will have even less, and this will increase further their financial pressure.

The Word has much to say about tithing. God says that He is going to test your heart. Do you trust Him? You can test Him right back. Watch and see as He blesses you and resolves your financial issues. God says He will give you financial freedom and safety. The only condition is tithing. The truth stands on its own, and you can't get around it because you think you've earned it. It isn't committing to tithing if God blesses you. God says that when you tithe, you demonstrate trust in His truth. This is when He will bless you.

Again, the truth stands on its own. When you hear His voice, it is not for you to decide on your own what you will or will not do, rather, it is processing with God the message He is giving you.

When I help these executives see the truth of the Word, their struggle continues because it requires faith that they have not experienced before. I acknowledge that this is not easy, but offer to investigate tithing with them, explaining that His truth will be known, and it will become real for them. I instruct them to spend time in the Word and dialogue with Him as they hear what He says. This is not law, but becoming a disciple who hears His voice receives the benefit of the truth received. It is ok to tell Him about your struggle with tithing. There is no need to worry, as He will process you through until you see what He has to say. He will ask you to go to faith about what He says, and even then, He will give you the faith needed—just stay with Him, hear His voice. One hundred percent of the time, if they learn this, hear His voice, process truth, and tithe, they are blessed. The Word stands on its own and is delivered in real life.

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Read John 8:51–52:

⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”⁵² The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’

This is an interesting statement: If we follow Him and His teaching, we will never see death. On the surface, this does not make sense, and it is why the Pharisees could not accept it. Because they struggled with what He said, they chose to reject the statement. Instead of rejecting what Christ speaks to you, stay in dialogue with Him until you can gain the understanding and the application of this truth. The Pharisees were not willing to stay in dialogue, hearing His voice, so they did not receive the truth that the life of God is now and continues into eternity. They did not hear how we never taste death, but always have life—which was a privilege that was available to them as well. When we are not working off our own paradigm but are willing to hear His voice, we grow in wisdom and experience the fullness of life. Essentially, death is the absence of hearing what He has to say. It is the absence of His Word—which gets to the very core and essence of who we are in relationship with Him.

Read John 15:13–15:

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants,[a] for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Jesus said His role is to speak, make known to us truth and life. If we receive that, what does He call us? Friend. What are friends? People in close relationship who talk all the time, help each other, pick each other up, rejoice with each other. It is fellowship. It is enjoying each other. It is loving on each other—giving love and feeling love from them. There is an affinity. You truly enjoy being with each other. This is true friendship.

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Larry and I have been friends for over 20 years. Friendship is relationship. It is joyful conversation. It is all that you get to experience together. It is the good, the bad, and the ugly, and oftentimes, it is the hilarious. Once, Linda and I went to Larry's house in Saint Louis, Missouri. We took our suitcases out of our car and made our way up the long walk from the driveway to the front door. Just as I was about to push the doorbell, a gigantic fire alarm goes off, and it is blasting. I was surprised because I hadn't actually pushed the doorbell, yet it went off in this big way. I just thought that was one heck of a doorbell! It was literally blaring. Larry didn't know we were there because he was dealing with the alarm. We couldn't get his attention because he couldn't hear us over the alarm. When he finally realized we were there, I told him that it was pretty clever how he got it to work just when I was about to hit the doorbell. He said the alarm just went off, and he had to get the alarm company to shut down the entire system. He was not amused, but it did give us a good laugh.

Friendship is fun. Friendship is joy. Friendship is relationship. Jesus says if you dialogue with Him continually, you are His friend, and you get to experience a continual level of joy.

Read John 14:7–11, 23:

⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.^[a] From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

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The words of Christ connect us to the Father. His word is fully connected to God, and as we hear these words, we, too, are fully connected to God. Through this connection, we have the privilege to know what is on His mind, what is truth, what He wants us to know, what instructions He has for us. Through His connection to the Father, we can hear His voice if we listen. His words connect not only us to Him, but His activity for and to us. This is quite remarkable. Everyone—believers and unbelievers—wonders what is going to happen next. What does the future hold? How should I walk so that I can enjoy the future? This is particularly for believers, since God has promised superabundant life and the Covenant—He will bless us, to make us a blessing. How do we do that? It's not that complicated. In fact, He will give the directions for us to follow.

Read Romans 8:12–17; 26–28:

Heirs with Christ

¹² So then, brothers,^[a] we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^[b] of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^[a] the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[b] for those who are called according to his purpose.

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Then, John 16:13–15:

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Let's put all this together. Who is resident in us? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. He receives God's will for us and communicates the Father's will to us. There is one thing about His will that is certain: He will make all things work together for good. Does this include all the stupid things we have done? Absolutely. Does it include all the pickles we've gotten ourselves into or all the things we struggle with? Yes. The Father will make it work for good. Why? Because He is superior to the circumstances. He has power over it.

When does the Holy Spirit receive God's will? All the time—sun up, sun down, and every moment in between. The Holy Spirit does not sleep. He speaks to the Father, receiving all that God wants to communicate to us. He speaks to us through our subconscious dreams. He speaks to us when we are awake. He speaks in a way that we will receive his message.

We need to be careful here. This is not about leading every step of your life. God uses people and places for the message, but it is rarely about the specifics of those people or places. We are to pay attention and through hearing His voice receive the interpretation of the message. Others can assist in this since they, too, have the Holy Spirit residing in them.

If each of us is truly a child of God and the Holy Spirit's role is to communicate the Father's will to us, then we are being led by the Spirit. We are not obligated and relegated to live in the flesh—as the church tends to teach. Rather, it should be normal to be led by the Holy Spirit. And if the Holy Spirit is leading, then what are we doing? We are following. How do we follow? By hearing what He has to say. He doesn't simply instruct us to follow the precepts of Scripture and then wish us good luck. It is important to know that the Scripture is truth, and God does not violate His truth. Remember, as we already discussed, His Word is true and stand on its own. We know that abiding in His Word is important because that is the source of truth. As we are led by the Holy Spirit, we discover *how* He wants to lead us as He applies that truth to each of us personally. Keep in mind that He will speak to us and we are to follow. As he leads us, He says He will guide us into truth.

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To clarify further, when visiting a museum, it is customary to follow a docent, or guide. Why do visitors seek out their services? Because the docents are far more knowledgeable about the exhibits than they are, and they know what they are talking about. Do the guides lead the visitors to the exhibits and let them try to figure out what is on display before them? Do they wish them good luck and go about their day? No. Their job is to lead the guests through the museum and explain everything that they experience. They will answer all of the questions asked and will provide valuable insight.

The same is true with the Holy Spirit, except that His guidance is not limited to a one-hour tour. There can be days and days and days and weeks and weeks and weeks of processing as we try to understand what God is saying. The Holy Spirit who resides within you stays with you and continues to speak God's will. He provides answers to all of our questions. What is the future? He knows the answer and will tell you of things to come. He will give us a heads-up. He will transfer the life of God by declaring (speaking) all that is Christ's, all the promises of Christ to you. He will declare it, and then show you how to walk into it. His role is to guide, tell of things to come, and declare the path of life. Our role is to listen. Listen and follow.

Can you follow His will if you can't hear His voice? Absolutely not. Hearing His voice is critical to enjoying the beautiful life of God. We urge you to receive that. Review the verses in this lesson and explore the simplicity. He says that His sheep hear His voice. He wants to lead us. He wants to guide us. He wants to give us the very best. Do you have a heart to hear?

The next lessons in this course will address the practical aspects of what it means to listen in a way that is going to be meaningful for you. It is possible, and it will be beautiful.



LESSON 2

THE PRACTICAL WAYS OF HEARING GOD'S VOICE



“God’s voice is personal, and spoken in a gentle, beautiful way.”

In Lesson 1, we discussed that all believers are called to hear God’s voice. God says that His sheep hear His voice. If you are a disciple, you are going to hear His voice and be able to follow it because He gives you the ability to hear and to follow. He speaks, and we listen. In Lesson 2, we will process this further so that we better understand the practical ways of hearing.

Read 1 Kings 19:11–13:

¹¹ And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke 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. ¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.^[a] ¹³ And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

This is powerful. God’s voice is personal, and spoken in a gentle, beautiful way. Again, where does Christ reside? In us. Because He is in us, He speaks in ways that are normal for each of us personally. It is not a strange, unusual experience that only happens in big ways, for big things. Rather, it is beautiful. It is understandable. Like Elizah, we learn to recognize His voice in a personal way.

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Read James 1:5–8:

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

If you lack wisdom, what should you do? Ask God. What will He do? He will speak to you and give you His wisdom. He communicates in a way that you can understand and at a level that you can understand, as well. He adjusts His conversation to you. It is not about how skilled you are or how mature you are. It is simply whether or not you have a heart to ask and let Him speak. God says He gives generously, which means with great specificity, with great clarity, in a way that you can receive it.

When my two grandsons were 10 and seven, they would ask me the same question. When I answered, the 10-year-old understood perfectly while the seven-year-old had no idea what I meant. Did I leave it at that? Did I tell him to wait three years and he would understand? Did I belittle him and tell him he should be smarter or work harder to understand? Absolutely not. I rephrased the answer in a way that made sense to him. I communicated to him differently than I did with his brother. It was my burden to figure out a way to answer him where he was in that moment in his life, not three years from then. The question was asked, he expected an answer, and I gave it to him in a way that he could receive it. God, too, gets us the answers by speaking in a way that we can understand.

I worked with a group of executives who happened to be Catholic. They were friends of a Catholic couple who attended one of the Abide Ministries retreats where they started hearing God's voice. Their lives changed as they began to experience the abundant life of God who was resolving their life issues and directing their path. Their change was so apparent that their friends asked what happened to them. They told them that they learned how to hear God's voice. They, too, wanted to learn how to do that, so the friends referred them to me.

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I then received a call asking if these execs could join me in a group so they, too, could learn how to hear God's voice. This was a group of deacons and others who were high up in the work of the local Catholic Church. I explained that I am a Protestant, and suggested that they seek approval from their priest before we proceeded. I didn't want to cause any trouble between them and their priest. I further explained that we would be studying in the Word and would likely run across some information that could challenge their theology. This is true for all people who have any kind of church background. We do not try to persuade anyone of anything and the purpose is not to focus on differences. The focus is on hearing His voice and walking with Him.

The priest gave them his blessing, and we started in the Word together. I told them that if they had a heart to hear, in the first 30 days of doing this, they would hear God's voice. A few weeks later, we gathered together, and they discussed how they were all hearing God's voice. One particular experience was from an exec who excitedly said, "You won't believe what happened. I was on the train to downtown Chicago when I asked God a question. I heard God's voice as He told me the answer!"

It is not about skill, it is about heart. You can hear His voice if you have a heart to hear it. It is His role and His burden to speak in way we can listen and understand. It is not based upon our spiritual maturity. However, there is a condition. This is actually one of the things preventing us from hearing Him: We simply don't believe we're going to hear. We ask Him our questions, as we are in need of wisdom. We would like to hear His voice, but we really don't believe we are going to hear it.

If this is the case, God can't speak because we are double-minded, stuck in the cycle of trying to evaluate on our own. This uncertainty is the reason we don't know if we are hearing Him or deciding on our own what to do with what is being heard. There is no value in telling us, since we are double-minded and unstable in our ways.

The key is to settle into the fact that God will speak and you will hear. From there, go forward to experience this. He will speak in a way that you can hear and understand. Take the time to work this through and get it settled. When I first learned this, I settled with knowing that I would accept and believe what God was going to speak to me. If I did not quite get it right, He would correct me. I was not going to be double-minded and was not going to evaluate whether or not He was speaking. I did not need to be perfect, just willing to be corrected if I was not hearing Him exactly as He intended.

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Read Isaiah 30:18–22:

The Lord Will Be Gracious

¹⁸ Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

For the Lord is a God of justice;

blessed are all those who wait for him.

¹⁹ For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. ²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. ²² Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

As we process our issues and decisions, God waits for us to listen to His voice. He speaks His instructions and guides us in the direction we should go. When we come to a fork in the road, He will speak His voice from behind us. Basing our decisions on our personal observations or using our own logic is called walking by sight. However, we are called to walk by faith, which is based upon listening and hearing what God speaks. He speaks from behind so that we listen instead of trying to figure out the solution ourselves. His instructions will be very specific. He will tell us to go this way or go that way. The answers will be very precise to our situation and our personal circumstances. This is not a broad theology where we try our best based upon Biblical truth. We trust that God is speaking to each of us through the Holy Spirit.

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THE PRACTICAL WAYS OF HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–16:

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^[a] you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

It is critical to remember that as we hear His voice, the Bible, which is His truth that we can trust with all certainty is not to be violated. His truth is life. It is wisdom. It is love. This is God. When we go to God, we begin assimilating Him who is truth, life, and wisdom. The guidance we are given is to live out our salvation—experience it. The scriptures then move from the pages into our heart and our life.

In the verses above, Paul states that this is profitable. It is impactful for instruction, for teaching, for reproof, for training, for competency, and for equipping in our work all things that we need to live the life of God that He promises to deliver to us. Our role is to hear, process, and have God speak to how we receive and apply these truths in our life. As we hear and process, we follow in obedience. The truth needs to be applied, but we need the wisdom to apply this to our life specifically.

There was a couple who wanted to buy a house. They weren't sure if they should buy a specific house or not so they pondered where they should go in the Bible to find the answer. What verse should they go to? None per se, but God says that when you seek wisdom, which is the application of truth, we are to ask Him, and He will answer. God will use Scripture to guide us to truth. If it is not the right house or the right time, He will tell you not to buy the house. If the house is the one He had planned for you, He will let you know that, too. He will speak specific directions regarding the answer to their question.

The couple, believing they would receive the answer, processed with God until they heard what He had to say. They trusted and knew that the Holy Spirit would guide them to the answer—using all the profitable teaching and instruction. All these wonderful things from the Word go hand in hand with Him speaking personally.

Remember, the Word is all true, and God will never violate the truth. The truth heard from God will only be verified in the Word.

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Read Matthew 5:17–20:

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

At the time, the Old Testament was the scripture known by the Jews. Jesus stated that He did not come to abolish the Old Testament scriptures but to fulfill them. He said it was all still valid and that He had come to give truth, meaning, and understanding of all the things of the Old Testament. It is still valid to this day. Nothing has passed away. The Word was given to us to live out the truth—the absolute truth. This is the life God has planned for His children, and it is to be given by God to us as truth.

When Jesus healed a person on the Sabbath, how did the Pharisees respond? They told Him that He was in violation of the Scripture, the law. Jesus said: “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Jesus wanted the Pharisees to move beyond the essence of the law to get to the heart of it. He brought truth to the heart of it so there would be an understanding of the truth of it. He did not come to abolish it or change it, rather to fulfill it with the truth of the heart of it. He will fulfill it in each of us individually. He will speak *through* the Word so that as we hear His voice, it will not be absent of the Word. The Word includes all of Scripture—the Old and New Testaments. All Scripture is profitable—all of it.

Encourage each other to explore what the Word has to say. God speaks through His Word. Then, He gives us application of this Word through the Holy Spirit.

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Read 1 Corinthians 2:9–16:

⁹ But, as it is written,
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.^[a]

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

We have the mind of Christ—the truth. We have access to Him, who is the truth. He is present in us. The Holy Spirit will relay to us the things of the Father and of Jesus, and we will be able to hear and understand His instruction. We don't have to have a PhD in theology to understand because the Holy Spirit has taken care of that. God has already addressed it. Because we have resident within us Jesus Himself, the Holy Spirit, we are more privileged than the disciples who were physically with Him. We have Him all the time giving us truth, speaking to us, and giving us wisdom. He is with us in every moment manifesting in our minds and our thoughts and our actions His life in us. The more we live this out, going deeper into Him, the deeper He gets into us. He has prepared already the things He wishes to disclose to us, which are received through the Spirit in us, and not through our intellect. We just have to be willing to hear and to listen.

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Read John 6:63:

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

In 1 Corinthians 2, we learn that we cannot figure life out with our own thinking and logic. Rather, we are to live according to God's revelation, His disclosure to us. Why? Because His words are spirit and life. His words are known in the Greek as *rhema*. It is the personal application of truth that are spirit and life that guides and direct us. By definition, this means that what He speaks, we have to be able to hear. The words He speaks have power to them. It is not just information, but the very ability to create, transform, resolve, and overcome circumstances. It is revelation. It is always asking what He has to say versus trying to figure things out by using our own observations and logic.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:4–6:

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

What happens when you read the Bible as law? It kills you. It produces worldly actions, and worldly actions are not of the Spirit. They are of the flesh. We begin to contain God in the boundaries of our intellectual understanding and limit the power of the Word that He speaks to us. If we receive the Word, what He speaks as Spirit, as revelation from Him, we then experience life—His life and His super-abundant elements of life that He will deliver.

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Legalism produces materialism and worldliness. The Spirit produces life. We are not to read the scriptures as law to perform to it, but rather let Him lift Scripture into life as we receive it. A wonderful truth of this is that your sufficiency to receive this comes from Him and is not dependent upon us. We are as equal to receive what He speaks as the most spiritual person you can think of (i.e., Billy Graham). How is this possible? Because we have the Holy Spirit within us, and the ability to hear and receive His words, and it is equally available to all, without partiality.

People have a tendency to say that others are more spiritual because they can hear God speak. Since you never hear Him, you must not be as spiritual. However, your sufficiency is not based on your ability, maturity, or experience. It is based upon Him. You can hear exactly the same way anybody else does, you just have to grow in this as you practice hearing. How does a baby hear their parent's voice? They listen to it all the time—and they get better and better and better at receiving, understanding, and following. God says the sufficiency comes from Him.

Consider this example: As we pursue truth, let the scriptures become life. God will lift the power and the life of these words into our soul and into our situation. This is good. Do not ignore or disregard what is received. It is important to abide in the Word every day to listen and hear, otherwise thinking can be easily skewed and moving away from the truth can be rationalized.

So, should you buy the house? Is this His will? Scripture won't give you a yes or no, but the Holy Spirit will. This leads to the life of God, not law and death.

Read John 10:3–5; 16:25–28; 16:13–15:

³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

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I Have Overcome the World

²⁵ "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.^[a] ²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

Jesus said His sheep hear His voice. He will speak to you, too. As you walk through life being led by the Spirit, stay centered in the Word, applying the Word to your life. What does that mean, and how do I receive it? God will speak to specific things about your life and guide you into His truth so that He can deliver the planned life to you. He will dialogue with you and speak things to you. This is His role. Our role is to listen and dialogue together with Him. We are to process the truth that He is revealing, knowing that it is true. We ask, listen, and discuss. Let's look at some Biblical examples:

Abraham: Read Genesis 12:1–2:

The Call of Abram

12 Now the Lord said^[a] to Abram, "Go from your country^[b] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

In these verses, who spoke? God. Who heard the Word of God? Abraham. Did he understand it? Yes. God told him to leave and He would make Abraham the father of many nations and a recipient and purveyor of the Covenant—blessed to be a blessing. The natural response would be to question God's instructions: What? Where? When is this all going to happen? We would need to know all the details before we just got up and left.

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It is ok to ask questions, but listen to His instruction, and do not evaluate whether or not it makes sense. Without giving specifics, God told Abraham what was ahead. Abraham just needed to take the first step—which was to leave his family and his land. God told Abraham he would be the father of many nations, which likely meant that children were in his future. Again, it was a truth about where Abraham was headed, but he was given no specifics.

Moses: Read Exodus 3:1–10:

The Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

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How specific was this exchange between God and Moses? Very specific.

God: Moses, I'm going to send you.

Moses: Don't send me. I'm not capable.

God: No, I'm sending you.

Moses: Well, then, who shall I say is sending me?

God: I AM.

Moses: What am I going to do?

God: You are going to ask them to let your people go.

It is very specific instruction. God said He was going to do this, so He needed Abraham to get to the right place for Him to proceed. It was very specific. As we look at all our unresolved issues, what do we need? Specific answers—just like He gave Abraham and Moses.

Read Jeremiah 1:3–11:

³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

The Call of Jeremiah

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

⁶ Then I said, "Ah, LORD God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."⁷ But the LORD said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

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⁸ Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
declares the LORD.”

⁹ Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,

“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to break down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

¹¹ And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?”
And I said, “I see an almond^[a] branch.”

This is another example of how He speaks with specificity:

God: Here is My assignment.

Jeremiah: I'm not capable of this.

God: Do not concern yourself with your capability—I am going to give you My words to speak. Here's what I'm saying. Do you understand that?

Jeremiah: Yes.

God: What do you see?

Jeremiah: A vision.

God: Good, let Me show you what that means.

The entire book of Jeremiah is Jeremiah dialoguing with God. He heard God's voice and spoke what God spoke to him. Did Jeremiah dream it all up? Did he decide to figure everything out on his own. No.

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Later in the Book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah reached a point of frustration where he said to God:

Jeremiah: They aren't listening, and I am sick of it. I'm done.

God: Jeremiah, did I tell you to concern yourself with the outcome? No, I just said for you to be faithful. Now, get up. These people are not going to listen to you at all, but I am inviting them to receive the message, and you are the messenger. You just carry out My instructions and serve My purpose.

Jeremiah: Sorry.

Then Jeremiah says something remarkable:

Jeremiah: I rediscovered Your words. I received your words, and then I ate them. I ate them, and they became a joy to me. (Jeremiah 15:16)

When Jeremiah "ate" the words, he chewed, swallowed, and absorbed them. He ruminated, meditated, pondered, and processed. The words became Spirit and life, and to Jeremiah they became a great joy. He stopped being concerned about outcome and instead focused on the joy of receiving and understanding. He got it. He understood.

God speaks, and we receive His word, the process of which is to be a joy.

Paul and Ananias: Read Acts 9:1–6; 10–16:

The Conversion of Saul

9 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

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¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."¹¹ And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem."¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Saul, who was bent on eliminating Christianity, encountered Christ on the road to Damascus and was blinded. Jesus revealed why Saul was chosen by God, and Saul immediately asked the Lord what He wanted him to do. (This became an earmark of Paul's life as from that point forward, he always referred to himself as a servant of Christ Jesus.) God said to go into the city and go to this certain place and wait. Saul did exactly as instructed. God then called Ananias by name, to which Ananias said: Here I am. Ananias was used to hearing God's voice, while Saul wasn't.

Upon hearing God's voice for the first time, Saul asked Christ who He was. Jesus told him that He was the One Saul was persecuting. Saul then asked Jesus what He wanted Saul to do. Just like that, Saul experienced an amazing transformation.

Ananias, on the other hand, knew God's voice and asked with expectation: What do you want me to do? God instructed Ananias to go to this very specific place, on a very specific street, in a very specific town, and lay hands on Saul. Ananias reminded God who Saul was, how he was coming to capture and harm Christians. He feared that Saul would come after him, too. He did not agree and thought it was a bad idea.

Does God mind when we tell Him we don't understand? No. It is ok, but keep talking to Him, and He will help you understand His will. Don't worry. He then tells Ananias something extremely significant: Paul is going to go to the Gentiles. That is certainly a new and unexpected revelation. Ananias did exactly as God had instructed.

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In all of the examples, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and Ananias knew that God's instructions were not sensible to their limited understanding. If what they saw before them was the entire picture, they very well could have chosen a different path. But that was not the case. They trusted God and followed His direction.

I disciplined an executive who was dealing with a difficult situation that he believed had no solution. In his opinion, there was absolutely no resolution to the problem. I invited him to ask God for direction, with the expectation that he would hear and understand God's specific instructions. He accepted the invitation and began hearing the Holy Spirit guiding him. The Holy Spirit spoke to him, challenged him, gave him specific steps, and led him to a wonderful solution. He went from seeing no possible solution, to hearing God's specific answer to his problem.

We are called to hear, process, believe, and follow. His promise to us is that He will resolve every issue we have. God also will direct us through circumstances that are meant to guide us.

Read Acts 16:6–10:

The Macedonian Call

⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ And when Paul^[a] had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Holy Spirit would not allow them to go to Asia. The verses do not go into detail about what He did to keep them out, but one has to assume there were a number of adverse circumstances that came about when they tried to move toward Asia. They then tried to go directly north, and again the Holy Spirit prevented them from going that direction as well. They couldn't go south, as that was the Mediterranean Sea, and Paul had already started churches to the east, so they knew not to go that way. Every direction seemed to be riddled with roadblocks.

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Paul had been called on a missionary trip, had wanted to go northeast into Asia but instead was prevented from going anywhere. In what must have been frustrating, Paul easily could have quit, or decided to do something on his own. However, this is not what Paul did. Rather, he asked the Father what He had to say and waited for His answer. He knew he would be directed by the Holy Spirit. He then received a vision and was told to go to Macedonia (Philippi). He was told to go directly there, not even stopping to start churches along the way.

As we seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, God uses circumstances to:

1. Confirm what we have already heard from Him regarding what He wants us to do. He does this so that there is confidence in moving forward.
2. Block the wrong path so we do not move forward in that direction, but instead wait to process what He reveals. This includes waiting for the right time, taking a new direction, and understanding further important details before moving forward.
3. Give us more reason to believe and trust Him as we walk along His path.

As we observe the circumstances before us, it is important to understand that when God speaks, He speaks specifics and shows us the way as we process these circumstances. He calls us to get closer to Him and receive clarity for the path ahead. So, pay attention, and then ask God what it is about. Recognize when something happens that guides you to the answer. *God, what do You have to say about this?* God gave us a way to receive what He speaks, to get confirmation about what we hear.

Read Malachi 3:16–18:

The Book of Remembrance

¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. ¹⁷ "They shall be mine," says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

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As they spoke to each other, God listened. This means that processing with others who have a heart to hear is considered prayer. God hears as we talk it out with each other, and then provides ideas, thoughts, and insight that help shape His revelation to us—His guidance to us. It is of utmost importance that we pay attention to what we are hearing.

I was invited to a C12 group session where one of the members was making his company presentation. This was a regular activity of the C12 sessions. He explained a real struggle, made a statement about the problem, and then planned to just move on. Before he could, I asked him to stop. The Holy Spirit told me to pay attention to what he just said, so I asked him to repeat it. When he did, everybody in the room realized the same thing. He had just spoken a part of his answer, and he didn't even know it. In sharing his story with the other group members, essentially talking with them, the Holy Spirit worked to confirm, to give insight, and to give clarity. Talking with others leads to receiving direction from the Spirit.

Read 1 Samuel 25:10–13:

¹⁰ And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. ¹¹ Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" ¹² So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. ¹³ And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

David had greatly helped Nabal when he had assisted Nabal's shepherds, providing them with protection, and teaching them how to manage the sheep better. Nabal was having a feast and would have extra food, so David asked if Nabal could give some of this extra food to David and his men. At this point, they had been living in caves and had not enjoyed good food for quite a while. Nabal responded harshly by asking who David was and then he refused to give him anything.

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David was furious. He instructed his men to strap on their swords because they were going to kill everybody in sight. He had had enough and was not going to be treated in this manner by Nabal.

Read 1 Samuel 25:20–26:

²⁰ And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. ²¹ Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. ²² God do so to the enemies of David^[a] and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

²³ When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. ²⁵ Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal^[b] is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. ²⁶ Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal.

Abigail, the wife of Nabal, went to meet David and pleaded with him. What you are about to do is not a good idea. You are a follower of God, but this is not of God. You are going to have consequences from God since this is not His will. She could have said that it was going to impact her and her family, but she was God's messenger who addressed David's response to Nabal. It was not a good idea, it was not God's will, and David ought to reconsider.

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Read 1 Samuel 25:32–35:

³² And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." ³⁵ Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."

David, having been challenged, received the message. Abigail delivered God's message and David recognized it as such. Abigail did not present her own thoughts or angles, she delivered God's direction. In addition, she approached it as we, too, are to approach our own issues. She didn't tell David what he should or shouldn't do. She didn't demand that he forfeit the plans to destroy Nabal and his people. Instead, she tells him to consider that God has something different for him to do.

To David's credit, what did he do? He listened. David was ready to kill everybody in sight, until God used Abigail to challenge him to stop responding in the flesh and instead listen to God. As God speaks to us, He also uses other people to deliver His messages. Many times, this is what it takes to get us to rethink something. When we share with others who have a heart to hear God, they can either offer confirmation or suggest that you stop, reconsider, and listen to what God has to say. David received God's message through Abigail and did not proceed with his initial plans of destruction.

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Read Psalm 16:7–11:

- ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.^[a]
- ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[b] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
- ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.^[c]
- ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

While we sleep, what does God do? He communicates to us and gives us wisdom, insight, ideas, and thoughts. This often comes in the form of dreams, which is what happened with Daniel. Linda has been particularly blessed with this gift. In the past, we have had concerns that we have talked through and tried to process. We asked God what He had to say about the situation, and many times, Linda has turned to me in the middle of the night to ask if I was awake because she had thoughts that she believed were from the Spirit. The thoughts she has received were not necessarily the answers, but ideas, new thoughts, or other things to consider. These new thoughts led us to process further until we received God's clarification and resolution.

God's communication does not stop when we fall asleep. In fact, quite the opposite. This is a wonderful privilege He has given to us that while we sleep, He continues to communicate. Our role is to be willing to receive His messages.

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Read Daniel 2:14–23:

¹⁴ Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁵ He declared^[a] to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. ¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;
²² he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king's matter."

Let's set the stage. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. Daniel was a member of what the Babylonians called wise men. There were about 300 of them. The king went to the wise men and told them to interpret his dream. They told Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the dream, and they'd interpret it. The king was not having it and told them that if they were so wise, they would not only tell him

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the interpretation, but they would also tell him what he dreamed. The wise men insisted that no one could do that, to which Nebuchadnezzar argued that they must not really be wise men, so they deserved a painful and cruel death. This would include Daniel and his friends.

As soon as Daniel learned of the situation, he made an appointment with the king to tell him what his dream was, along with the interpretation. The king held off on the killing spree, and Daniel and his friends go directly to God to ask for the information they need to save themselves and their fellow wise men. What did God do? He told them the answer. God had to be very specific because the king's dream was very specific.

God is capable of many things, including interpreting things, giving wisdom, insight, thoughts, and ideas. He can get you where you need to be in order to understand His message fully. Your creativity and your understanding will come together as you process His information, the insight He provides, the wisdom He offers. If you have a heart to hear, He will provide the information you seek, and it will be specific to your situation. Each of us needs to know how to distinguish His voice versus other voices.

Read Luke 11:9:

⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Then, John 10:1–5; 26–27:

I Am the Good Shepherd

10 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

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We are to go to the Father and ask for His will—His wisdom, insight, and truth. If we go directly to Him, He will deliver this because He has given all of us the Holy Spirit who knows the answers. We will get a response as we hear His voice. We are not to stray from His path and seek another way because this only gets in the way of hearing His voice.

How do we know we are hearing His voice? This is a question that the evil one continues to pound us with. *Did God really say that?* We will know it is God as He will reinforce that it is Him. This will resonate in the core of our being and into our spirit because of the Holy Spirit.

Consider how a baby learns to hear the voice of his parents because he is in their presence all the time. This is also how we learn to hear God's voice—by being in His presence through our abiding and trusting. We verify, confirm, dialogue, and ask for wisdom and truth. God will speak until we receive clarity. It is not our burden to break down His message into pieces that make sense to us, but His to deliver in a way that we understand. We simply have to stay with Him, process with Him, and dialogue with Him. It is very specific, it is very direct, and it starts with Scripture. He will never violate Scripture. When we seek personal application to our situation, He will give specific instruction. Trust that you are hearing His voice. Practice it. Get used to it. For this is when you will realize how fantastic it is.

LESSON 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OBEDIENT AND EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS TO WHAT WE ARE HEARING



“You have the Holy Spirit within you, and His role is to speak to you. Our role is to hear and follow.”

In Lessons 1 and 2, we learned that if you are a disciple of God, you are going to hear His voice. If you are His sheep, you are going to hear His voice. The question we all have is: How does that work? If you’ve never experienced it, is it really available to you? Yes, it is, and it is really simple. You have the Holy Spirit within you, and His role is to speak to you. Our role is to hear and follow. We learned that His speaking is very specific, and while it is His voice, it sounds more like our inner voice. Everyone speaks to themselves, and you hear, recognize, and respond to that voice. The Holy Spirit takes that voice and reveals that it is Him, so we need to pay attention. Trust that He is not going to bait and switch. He will give you ideas. He will give you creativity, and He will instruct you and guide you. He will stay with you as you learn to follow.

One of the key things to learn is that if we do not pursue hearing from God, do not take the time to hear from God, or reject what we hear from God, there are consequences to how we live.

Read Proverbs 15:29; 28:9:

²⁹ The Lord is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

⁹ If one turns away his ear from hearing the law,
even his prayer is an abomination.

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Having a heart that doesn't want to cooperate with God is an obstacle that God calls a sin. Sin isn't just doing what we know is wrong, sin is also operating in the self and not hearing, ignoring, or refusing to follow God's will. This can even include something that we consider to be good. For example, someone could be involved in an organization that is doing wonderful, godly work, but it is not where the Father wants them to be. Failure to ask Him if this is His will or refusing to follow Him is sin and severs the relationship with Him. If this is the case, their prayers are an abomination to God—blocking them from receiving the full benefits of hearing Him. We are called to have a heart to hear, process, and receive. This is a critical step for us to live out the wonderful life of God.

Read Isaiah 59:1–2:

Evil and Oppression

59 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;

² but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.

We can develop a barrier between us and the Father—which is something that is not commonly known by the church. If you are not hearing His voice, this indicates some iniquity, and you need to stop and check in with the Father so He can reveal the issue and bring resolution. It is important to fully understand that His voice is clear to those who are walking with Him. You do not have to be perfect. You simply must be willing to walk with Him and hear His voice. If you are not hearing, it is because something is blocking His voice. Pay attention. His heart is to keep you walking with Him, and He uses this as an important indicator that something is not right. Further, there is a consequence. God can no longer respond to your prayers because you are not hearing what He has to say.

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Read Mark 11:25–26:

²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”^[a]

When we pray, God reminds us of our unforgiveness. This unforgiveness needs to be resolved before we are able to move forward. What has Christ done with our sins? He has forgiven them—all of them. It is already done. We are all forgiven. So, if we have unforgiveness, this demonstrates that the nature of God does not operate within us. In fact, this is a clear indicator that we operate in the flesh.

If we are in unforgiveness toward our brothers and sisters and other people, why are we not offering the same forgiveness that Jesus gave to us? There is a parable about the manager of a vineyard whose debts were forgiven by his generous boss. The manager, in turn, gave no forgiveness of any kind to his workers. When the boss heard of this, he rescinded the offer to forgive the debt. The manager was not going to benefit from the boss’s debt forgiveness when the manager himself would not offer the same forgiveness to those who were in debt to him.

Unforgiveness is an indicator that we are not walking with God. Unforgiveness is the stopping point in the process. The remedy is to receive real forgiveness and then operate in your heart with forgiveness toward others. God reminds us that we are to get our heart right with Him. We are to go to forgiveness and reopen the channel to God leading us into His will through our prayer life.

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Read Hebrews 3:15–19:

¹⁵ As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

We will not be able hear God’s voice if we are in disobedience. God called us to follow Him into His promises, His grand life for us, but if we rebel and choose not to follow Him, we stop the process in its tracks. It is ok to struggle, but don’t stop the process. Don’t give up, keep coming. Don’t refuse to be persuaded that what God has to say is true. That is the heart issue—are you willing to keep processing with Him, or have you decided you are not willing to go. This is the heart of disobedience. If you are not willing to go any further, you will no longer hear from Him and will be unable to move into His promise of a grand life. This response comes from either not knowing that we are able hear His voice, which results in never pursuing hearing it, or hearing His voice and blatantly choosing not to follow what He says.

As we understand that we can block the will of God and His grand life from being given to us, let’s understand what then is important for us to receive God’s best for our lives.

Read 1 John 5:14–15:

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

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If we pray according to His will, by definition, what must be true? We must have heard it, processed it, and believe it. He listens and knows if we understand and receive His will. This is a dialogue that goes back and forth. If we begin to hear what He says but do not quite understand with clarity and certainty, it is okay because He is listening and has more to tell, to clarify that will bring guidance and direction. When we understand His will, it will happen. This is especially true as we take the steps to experience His will. It will be fulfilled.

God listens to verify that we know His will. If we do not, He asks us to stay with Him until we do. He will continue speaking to us so that we have full understanding of His will. This requires intimate time with Him without distraction.

Read Matthew 6:6–8:

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

It is important to have intimacy, a quietness with Him with no distractions. When Jesus said to go into your room, this room can be a variety of physical places, but He meant the place where it is just you and Him, and where you are able to block out the noise of the world and the noise of yourself. He leads us to neutrality so that we want what He wants. That will not be achieved when we are distracted by the noise that infiltrates our everyday lives, noises like the TV, emails, cell phone, other people, etc. Rather, we are to avoid distractions and be able to hear and process His voice.

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What is your room? Where you can be quiet? Do you have a place that is good and pleasant that will give you the calm and peace needed to dialogue with God? Larry has a farmhouse that God has told him is his space for being quiet, intimate, and without distraction. When he seeks God in this place, he is able to hear Him clearly.

This “room” can be anywhere, and it is different for everyone. For Larry, it is his farmhouse, but for others, it might be a closet, a bedroom, or a parked car. The key is that it is quiet, intimate, and distraction-free. Wherever you can block out the noise, hear His voice, and dialogue with Him is your “room.” Go to that place and take notes by journaling, so that you can continue the dialogue day after day about what He is speaking.

Will God speak to you if you are not in your chosen quiet spot? Yes, He will speak anywhere, but He is saying that the process is enhanced when we do what Jesus asked us to do. Go regularly to your quiet place, and listen and record what you are hearing. Further, He says that when you come, have a heart to surrender.

Read John 4:34; 6:38:

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

We know that Jesus always listened to the Father and surrendered His will to the Father’s will—not exercising His own will. We are to live in the same way by having a heart to surrender our will and by always listening and receiving so that we can then follow His will. He speaks to this in the following verses.

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Read Matthew 16:21–25:

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord!^[a] This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^[b] to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life^[c] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

He had just told Peter that He was going to build His church upon Peter’s ability to hear and follow His voice. Christ also told him that He was going to suffer and be killed through the crucifixion but He would also be resurrected. How did Peter react? He said he would never let that happen to Him. Jesus then said to Peter: “Get behind me, Satan.”

Peter went from being holy to satanic in 20 minutes. What was the sudden change? Why did Jesus respond this way? Because Peter wanted to thwart the Father’s will. If it were possible to ask Peter if he thought his declaration to protect Jesus was a good idea, he likely would have defended himself because he did not want Christ to die. He wanted to prevent that and would do whatever he could to keep that from happening.

Christ declared, “Get behind me, Satan... If you are going to follow Me, you must deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Me.” The mistake Peter made was that he did not check in and ask Jesus what His will was. Instead, he decided on his own what he would do versus seeking further to understand what Jesus was saying and why. It is required to always seek the things of God and not the things of men. When decisions are made without seeking His counsel, we actually are following Satan and working against His will. To hear and follow Him requires denying self, taking up the cross (believing what He has done at the cross), and following Him—which is where He needs us to spend most of our time.

LESSON 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OBEDIENT AND EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS TO WHAT WE ARE HEARING

Read Deuteronomy 28:1–2:

Blessings for Obedience

28 “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

The condition to be able to have the blessings come upon you is to hear His voice and follow His instructions. As we hear and learn to take the steps He speaks, the blessings will overtake us—they will come from behind. The reason for this imagery is that we should always be facing God, seeking God, listening to God, and following God’s instruction. This should be our focus and our commitment. We are not to focus on the blessings, because if we do, we turn away from God and stop the blessings. It is not, “Seek ye first the blessings, and He promises to provide them.” Rather, it is, “Seek ye first the Kingdom (focus on Him) and all these things will be given to you.” The blessings will come, and they will come upon you. Hear, receive, and follow. This is the Covenant, as promised.

Read Romans 8:28–29:

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[a] for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

All things work together for what? For good. How many things? All things. Every bit of all the things in our life, including the mistakes we make and the things we don’t quite get. It is all okay if we come with a heart to hear and trust that He is going to give us the Covenant. He will bless us to make us a blessing. He will make all things work together for good so listen and follow what He has to say.

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Read Psalm 65:4–5; 11–13:

⁴ Blessed is the one you choose and bring near,
to dwell in your courts!

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
the holiness of your temple!

⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness,
O God of our salvation,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas;

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,

¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

All paths that are given by God are pleasant, good, fantastic. The key word is path. It is walking forward step by step. It is not a destination, nor are we to just stand still and expect to receive all that God promises. Rather, our role is to follow His instructions and walk along His path to receive the fantastic. If we listen to His voice and follow Him, He will deliver His Covenant—which is to bless us to make us a blessing. He will make all things work together for good. He guarantees that all our paths will drip with pleasantness and goodness.

So, again, what is our role? To listen and follow. If we are not hearing and following, then we are not paying attention, and thus, we are not walking on His path. Further, if we have a heart to hear and follow, are we telling God what to do and how to do it? No. When most believers go to God in prayer, what we are really doing is presenting our list of things we wish for Him to handle or provide. We put those in front of Him and then end our prayer with “in Jesus name, Amen.” In saying that, what we really do is hang up the phone. We have not pursued His will, what He has to say, and what He wishes to speak to us to move us onto His path. Because of this, we never even get to this path.

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Listening is really knowing what He knows. By hearing Him, we have a heart to receive His best. Listen, talk, dialogue, get clarity, and focus on Him. We don't need to tell him what to do, but rather, we need to ask Him what He has to say and then listen to receive His will. From there, we can process His will.

Read Proverbs 1:2–7; 2:1–5:

- ² To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,
³ to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
⁴ to give prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the youth—
⁵ Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
⁶ to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.
⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The Value of Wisdom

- 2** My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³ yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴ if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.

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If you keep listening, God will get you the answers that you require. Continue to go after it and seek it, and He will give you wisdom, insight, and answers. He will solve things for you. Simply seek His answers, and if you apply your heart to hear it, you will receive it. You will hear His voice. He will keep talking to you as you keep processing. Be persistent and stay with it until you get the answer—His answer. He will speak it to you, and you will know with all certainty that the answer you received is His.

Read Psalm 25:1–6:

Teach Me Your Paths

^[a] Of David.

25 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;

they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all the day long.

⁶ Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

Remember, the phrase “loving kindness” means Covenant loyalty. We are to believe that God is loyal to the Covenant and will give us the Covenant in every circumstance, no matter how difficult or problematic it is. Thus, we can all expect to grow in His characteristics, His wisdom, His love, His heart to give us the Covenant—always. Jesus has taken residence in us. Our walk with Him is to be sanctified—to become like Christ. We will be led into truth. If He leads us into truth as He guides our path, He must speak to us, communicate that truth, and guide us to receive this truth. His communication will be specific to each of us. Our role is to listen, hear, and process. He will lead, we will follow and trust that He will get us there.

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Read Psalm 37:23; 16:9:

²³ The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
when he delights in his way;

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[a] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

In our lives, we have issues, problems, enigmas, difficulties, and adversities. Of course, we prefer that God would just tell us the answers to our issues, and then sit back and wait for Him to fulfill those answers. We do want His will, but we just want Him to tell us the answer—right now. The life God has for us is not a destination, but rather a path. It will be received a step at a time. Little by little, step by step. So, as we follow, it's about taking the next step along the path that He has for us.

In doing this, our questions will focus on two things: the path we are to be on—the path of His promises and what steps we should take next. Take the step. Listen. Take the step. What happens next? Now what? Take the next step. His will is more about the steps than the final answer. Make no mistake, His final answer will come, and when it does, it will be fantastic. But if God simply gave us the answer to all of our concerns or problems, what would we do? We'd likely move on without giving it another thought. God wants us to hear the next step and keep listening. This requires waiting for the final answer. Waiting on the Lord is misunderstood. We tend to think it is passive and that we are at a standstill until we get the answer. However, waiting is actively walking with Him (the biblical word is *dance* with Him) as we hear the next step, expect the goodness, and resist the urge to walk ahead on our own. This is how we can enjoy the walk. Do not spend so much time worrying about the outcome, nor the steps down the road. Enjoy where we are and what He is doing with us. He will get us there.

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Read Isaiah 55:8–9:

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

These verses note that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. They are different—significantly different. Because of this, listen to what He has to say about our issues and paths. He knows things often do not make sense or are very complicated, but He will tell us things that cannot be received by logic or human thought. To receive what He is speaking requires us to be open to His new ways. As we think about resolution and consider our issues, God says that He will tell us new things, He will show us new ways. What He shares may not make any logical sense (remember, He sees the picture in full), but we are willing to receive and follow Him anyway. We are willing to process with Him where we struggle and continue to stay with Him—just as we learned with Ananias.

God told Ananias to go lay hands on Saul. How did he respond? In simple terms, he basically said, "No, thanks. I'd rather not do that." God then told him that He understood his hesitancy, but His ways are not our ways. Ananias viewed Saul as a man who had done evil to God's people, but God had a plan, and that plan included Saul being a chosen instrument to go to the Gentiles. At the time, Ananias certainly would not have thought that was a way of God as he thought His message was just for the Jews. God's plan exceeded anything Ananias could have imagined. Even though it didn't make sense to Ananias, he chose to be faithful to God and did as He asked. Again, God's ways are not our ways.

Read Luke 1:18, 34:

¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"^[a]

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The angel spoke to Zechariah and told him that his wife was going to have a baby. How did Zechariah respond? He did not believe that was going to happen. Because of his unbelief, he was struck mute until the baby arrived. The angel told Mary that she was going to become pregnant and be the mother of the Messiah. How did she respond? She asked how it could possibly be given that she was a virgin. She did not doubt it, she just wanted to know how it was going to work. The angel then explained how the Holy Spirit was going to come upon her.

God shows us that our hearing and responding are about how we approach Him. When the ways that He shows us are not our ways, especially when they don't make sense, He does not want us to argue that they will not happen and go to resignation believing such. Rather, He wants us to process as Mary did. *God, this seems incredulous. Could You please help me understand this?* If we have a heart that is willing, God says to stay with Him and He will give us understanding as well as a willingness to follow Him and His ways, even if they are not our ways. We don't need to know all the details, but He will show us step by step.

Read Matthew 17:24–27:

The Temple Tax

²⁴ When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" ²⁵ He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" ²⁶ And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. ²⁷ However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.^[a] Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

The disciples were challenged by the tax collectors when they were asked about paying the temple tax. They agreed to pay the tax and Jesus then said something further about paying the tax that helped illustrate an important point: Sons do not pay but strangers do, so the temple leaders should not require the sons to pay the tax. Jesus continued and said that so they do not offend the leaders to pay the tax. Jesus instructed Peter to go catch the first fish that bites, and in its mouth would be money to pay the tax. His ways are certainly not our ways.

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Peter did as Jesus instructed because he had learned to follow Christ. In doing this, He also helped Peter understand that He could do supernatural things and that Peter did not need to understand all the details. Peter just needed to receive what He said and be willing to process what He said. If he did, His activity would be accompanied by power. His ways are not our ways, and He is not limited to only things that are done in the natural.

Read Ephesians 1:17–23:

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

As we seeking understanding, He seeks to manifest Himself—His power, His authority, His ability to perform all things supernatural. He is not limited in any way and has no boundaries. His work exceeds the limits our own understanding which leads us to the feeling of uncertainty. Though this is difficult to receive, we are to accept His ways joyfully. It might not make any sense, but we are to trust that He is up to something wonderful. In trusting Him, we will see Kingdom power and Kingdom activity, which is the power that comes in a way that is beyond our limits and rationale thought. Focus on what He says versus the limitations of our own logic and natural experience. Willingly receive and move forward with Him along His supernatural path.

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Read Psalm 133:

When Brothers Dwell in Unity

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

133 Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!^[a]

² It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!

³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

When we live in unity—with each other and the Holy Spirit—He commands blessing. He commands the Covenant blessing with power so that we can join Him in His great work. He gives us unity through confirmation in a spiritual depth that we—our spouse, our friends, our inner circle—also receive. How is this possible? It is possible because they have the same Holy Spirit within them, and they, too, can hear and receive what the Spirit says. This allows them to confirm that we are hearing His will.

So, as we seek unity together, we all question whether we are hearing Him correctly. When those who walk with us come to unity, they can confirm God's will. If the Holy Spirit says we are hearing Him right, our spouse or friend or inner circle can confirm this. This confirmation is spiritual, not logical. It is not a negotiation, it is not figuring things out together. It is a spiritual confirmation that must be trusted as we seek Him and hear Him speak His will to each of us.

In the event that conflicting messages are heard, there can be no confirmation. When this occurs, encourage each other to stay with it, to keep processing further until the same message is heard, for it is in this place that God's will is received and the promised command of the blessing can be expected. This is living in His Kingdom.

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Read Romans 14:17:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

What is the Kingdom? It is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Hearing His voice means being with Him in relationship. Being with Him in relationship means we are in His Kingdom. Living in His kingdom is not obtained by anything we do, rather, it is because of Who we are with and His righteousness. He alone gives us peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Receiving confirmation with others and learning and following His will leads to blessing. He gifts each of us the privilege and benefit of living in His Kingdom where we hear His voice.

Read Proverbs 3:1–4:

Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart

3 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,

² for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.

³ Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ So you will find favor and good success^[a]
in the sight of God and man.

As we abide in Him and hear His voice, write down what you hear Him say. If there are questions, write them out and consult with your spouse, your family, or your inner circle. Confirm what you heard. Trust what you heard. Listen, pray, spend time with Him in quietness—and write down what you hear.

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When you put pen to paper, something remarkable happens: You are able to process further as additional questions arise: How are you responding to what He has spoken? Do you understand it? Do you need further clarity? Have you been obedient to what He has instructed? What other questions do you have? What other insight do you have? What else is God adding to what you understand already? Further, we remember the work of God and are thankful and praise Him. In addition, we remain encouraged that we are privileged to have this wonderful life with God and that our path ahead will be pleasant and good and will be a blessing.

Read John 5:16–23, 30:

¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

Jesus Is Equal with God

¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

The Authority of the Son

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father[a] does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Witnesses to Jesus

³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

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Jesus did nothing except what He heard from the Father. Consider that. There were no long periods of time that passed where Jesus had to figure things out on His own. The Father spoke to Jesus all the time, every single day. We, too, can be assured that God speaks to us all the time, as well. If we are not hearing God's voice, where does the problem lie? With us. We are either not willing to receive it or we have iniquity or unforgiveness in our heart. Something is not right and we need to get right with God so we can get back to hearing his voice, just like Christ did. There was never a time that He didn't hear the Father's voice. Trust this.

When people say they are not hearing the Father anymore, that things aren't working, or they are discouraged, my first question is: When was the last time you abided with Christ? If it has been a few days, or a couple of weeks, or a month, it is clear they are not hearing because they are not with Him in the Kingdom. The remedy is not to work harder to figure things out to fix their problem, but just to repent and come back to Him in the Kingdom. We are to surrender our will, spend time with Him, and rejoin the intimacy of the relationship—especially by spending time in the Word. He will always welcome us back so that we can again hear His voice.

It is important to accept help from others. Start from the last thing you heard from God and go from there. Go together and listen to what He says. Ask the questions you have for Him and go to the Word to process what He speaks. Trust what you are hearing and write it down. Remember He is listening and will give you wisdom and insight to understand and receive His will.

Read 2 Peter 1:16–21:

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, [a] with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

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As we hear from God, believing that we are receiving what is called prophecy—forth (truth) telling and foretelling, He wants us to open it up to others—to become public. Bring what you hear out in the open and ask others who have a heart to hear and do hear, to process with you. He helps us understand that private interpretation tends to get skewed. Flesh gets in the way, and we fail to use the privilege of having others join us in unity with the Spirit to confirm God's will. Never be afraid of this, but instead, welcome it. Why wouldn't we?

Seek God's will until you have it confirmed. Even if others disagree, do not be concerned as long everyone has a heart to hear and understand God's will. Keep pursuing together, asking God what He has to say. He will provide with clarity the answers you need.

Read Luke 8:49–56:

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more."⁵⁰ But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."⁵¹ And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.⁵² And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping."⁵³ And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.⁵⁴ But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Jesus said He would come and heal the girl, but she died. The friends of the family were wailing, and mourning, and criticizing Him. They believed this situation was over so there was no sense in going any further with it. What's done was done and there was no hope of recovery. What did Christ do? He put them out. He was not going to allow their lack of faith to hear what He had to say. Because they were skeptical and unwilling to hear what He had to say or follow what He would do, He put them out. The only ones He allowed in the house with Him were Peter, James, John, and the girl's parents. Why? Because they had a heart to believe and hear God.

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Don't let skepticism get in the way, rather bring together people who have a heart to hear. This is why it is so important to have a community around you that has a heart to hear God, hears God speak, and processes together to understand and receive God's will.

Read Acts 15:1-6:

The Jerusalem Council

15 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.^[a]⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

⁶The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

At the church in Antioch, the believers there had a very sharp disagreement. Some had heard that they were supposed to circumcise, but Paul and Barnabas argued otherwise. Is it ok to have disagreement with others? Absolutely. We will all have disagreements at one time or another throughout our lives. The issue is what we do with the disagreement. Do you give in or cave to avoid conflict? Do you argue and fight until you persuade the other party that you are right?

God wants us to consider the matter and process together with Him until we get an answer. Disagreement should not ruin our day or put a strain on our relationship with the person or people we are in disagreement with. He wants us to keep our joy as we listen for His voice to speak to us. He wants us to stay in unity where He will show us His will, His answer. We need not stay in disagreement when we can consider the matter with God and also with our spouse, inner circle, those people around us who have a heart to hear and confirm God's will.

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Read 1 John 4:1–6:

Test the Spirits

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As we process differences and disagreements, we are called to test the spirits. What does that mean? Do not assume that the people who claim to hear from God are representing truth from God. If we are with people who have a heart to hear, we can go to God together to make sure that what we are hearing is right. Do not assume that one is right and the other is wrong. Instead, know that God has more to say, and it will be revealed as we seek truth and understanding. God will reveal wonderful things that we get to discover together.

If differences and disagreements are presented by those who do not have a heart to hear God, we will know this is not the truth and should not accept that what they say is from God. A clear indication of this is how they respond to the challenge. Do they get defensive or start arguing? If so, they are operating in the flesh and are using God to justify their position. There's no need to argue, but we also are not to accept what they are saying as true. We are to test the spirit of things and come to conclusions so we walk in truth. In all situations, see what God has to say. Test the spirit. Is it of God? Is there a bigger story? Wait until we get confirmation. This is particularly important when we thought we knew God's will but for some reason it isn't happening.

LESSON 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OBEDIENT AND EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS TO WHAT WE ARE HEARING

Read Philippians 3:10–13:

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Straining Toward the Goal

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

Then, 1 Samuel 22:1–5:

David at the Cave of Adullam

22 David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. ² And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul,^[a] gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

³ And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay^[b] with you, till I know what God will do for me."⁴ And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. ⁵ Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So, David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

David had been anointed king and had great success with Goliath when he joined the army of Saul. In fact, his success went on to exceed that of Saul. His knowledge that he would be the future king did not keep him from doing the job he had set out before him. He understood that it was in God's timing, and he needed to faithfully walk with God—hearing God and moving forward step by step.

LESSON 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OBEDIENT AND EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS TO WHAT WE ARE HEARING

When Saul felt threatened and decided to kill David, David ended up by himself in a cave. He went to God and asked if he misheard God's message. God told him not to focus on the past—in any way. Let it go. Move on to the high calling of Christ. When? Now. In other words, don't stay focused on the past—move forward. It is ok if you don't understand but move forward into the high calling of Christ.

David had reached that point when God brought him men to train. God gave him instruction to train these men who would become strong and mighty. He instructed David to be faithful to what He told him as that faithfulness would lead David to becoming the king as He had promised. It might not have looked remotely the way David had imagined it, but the promise was still going to happen.

Let the things go that lay behind and press on to the high calling of Christ Jesus. Be faithful to the moment. When things are not being fulfilled as imagined, it is ok to reassess what God is saying. There just might be a new step or assignment that needs to be completed before going forward. Be faithful to what is happening now and refrain from letting the past burden you. God will confirm that the promise is still valid as you move forward.

As we finish this course, it is our desire that you accept and receive that every believer is to hear God's voice. Every believer should trust it, practice it, and receive it. If you hear His voice, you will be a disciple. If you are not hearing His voice, you are not a disciple. It's that simple. Hearing His voice means you have the Holy Spirit within you, talking to you. Surround yourself with people who also have a heart to hear. Practice together. Process together to reach confirmation and unity, for this is where God will confirm blessing. Know that He will guide you step by step, and His guidance will be specific to your situations and circumstances. God will speak to you, and you will receive the beauty of what He has to say. Don't let anything get in the way of hearing His voice. The greatest privilege Jesus has given us is to be with Him in the Kingdom of God, enjoying Him. This is what happens when hear His voice!

