

The ONE
YEAR®

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HEARING HIS VOICE

DEVOTIONAL

365 DAYS OF INTIMATE
COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

CHRIS TIEGREEN



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The One Year Hearing His Voice Devotional: 365 Days of Intimate Communication with God

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INTRODUCTION

“GOD IS NOT SILENT. It is the nature of God to speak,” writes A. W. Tozer, and it’s true. God’s relationship with human beings in the pages of Scripture and throughout history, as well as the very existence of the Bible, gives ample evidence that God guides, instructs, corrects, inspires, encourages, reveals, and more. Inspired writers even call Him “the Word.” He has always been vocal, and He always will be.

Not everyone believes this. I recently heard a very prominent pastor scoffing at Christians who “think they can actually hear God directly.” Of course, this pastor’s perspective is nothing new. We hear it all the time from skeptics and cynics. A comedian once quipped that it doesn’t bother him at all when people say they talk to God; it’s when they claim God talks to them that he gets worried. Or, in the more direct words of Lily Tomlin, “Why is it when we talk to God, we’re said to be praying, but when God talks to us, we’re schizophrenic?” That’s a good question, especially for Christians, whose entire faith is based on the truth that God wants a personal relationship with His people. We have to ask ourselves what kind of relationship He wants. One without conversation? Surely not. That would hardly be a relationship. No, God speaks, and His people listen. That’s what following Him is all about.

Though many in the Western church insist that God doesn’t speak to us today—because our hearing is too subjective, or because He has already said everything He has to say in the Bible, or because of any other objection not found in the Bible itself—Christians in less rigidly analytical and skeptical cultures are hearing Him daily and doing mighty works in the power of His Spirit, simply by following what they hear. We can find plenty of abuses and stories of people who misheard God, but there are far more testimonies of people hearing Him clearly and bearing much fruit from what they have heard. Anyone can learn to recognize God’s voice—adults and children, the highly educated and the illiterate, leaders and followers, and any other category of hearer we can think of. God doesn’t mind the skeptics. He simply speaks to people who will listen and believe.

What does He say? How does He say it? How can we know when we've heard Him? What can we do to hear Him better? These are some of the questions this devotional will explore. We could spend the rest of our lives learning how to recognize God's voice, and most of us likely will. But we can be confident that if we seek Him, He will make Himself available to us. If we listen, He will speak. And if we believe what we have heard, He will show us more. The God who speaks is always seeking to take us deeper into His will and draw us closer to Himself.

This book won't give you a step-by-step system for hearing God's voice. There's no such thing, although there are patterns and practices you can adopt to position yourself to hear Him better. But even if you don't learn any surefire "how to" principles here, simply turning your attention to hearing will stir up God's voice within you. Over the course of a year, you'll start knowing what He's saying intuitively, even if you don't know how you know. Those who hunger for Him will be satisfied.

There are 365 devotional readings in this book, and they cover many issues related to hearing God. One devotion each week is based on a story or a post-biblical example, some from Christian history and some from my own experience and acquaintances. Another is a "first person" devotional from the heart of God—things I have heard Him say and that I believe He wants to share with others who are listening.

Each devotion ends with a brief prayer. Some people (like me) tend to skip over guided prayers in books, but I would encourage you not to do that here. Some of the prayers may seem simple or superfluous, but there is a point to them. When we ask, we receive. God responds when we express our desires to Him. If your desire is to hear God's voice—and if you're using this devotional, it most likely is—then asking Him daily to hear Him better, no matter how basic the request, is an invaluable practice. If some of the prayers seem repetitive, that's okay. We're told in Scripture to keep asking, to persist until God answers. Over the course of a year, He will answer—often in surprising ways.

Listening to God is a process, a journey, and an adventure. This can take time, but it's worth the effort. He promises that those who seek Him will be rewarded with His presence and His voice. The words of the living God are powerful and life-changing. May He bless our desire to hear Him.

JANUARY 1

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

JOHN 1:1

From the first pages of Scripture, God speaks. Every time He utters a word, things happen. He says, “Let there be light,” and light comes into being—and He keeps talking until our entire universe is filled with order and life. He calls out a people from among the nations and reveals His purposes through them. He chooses prophets to deliver His messages when those people are in danger and need to return to Him. And when He sends His own Son to live among us, the Son is called “the Word.” Clearly, we do not serve a silent God.

Many people can't say with any certainty that God still speaks today, much less to them personally. They can accept His written Word as His voice—generalized for all who read it, of course—but for personal conversations and direction, they strive and strain to hear. Our theology tells us that God is quite vocal, even if our experience tells us He isn't. The result of this paradox is a lot of theory, little practice, and a considerable amount of frustration.

Step one in hearing God is acknowledging that He still speaks. We have to be convinced of that in order to press through the frustrations on the way to hearing Him. Low expectations will undermine our efforts. If we know He's the Word who always has something to say, we won't give up easily in our attempts to hear Him. Most of all, we'll *believe*—a prerequisite to receiving anything from God. Faith opens our ears.

Believe not only that God still speaks, but that He's speaking *to you*. He calls you into a relationship, and relationships are based on communication. Conversations with God are normal—you were designed for them. Believe and listen—and know that you will hear.



Living Word, I invite You to speak to me. I know You have been; please open my ears to hear. I want to learn the sound of Your voice and know Your thoughts. In faith, I'm listening.

JANUARY 2

[Jesus said,] “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

JOHN 10:27

There are lots of voices in the world. Some are easily recognizable; others blend into the background noise. Some come from a distance; others from within our own heads. Some are tender and sympathetic; others strident and critical. And all compete for our attention.

Jesus knows how confused we can be. That’s one of the reasons He gave His followers an illustration about shepherds and sheep. Sheep learn to recognize the voice of their shepherd so that when he calls to them, even in the midst of a multitude of other voices, they follow his distinctive sound. The other voices are just noise to the sheep of the Good Shepherd; they are uniquely tuned to His voice alone. When they hear it, they follow.

Our goal is to be tuned in to one voice only—to be so sensitive to the one true voice that we can hear it above the din of a multitude of rivals. To be so accustomed to the signature sound that called us into existence that it becomes our constant homing signal for every decision. In the depths of our spirit, we can learn to recognize that voice and distinguish it from all others. According to the desire and promise of Jesus Himself, we can hear His voice.

Don’t make assumptions about what Christ’s voice should sound like. Be willing to step into a learning process. But know that it’s not only possible to hear His voice, it’s assured. Somewhere within your soul, you will hear His heart-to-heart words and know they are His.



Jesus, my Shepherd, tune my heart to hear Your words. Let them sink into my soul and become a part of who I am. Help me ignore false voices and listen to Yours alone.

JANUARY 3

Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1

It is one of the most neglected instructions in the New Testament. Paul tells the Corinthians—not apostles, not church leaders, but regular people who haven't done a great job of handling spiritual gifts—to seek the gift of prophecy. And not only are they to seek it, they are told to seek it *zealously*—literally to *covet* it, be *jealous* for it, and *eagerly pursue* it. In other words, Paul wants us to listen to him and heed his teachings, but also to be able to hear God's voice on our own and express it to one another.

Clearly, this isn't an Old Testament-style warning: "If you say you speak God's words and get it wrong, the penalty is death by stoning." It's an open invitation, not a narrowing of the boundaries to limit impostors. It's an encouragement for all believers to listen, to tune in to the divine heartbeat and become vessels of revelation for others, to try to pursue and cultivate the gift of prophecy. And considering Paul's audience, the implications are surprising: Anyone can do this. It isn't just for Isaiahs and Jeremiahs and Ezekiels, with staggering words of warning and enormous burdens of responsibility. It's for average folks, anyone with a heart to hear. And, as Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 14:3, it is for strengthening, encouraging, and comforting others.

God is a communicator looking for people who will learn the keys to hearing Him; who will listen for His insight and direction for specific situations and then express it to others. Too many people disqualify themselves from God's invitation, either by false perceptions of their own gifts or false perceptions of God. Still, He calls us to come deeper into His presence with listening ears—and with the rock-solid conviction that He will make His voice known.



Holy Spirit, teach me to prophesy. I choose to eagerly pursue all of your gifts, but especially the gift of hearing You and declaring Your words to others—to encourage them, comfort them, and build them up.

JANUARY 4

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

AMOS 3:7, NIV

Ask the average person what a prophet does, and most will boil it down to predicting the future. A prophet is often perceived as the Judeo-Christian version of a clairvoyant, a seer who peers into the plan of God and perfectly describes how it will unfold. Somehow we got the impression that prophecy—hearing God’s voice and declaring it—is entirely future oriented.

Prophecy can be about the future, of course, but the point of hearing God’s voice is not simply to figure out what’s going to happen down the road. It’s to get God’s perspective—whether on the past, the present, or the future. He reveals His thoughts about us, His interpretation of events and circumstances, the purposes He is working out, and His greatest desires for our lives. He portrays life in its true light—a vital point of view when we get stuck in dark places. When He speaks to His servants the prophets, He reveals not only His plans but also His heart. And His prophets, according to the New Testament, are any believers who will listen to Him.

In any situation we go through, we can know that God’s perspective is available to us. He may not unveil every detail—we still have to walk by faith, not by sight—but He lets us know how He sees things. He imparts His truth and His wisdom whenever we need it and are patient enough to seek it.

Hearing God’s voice begins with absolute trust in Him as a communicator—understanding that He doesn’t arbitrarily carry out His will for humanity without making us participants in His plans. He reveals what He’s doing, invites us into it, and involves us every step of the way.



Lord, involve me in what You’re doing. Reveal Your purposes to me. Help me to see from Your perspective, think Your thoughts, and walk in Your ways.

JANUARY 5

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

ISAIAH 30:21, NIV

We long to hear God’s voice. We come to a fork in the road, a moment of crisis, a point of decision that requires us to take a step in one direction or another because standing still is no longer an option. We tell God that if He just lets us know one way or another—this way or that way, heads or tails—we’ll do it. Yet we’re still not sure. Right or left? We just don’t know.

What’s the problem? Maybe the Spirit within us has already let us know, but our heads keep rationalizing the possibilities. Maybe we only *think* we’re willing to do what God says, but really we’re approaching His voice as good advice to consider, rather than a command to follow. Or—and this is often the case—we’re merely seeking *information*, while God is calling us into deeper *relationship*. The promise of His voice isn’t simply for the purpose of communication; it’s for communion.

That’s the mistake many of us make in our approach to hearing God. We want information, and He wants a relationship. Our approach reduces our hearing to in-and-out transactions—we come, we hear, and we leave with more knowledge than we had before. But God’s desire—and the reason for His delays and silences—is to draw us closer and deeper. He withholds Himself enough to keep us seeking *Him*, as opposed to seeking His words alone. It takes more effort that way, but that’s the nature of relationships. In order to grow close, we must invest time, energy, and interest. And God will withhold a right-or-left answer if it provokes us to make that investment. Seek Him above all else—and His voice will eventually become clearer.



Lord, forgive me for seeking You as a giver of information rather than seeking You as a person. Draw me close, not just so I can hear Your words, but so I can hear Your heart.

JANUARY 6

You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.

PSALM 139:5

He heard it in his spirit during his morning quiet time: “The evil one cannot touch you.” That fit with some of the verses he had been reading, and the phrase stuck with him most of the day. But it was only after the attack on his ministry—a legal threat from a religious extremist that would probably be backed by the country’s hostile government—that the phrase made sense. He realized that God had known ahead of time the challenges he would face that day and had given him the assurance he needed to remain calm and trust God. This attack was not a surprise to God, and He would keep it from being effective.

When we commune with God regularly, reading His Word and listening for His voice, we often find that He prepares us for what we’ll face. The messages we receive from Him don’t make sense at first because we have no context for them. But in retrospect, they are very reassuring. If we had heard Him afterward, we would wonder if we heard only what we wanted to hear. But when He tells us ahead of time, we know it isn’t a figment of our imagination. That may not change the situation, but it can certainly change our response to it. Only God can give us assurance before we need it because only He knows what’s going to happen.

Make it a habit to listen in the morning for whatever verses God gives you and whatever impressions He whispers into your spirit. Write them down. They may seem random at the time, but if you review them at the end of the day, you may find a correlation between what He said and what you experienced. Not only will this encourage you in times of need, but it will also confirm that you are hearing God’s voice—and that He goes before you to bless you.



Holy Spirit, speak to me in the morning about the journey ahead. Prepare me for each day. Let me experience the comfort of knowing that You are already watching over my future.

JANUARY 7

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength.”

ISAIAH 30:15

FROM THE HEART OF GOD

“This is the normal, natural posture for My children. I want you to rest in Me. When I first spoke these words to Israel, they were desperately trying to arrange their own rescue. They looked around at the threats to their security and didn’t believe I would come through for them. Their restlessness became their downfall. But this is My desire for you: to place your full confidence in Me to lead you, speak to you, deliver you, protect you, provide for you, and come through for you—even when for a moment it doesn’t look like I will.

“If you will let this be your posture when you listen for My voice, you will hear Me. I want you to listen carefully, but I do not want you to strive and to strain. A restless spirit has a hard time hearing the pure, clear sound of My voice. A trusting, calm spirit will hear the echoes deep within. I rarely shout. You must be quiet to hear Me.

“Do you really want to hear Me? Then quiet yourself and be still. Be confident. Lay your doubts and skepticism aside. Rebuke your restlessness and your fears. Set aside your own agenda so you’ll be able to recognize Mine. But bring your enthusiasm. I love your deep desire to know Me better. I long to connect with you and build our relationship. Long for Me without striving for Me. Seek Me without straining. Rest and trust, and be very patient. I will train your spirit to hear.”



Sovereign Lord, Holy One of Israel, who am I that You would want to talk to me? But You do, and I have set my heart to listen. Sensitize my spirit to Your voice. I set aside my fears, plans, manipulations, anxieties, impatience—everything—to hear You. In my quietness and confidence, be my strength.

JANUARY 8

[Jesus said,] “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now.”

JOHN 16:12

We know this is not simply a promise to future writers of the New Testament. Jesus is speaking to the entire inner circle of His disciples (minus Judas). Only three of these men would later pen portions of Scripture, and at least six other followers of Christ who did not hear these words would write more than half of the New Testament. Nor is this a prediction that Jesus would spend some time with them between His resurrection and ascension. The statement implies much more than a few days of conversation. No, this is a promise to speak to all believers, after the Resurrection, on an ongoing basis. We know that early believers expected to hear Christ’s voice—people such as Agabus, Philip’s daughters, members of the Corinthian church, and many more are said to have exercised prophetic gifts. They heard Jesus speak and confidently shared His message with others.

Jesus continues to speak to His people today. He draws us into a relationship with Him; He leads us in ways we need to go; He calls people into ministry; He teaches us the deeper ways of His Spirit; and He speaks through us to others. Long ago, God promised that we would hear a voice telling us which way to go (Isaiah 30:21), and Jesus was very clear that His sheep would know His voice (John 10:3-4, 16, 27). This is normal for our relationship with God.

But in order to hear God’s voice, we must be absolutely convinced that Jesus has plenty to say to us—that “there is so much more” He will share as we grow closer to Him. Without knowing this, we question everything we hear, grow weaker in faith, and consequently hear less. But faith in His desire to communicate will open our ears to all He has to say.



Jesus, strengthen my faith to believe. As I search for the sound of Your voice, help me not to question whether You want to speak. You do—You have made that clear. Help me to hear all that You have to say.

JANUARY 9

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

JOHN 16:13, NIV

We wish we could sit down with Jesus face to face and start firing questions at Him. Audible words, no ambiguity, just straightforward answers. But when Jesus spoke with His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, He assured them it would be better for Him to leave and for His Spirit to come dwell in them (John 16:7). Somehow the mystical relationship between His followers and His Spirit would be better than the manifest relationship they already had with Him. They would be better equipped to hear and handle truth.

It's hard for us to imagine that an inaudible voice would be a better guide for us than audible words straight from the Savior's mouth, but that's what Jesus said. The Spirit is a teacher, a counselor, a communicator. He doesn't just share information with us; He guides us into truth—the reality on which we can base our entire lives. When we know His truth—whether we understand it or not—making the right decisions becomes a lot less complicated. And when we don't know His truth for a specific situation, we can trust that He will lead us into it.

Our primary experience with the Godhead in this age is with the Holy Spirit. That's the relationship we need to cultivate. Any direct experience of God, whether of sensing His presence or hearing His voice, comes through the Spirit. The more we build that relationship, being sensitive to the ways He moves and the thoughts He fills us with, the more we will be able to hear God's words in any given situation. It's a long-term process, not a short-term transaction. When being continually filled with the Spirit becomes our highest pursuit, hearing God's voice becomes a regular experience.



Holy Spirit, fill me with Your thoughts, acquaint me with Your ways, saturate me in Your presence. Help me to hear Your voice as You breathe into me moment by moment.

JANUARY 10

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will . . . not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard.

JOHN 16:13

We don't understand the mysteries of the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit, but we do know each has a distinct role in our lives. When Jesus tells His disciples about the work of the Spirit, He explains that the Spirit will hear from Jesus Himself, who in turn has heard from the Father. They share all things, but the Spirit isn't the initiator; He's the connection between the will of the Father and the souls of His followers. At times, Scripture refers to Him as God's Spirit, and at other times as the Spirit of Jesus. Either way, He knows the heartbeat of the Trinity.

Why is it important to understand the distinction of the Spirit? Because He's the one to whom we relate. We often strain to hear God's voice externally, but the Spirit resides within us. That's why His voice in our lives is rarely *audible*, as it was with Moses or Samuel, at Jesus' baptism, or at Paul's conversion. Far more often—in fact, almost always—it's that river of living water flowing out of us, like a well bubbling up from the deep source of life in our human spirit. When God speaks, it usually comes from within.

Many Christians fear this dynamic because it's so subjective. They forget, of course, that all relationships are subjective. All relationships require time and wisdom to translate the heart of the speaker through the filters of the hearer, and even then we sometimes hear only what we want to hear. Nevertheless, this is the dynamic God has chosen: personal, subjective, and highly relational. We don't need to be afraid of it. We can learn to recognize the voice that takes the will of the Father and the Son from outside of us and echoes it inside of us. The Spirit really will tell us what He has heard.



Holy Spirit, speak to me the things of the Father and the Son. You showed Jesus what the Father was doing and what He said; do so with me, too. Present the ideas of heaven within my spirit.

JANUARY 11

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will . . . tell you about the future.

JOHN 16:13

Everyone wants to know their future—or at least the positive parts of it. That’s why many people read horoscopes and call psychic hotlines. It’s also why many of us who shun these counterfeits will ask God for guidance and insight into His plans for us. Not only do we need to make decisions that are contingent on future events, we want to be reassured that our hopes are not in vain. When the Spirit speaks to us, He gives us such assurance. His voice is not one to fear or dread, even on those occasions when He must discipline us. His plans for His children are always ultimately good.

Jesus was clear that the Spirit would tell us about the future. That doesn’t mean He tells us *everything* about the future, but He does give us glimpses of His plan. He gives us information we need for today’s decisions, promises we need for tomorrow’s fulfillments, and big-picture purposes we need in order to join Him in His work. He showed John a lot about the future in Revelation and gave Paul some glimpses of it regarding the Second Coming. He also gave His followers specific directions and warnings, as when He called Paul as a suffering apostle to Gentiles or warned him through Agabus about the coming imprisonment in Jerusalem. But it was never a complete picture—Paul writes in Philippians that he didn’t know whether he would live or die. Still, there are times when God forewarns us or gives us inside information that we need to know. He sees the future, and it isn’t entirely a secret.

Mostly, the Spirit instills hope. He sometimes gives us specific, personal details about what’s ahead, but sometimes He simply fills us with expectation of God’s goodness—that “future and a hope” from Jeremiah 29:11. Either way, He is leading us onward and upward in His Kingdom.



Holy Spirit, tell me things about the future. Lead me in the ways I need to go. Give me pictures of my purpose and Your plans. Open up Your secrets for me to treasure.

JANUARY 12

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

GENESIS 1:3

From the earliest pages of Scripture, God’s voice plays a prominent role. This is how He created the world. He spoke. He didn’t just think the world into being. Neither did He silently put it together in some divine workshop. He spoke, and it was.

All throughout Scripture, we see the power of the spoken word—especially the word declared by God. He breathed Scripture itself into being, and we are told that the Word cannot be altered or broken (see John 10:35). He declared prophecies to His messengers, who then declared them to others, and His words came to pass. We are told in Isaiah 55:11 that God’s word will accomplish its purpose. It will not return to Him empty and unfulfilled but will cultivate the fruit He desires, just as the rain waters the land. Unlike us, He does not scatter His words randomly or carelessly. They are intentional, effectual agents of His will.

That may seem obvious, but the authority of His spoken word has huge implications for us. It means that when we hear from God, we cannot treat His voice as an item on the buffet line—available if we’re interested but easily passed over if we’re not. When He reveals something to us, no matter how difficult or unrealistic it may seem, we’re obligated to believe it and receive it. We don’t have the option of saying, “Maybe it’s true, maybe it isn’t.” We don’t have a right to say, “Maybe I’ll accept it, maybe I won’t.” It is binding.

That may sound stifling, but it’s actually liberating. We have turned our lives over to God, and managing them—orchestrating circumstances, making self-crafted decisions, forcing opportunities—isn’t our responsibility. Our job is to listen, integrate what we’ve heard into the fabric of our being, and live from the certainty of those words. When we do that, our lives are backed by the power of the same voice that spoke worlds into being.



Lord, please speak specifically, powerfully, and purposefully into my life—with words that cannot and will not return to You empty.

JANUARY 13

I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.

GENESIS 15:7

The man's business was going well, even growing, and the future seemed bright. But one day he heard God tell him to hold a going-out-of-business sale and close his doors. On the surface, it seemed like bad advice, and his wife thought so too. Surely this couldn't be God's will. Maybe the man had misheard. But God doesn't give bad advice, and sometimes His voice can't be so easily dismissed as a misunderstanding. This word was clear. So the man went out of business and, in the painful aftermath, remained unemployed for a year.

What went wrong? Had God misled him? No, after a year of second-guessing God, he saw how the Lord began to provide new opportunities. The career change ended up being one of the best things that ever happened to this couple. They have prospered ever since. But it wasn't easy at first. Following God rarely is. It takes time to see the fruits of obedience.

This is a common theme in Scripture. God called Abraham to leave home and go to a land He would show him later. Abraham had plenty of opportunities to second-guess his decision to follow—his wife was even captured at one point—but God eventually vindicated his faith. Plenty of other people in the Bible were led in seemingly absurd directions, yet following always proved to be the right thing to do. That's what life is like when you believe God speaks. He leads in ways that, on the surface, don't always make sense.

But His ways do make sense, and eventually we are able to see how. Hearing and responding to His voice is a real possibility. Others may question our hearing, but their voices aren't the ones we follow. We follow God into whatever land He shows us.



Lord, if You will speak to me clearly, I'll go in any direction You tell me, regardless of what other people think about it or how much sense it makes to me at the time. My steps belong to You.



JANUARY 14

The LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

ISAIAH 30:18, NIV

FROM THE HEART OF GOD

“You may think it strange that I long to be gracious to My people, as if I have to wait to express My feelings toward you, to be merciful, or to act on your behalf. But sometimes if I acted on My compassion in the way you would like, you would receive it as an endorsement of your current direction or be overwhelmed by the weight of it. I want to do some wonderful things in your life, but My love for you demands that I wait until you can handle them well. So the expression of My compassion lingers.

“So does My voice. I long to speak to you with the same kind of longing that stirs My compassion. Why don’t I, you ask? Because I have chosen to respect your willingness. I can do anything I want, but I don’t often intrude on people’s lives and force a relationship on them. I’ve startled a few choice servants throughout history by surprising them with My voice, but generally I wait for people to come to Me. The relationship is much more satisfying for both of us that way. I much prefer that you realize you have this longing deep in your heart than for Me to tell you that you do.

“So you are blessed if you turn toward Me—and blessed if you wait for Me. Many cry out to Me, but not many wait. If you do both, you will be one of the few. You must understand that My heart of compassion is instantaneous, but My acts of compassion are not. Sometimes I wait for you, and sometimes I expect you to wait for Me. You will always be glad when you do.”



Father, I need to know Your compassion even before I see it, and I need to know You will speak even before I hear. Give me the resolve and the tenacity to wait for You. You reward those who diligently seek You; I commit to being one of those who do.

JANUARY 15

Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

MATTHEW 4:4, NIV

The New Testament uses two words for “word”—*logos* and *rhema*. Some Greek authors use the two as practical equivalents; others treat them as subtly but significantly distinct. Where there’s a difference, *logos* refers to the Word of God, or to Jesus as “the Word,” while *rhema* seems to imply more immediacy—a spoken word for a particular moment. In Matthew 4:4 when Jesus talks about our feeding on every word from God’s mouth, *rhema* is used. In other words, listening to God’s voice moment by moment is necessary for our spiritual lives and growth. If we don’t hear Him, we don’t thrive.

Whether or not there’s a huge difference between *logos* and *rhema*, most of us have experienced a difference between the written Word of God and verses or passages from that Word that struck our hearts in a powerful, immediate way. All of God’s words are true, obviously—He cannot speak lies or deception—but some are true for a given moment, particularly suited for a present need. For example, is it biblical to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord or to move forward boldly in faith? The answer is yes, absolutely, on both counts. But which one for which moment? Those listening for God’s voice will hear Him highlighting one or the other of those directions at a critical time, and they will know which one to do. Those who rely on only the written Word as an instruction manual, uniform in its seasons of application, will be left confused by two equally biblical options.

Get to know God’s Word thoroughly, but listen at all times for His specific word for your specific situation. Notice when words jump off the pages of your Bible or when God seems to highlight the same truth in several ways during a particular season. Your life is sustained by feeding on *every* word that comes from His mouth. Learn to recognize them.



Lord, I hunger for and feed on Your truth. Let my spirit jump when I hear Your voice.

JANUARY 16

The voice of the LORD splits the mighty cedars.

PSALM 29:5

We thought the voice of God was much more subtle than that. We thought it was almost imperceptible, the kind of voice you have to strain to hear when the breeze is blowing in exactly the right direction and all else is quiet. But Psalm 29:4-9 tells us otherwise: “The voice of the LORD is powerful . . . majestic . . . splits the mighty cedars . . . strikes with bolts of lightning . . . makes the barren wilderness quake . . . twists mighty oaks and strips the forests bare.” The same voice that created entire universes with just a word is still active today. When He speaks, things happen.

So why the discrepancy? Why is this powerful, majestic, forest-stripping, lightning-bolt voice so hard for us to hear? How does it radically transform the environment, yet fall ever-so-subtly on our ears? Perhaps we’re listening with the wrong ears. God’s voice is an intense and immensely powerful force, rather than a series of sound waves. Perhaps He issues loud commands to nature’s obedient instruments but whispers His love and guidance to those whose spirits can choose and must relate to Him by faith. Perhaps if He dictated everything to us clearly and decisively, it would be the end of a relationship and the beginning of rote servitude—a condition for which He did not design us.

Regardless, we need to understand that the voice we strain to hear isn’t weak. Just one word from God can change any situation at any moment. He may whisper to us, gently guide us, tell us about His plans for us, and counsel us in the midst of our circumstances, but when He issues a command, it’s done. We must never mistake His quietness for reluctance or weakness. We can depend on the power of His voice—even when we aren’t hearing it clearly.



Lord, I invite You to speak powerfully into my circumstances and into my heart. I trust Your timing and Your ways. Change whatever You want to change.

JANUARY 17

Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life.

ISAIAH 55:3

Christians are fond of quoting the Bible as God's Word. We believe it is the collection of writings in which the God of the universe has revealed Himself. It tells of people's encounters with God, quotes prophets who heard Him, relates the story of His Son coming into this world and dying on our behalf, and testifies to the miracles of God's intervention in human lives. This book is a supernaturally inspired unveiling of ultimate reality.

This is an honorable belief; but when we admit that we haven't actually read the whole thing, it's also a hollow belief. Do we really value knowing God through His Word? Getting a glimpse behind the veil of the physical world? Hearing the divine voice and feeling the divine heartbeat? Walking in the wisdom rooted in eternity? Apparently not as much as we say we do. Surveys indicate that most Christians spend precious little time in the life-giving Scriptures or even asking God what He wants to say to us.

Why do we keep our distance from His voice? Perhaps we don't expect to hear Him or understand what He says, or we don't trust that what we heard was actually Him. Or maybe we're afraid He will say things we don't want to hear—words of correction or rebuke or demands that will require time and energy on our part. But if we come with ears wide open, we won't be discouraged or humiliated by what we hear; we'll find life. His words will breathe energy into us. They will give us hope, not obligations; constructive advice, not destructive rebuke; opportunities and promises, not limitations and denials. Our days tend to suck the life out of us, but coming to God with open ears infuses life back into us. If we listen, we will find the supernatural support we need.



Father, Your Word is more than truth; it is life. Why would I ever neglect it or, worse yet, hide from it? I have nothing to fear in what You say and everything to gain. My ears are open; speak life to me.

JANUARY 18

Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.

ISAIAH 55:6

Now. While God is near. That's when we are told to call to Him; because, apparently, there are times when He can be found more readily than at other times. We generally assume that God makes Himself available to all who call on Him, and Scripture seems to indicate as much. Yet, throughout history, there have been long, dark ages of relative distance in the divine/human relationship. God *can* be found anytime, but He is more readily encountered when His Spirit is doing a widespread work.

In post-Pentecost Scriptures, God does not hide. The book of Acts, the New Testament letters, and Revelation all speak of God's will being made known, of mysteries being revealed, of formerly hidden things being made manifest in the new age of the Spirit's work. Some seeking may be required, to be sure, as when Paul tried to venture into northern Asia Minor but was forbidden by the Spirit, or when the church leaders gathered in Jerusalem to seek God's will for Gentile believers. And some messages may be encrypted, as in the book of Revelation, which we still struggle to decipher. But, in general, God makes Himself known. He may not explain *everything* to us, but He directs and speaks nonetheless.

God is not silent. We are children of a very vocal Father. In this era in which the Holy Spirit inhabits all who believe, we are not left to figure things out on our own or wonder what to do next. We may need to seek diligently and persist tenaciously, but God will make His will known to us in every situation. We don't have to speculate about whether He is near. He is. He has made Himself "findable." The time of His presence is at hand.



Lord, Your Word tells me to "seek" and to "call." That's it. But I have a hard time believing the simplicity of it all. Please reward my seeking and calling quickly and decisively enough to establish this posture as a pattern in my life. Captivate me for life with the sound of Your voice.



JANUARY 19

Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness.

MATTHEW 9:35

When we're listening for God's voice, we're often seeking specific direction for a particular issue in our lives. There's nothing wrong with that; God is intimately aware of and deeply concerned about every aspect of our existence. His conversations with us can get very personal. But we also face the danger of becoming so inwardly focused, so self-absorbed in our talks with Him, that we forget His overall purposes. We're so busy talking about the things at the forefront of our minds that we neglect what's on the forefront of *His* mind.

When Jesus walked among us, He spent His time teaching about the Kingdom of God—not the Kingdom as we often define it (a spiritual-only approach or an evangelism-only emphasis), but the Kingdom as *He* defines it: God's rule and reign in every area of life. Jesus demonstrated the Kingdom by healing people of every kind of disease because disease is not a characteristic of the Kingdom. He taught us how to relate to God, because knowing Him is what the Kingdom is all about. In thought, word, and works, the Kingdom was among us.

It only makes sense, then, that as we listen for God's voice, we can expect to hear Kingdom values and purposes. The King is still among us, teaching us and healing us and leading us into the blessings of His realm. Yes, this applies to the details of our day and the personal crises we face, but it's also bigger than that. When we hear God's voice, we should assume that whatever He says is part of a greater picture. He is leading us through the day, but He is also leading us into a significant destiny—probably more significant than we realize. We have to tune our ears to the big vision and let His words draw us forward into all that a Kingdom citizen is meant to experience.



Jesus, tell me great and glorious things I do not know. Give me a vision that's bigger than my own life. Lead me into the fullness of Your Kingdom.

JANUARY 20

Today when you hear [the Spirit's] voice, don't harden your hearts.

HEBREWS 3:7-8

Jim had survived epic battles with his past addictions, and he had lived the last few years in relative freedom. Well, mostly. There were occasional, low-level lapses, but nothing like before. He was on a steady path toward victory.

But when he found himself in a tempting situation—traveling alone, far enough from home that no one would ever know—the old triggers were almost irresistible. The voice in his heart told him to step back, but he didn't listen. That voice seemed like nothing more than an overworked conscience, and it was easy enough to tell it to be quiet. "I'm okay. It won't spiral out of control like it used to. This time it will be different." But the next morning, Jim was overwhelmed with guilt, feeling as if he were being sucked back into old habits, and wishing he had listened to the voice of caution the night before.

The writer of Hebrews urges his readers not to harden their hearts to God's voice. He writes about faith in Jesus and the salvation He offers, but the dynamic of hardening our hearts when God speaks applies to much more than our big-picture calling. God is constantly calling us toward a Promised Land, the place of fruitfulness and fulfillment that He intends for our lives; yet, we find it easy to ignore Him at critical moments when He warns us of danger. We think we're in control of ourselves, able to navigate the minefield of habits, relational patterns, and emotional and behavioral triggers that "used to" trip us up. We suppress the voice of caution, not realizing that it belongs to the God of the universe, who loves us and is looking out for us.

What's the solution? *Listen.* Live with a soft heart, avoiding any hint of rebellion. Understand that God always urges us toward wholeness. His voice is telling us the truth.



Lord, why is it so easy to push Your voice to the back of my mind when I want to? It seems almost accidental, but it's really negligence or even rebellion. Soften my heart and make me sensitive to everything You say.

JANUARY 21

I hold you by your right hand—I, the LORD your God. And I say to you, “Don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.”

ISAIAH 41:13

FROM THE HEART OF GOD

“There have been times when you don’t believe I’m here to help you. I’ve seemed inactive toward you, or I’ve disciplined you, or I’ve let you experience the needs and challenges that cause you to cry out for Me. You’ve even wondered if I’m opposing you or ignoring your pleas. But you need to understand that whatever situation you’re facing, whatever hardship you endure, it isn’t because I’m not on your side. Even when I allow difficulties, I’m working on your behalf. You need to grow in faith, wisdom, and love, and you can’t do that when you aren’t being stretched by situations that require faith, wisdom, and love.

“Notice in My Word how every crisis is an opportunity for people to experience Me and learn more of who I am. Your difficult situations set the stage for moments of revelation. I reveal who I am in the midst of your need for Me. You would never know Me as Healer, Deliverer, or Provider if you never needed healing, deliverance, or provision. And because your need to know Me is greater than your need to be immune from these challenges, I will allow you to be put in challenging situations.

“Still, My words to you are, ‘Don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.’ Time and circumstances will attempt to mock your belief in those words, but you must not let them. Cling to what you know to be true. Deep down, you know My heart—that My desire is for you, and My purposes always favor those who love Me. Never let go of those truths. However things appear, I am on your side. I want the very best for you, and I’m in the process of working it out.”



Lord, is this true? I can easily believe this for other people, but I wonder if it’s true for me. Let Your love for me—and Your presence and Your help—sink into my heart as unshakable realities. I choose to trust that You are holding me by Your powerful hand.

JANUARY 22

I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guardpost.

HABAKKUK 2:1

Sometimes people are startled by God's voice. They haven't really been listening for Him, but He steps into their lives anyway with some vital information or direction. That's what He did with Moses, who was hardly looking for a new direction from God when he encountered the burning bush. That's what God did with Samuel, who thought that Eli the priest was calling to him in the middle of the night; he had to be told it was God. And that's what God did with Mary, who may have sought God's will diligently but would never have expected a visit from an angel and an announcement about her beautiful, scandalous pregnancy. God will surprise us when He is about to do something major in His overall plan and wants to use us as part of it. But that isn't the usual way of hearing Him.

No, we will rarely be aware of His voice if we go through life thinking, *If God wants to speak to me, He has my number.* He much more readily speaks to those who are actively listening—who, like Habakkuk, have stationed themselves on the wall and are waiting to hear what God says. This kind of attentiveness requires faith and patience, but eventually it will be rewarded. The more we listen, the more we hear. The more we practice hearing, the more we learn to recognize which voice is God's. Sure, practice involves failure—we will misunderstand some things as we learn—and there will be times when our attentiveness tunes us in to all kinds of voices, not just God's. But over time, we learn to recognize His voice out of all the others.

Whatever it takes, we need to position ourselves like satellite receivers waiting for a signal from the spiritual realm. We need to ask God to speak, and then we need to listen for His voice. He will develop our ears to hear.



Lord, I'm listening. Please speak, and please help me to recognize Your voice. Speak to the questions I've put before You. Give me the pleasure of hearing Your voice clearly.

JANUARY 23

I will wait to see what the LORD says.

HABAKKUK 2:1

Habakkuk positioned himself to receive communication from God, but he uses very visual terms. He has climbed his watchtower, and he is waiting to see what God says. Surely he is speaking figuratively, isn't he? Obviously, we can't *see* a voice. He must mean he is opening his ears to hear, right?

Not necessarily. God often communicates in the pictures of our lives. We see in Scripture that His preferred language is visual. He has given us a book full of sensory experiences and manifest encounters, He instructs Ezekiel and other prophets to act out many of their prophecies, and He incarnated Himself into flesh so He could be fully realized right before our eyes. He is constantly painting pictures, whether with the symbolism of the Passover, the demonstrative details of the Tabernacle and the Temple, or the life stories of our heroes of faith. It only makes sense that if God has communicated with stories and symbols and visions, we might want to open our eyes to "hear" His voice. Again and again, throughout the Bible and history, God is a God of graphic parables.

What does it mean to "see what the LORD says"? At the very least, it means watching for demonstrations of His goodness through His people and our circumstances. The events of our lives aren't random. "Coincidences" may be God's effort to draw our attention to what He is doing, or they may be illustrations of greater truths. In the words of Malcolm Muggeridge, "Every happening, great and small . . . is a parable whereby God speaks to us; and the art of life is to get the message." In a multitude of ways, God portrays His plans, His thoughts, and His desires to us. And we might begin to notice if we open our eyes to see what He is saying.



Lord, thank You for speaking in ways I can understand. Open my eyes to see the pictures Your voice creates around me. Fill my senses with parables of Your nature and invitations into Your ways.

JANUARY 24

[Jeremiah said,] “Just as the LORD had said he would, my cousin Hanamel came and visited me in the prison. . . . Then I knew that the message I had heard was from the LORD.”

JEREMIAH 32:8

Jeremiah was accused of only posing as a prophet, but he was entirely genuine, one of God’s finest. Scripture and history have vindicated his words as truly coming from God. So it’s a little surprising when Jeremiah gives us a glimpse of the hearing process—and, as it turns out, it isn’t quite as neat and clean as we might think. He receives a message from God that a relative will come and offer to sell him a piece of the family property. When the relative comes and makes the offer, just as God had said, Jeremiah admits, “Then I knew that the message I had heard was from the LORD.”

We imagine God’s prophets hearing so clearly and decisively that there’s no question of whose voice they heard. But Jeremiah apparently wasn’t sure until circumstances confirmed it. Yes, he had heard a message, but was it truly from God? He thought so, just as we think God is speaking to us sometimes. But the origin of those whispers, impressions, and messages we receive isn’t always clear. Sometimes we need confirmation. Sometimes—almost always, in fact—hearing God is a process.

There’s nothing wrong with being uncertain. When we think we might have heard God’s voice but need confirmation to make sure, that’s normal. If a prophet like Jeremiah didn’t always know for certain until events confirmed what he had heard, we can be comfortable with the same dynamic. This is what it’s like to hear God when He isn’t booming like thunder from heaven—which is most of the time. God is patient with the process and will refine our hearing and draw us closer to Him in the midst of it.



Father, teach me how to discern whether the things I hear are from You or not. Give me confirmation when I’m not sure. Train my ears to recognize Your voice.

JANUARY 25

Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested [Joseph].

PSALM 105:19, NKJV

Often when God speaks, circumstances begin to move in the opposite direction of what He says. That was certainly the case with Joseph; he had two dreams that depicted him in a position of power, and he saw his family members bowing down to him. Very quickly, some of those family members betrayed him and sold him into slavery, and he found himself at the bottom of Egypt's social order for the next few years, spending much of that time in prison. This was the antithesis of what God had spoken, and surely Joseph must have wondered what had gone wrong. Did he mishear God? Did God change His mind? Had Joseph blown it by telling everyone the dreams? God clearly wasn't doing what He had said—*if* He had even said it in the first place. According to the psalmist, the word of the Lord tested Joseph until what he had been told came to pass.

That's a common dynamic when God has given a promise or direction. The visible world seems to stretch us in uncomfortable directions while we wait for God to do His part. In the meantime, we ask questions: Did He really speak? Did we hear Him correctly? Did He change His mind? Did we mess it up somehow? The wait can be painfully long, and many are tempted to give up before the fulfillment. But when God has really spoken and we have really heard, waiting in faith is the right response. Even if the wait is excruciating.

We need to understand that God often gives us a view of the *end* of a matter, not a view of the *process*. Our choices in the meantime say a lot about what we believe about God's goodness. As we cling to hope, maintain faith, and learn patience, He works His nature into us. In the process, we eventually receive not only the fulfillment but also a changed nature.



Lord, give me strength to persevere through the process, hope to see from Your perspective, and faith to endure.

JANUARY 26

We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18, NIV

Am I in tune with God's Spirit? Am I exercising His gifts appropriately? Are my desires in line with His? Am I praying according to His will? Am I hearing His voice? If we can't answer these questions with a high degree of certainty, we will walk out our relationship with God tentatively. We will make decisions, offer prayers, and listen for His guidance without much conviction, and our uncertain faith will waver. There's a lot of humility in this walk, but not a lot of holy boldness. And we can't accomplish much in God's Kingdom without both.

The most significant variable in answering these questions is whether or not we are gazing at Jesus. When He is front and center in our minds and hearts—when He is bigger and better than our deepest desires, getting our prayers answered, and discovering God's will—He will align us with His heartbeat. When we contemplate His glory and pursue Him above all else, we are transformed into His image without even being aware of it. We become like whatever we love, so if Christ is our greatest love—not just in theory, but in daily consciousness—we become like Him. And as we do, we hear, pray, walk, and talk like He does. Just as He is the radiance of the Father, we reflect God's radiance too. We don't have to worry about being misguided when our greatest passion is knowing Jesus.

When Jesus becomes and remains the focus of our attention, a lot of other things in life fall into place and a lot of spiritual questions get resolved. We may not know exactly how that happens, but it does. Our perspective changes. Even our questions change. And uncertainties about our relationship with God begin to vanish.



Jesus, may my gaze never depart from You. Show me Your glory. Impart Your nature to me. Implant Your heartbeat within me. Be my truest and deepest passion.

JANUARY 27

O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

PSALM 139:1

She saw the guy in the back row and heard something in her spirit: “Caleb.” Was that actually his name? Did he remind her of someone she used to know named Caleb? No. She was sensitive enough to God’s ways to know that seeing the man as a “Caleb” was a word from God, a timely illustration of something going on in this man’s life. So she walked up to him later and said, “I’m sensing from God that you are like Caleb in the Bible. You see the giants in your life, but you have no reason to be afraid of them. God is calling you into a promise, and you have enough faith to go, no matter how intimidating the path seems. You are called to ignore those who say it can’t be done and to take your mountain by faith.”

The man was moved to tears. As it turns out, he had been sensing God’s call into a new endeavor and yet had encountered obstacles. He had been reminding himself that God was with him. But, as most of us do, he wondered if he was on the right track. He needed confirmation. The woman who saw him as a Caleb gave it to him.

That’s one way to hear from God and speak His encouragement into other people’s lives. The woman didn’t say, “God told me,” and then prescribe direction for his life. She simply sensed a message from the Holy Spirit and shared what she had heard. If it didn’t apply to the man’s life, no harm done. But it did, and the man was greatly encouraged and strengthened to pursue what he had been hearing from God.

Don’t be afraid to share what you are sensing from God. Do it in humility and in a way that doesn’t try to dictate God’s will. Let your Spirit-inspired insights encourage and strengthen others. This is how He often speaks to His body.



Holy Spirit, give me insights that build up Your people, and give me the courage and humility to share them well. Use me to speak Your words and to represent Your heart.



JANUARY 28

*I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt,
the place of your slavery.*

EXODUS 20:2

FROM THE HEART OF GOD

“Sometimes when I speak to you, I need to remind you of what I’ve done for you. This isn’t because I’m holding it over your head. I just want you to remember the relationship we have. If you remember where we have been together, you’ll be much better prepared to trust Me for where we are going together. I want you to understand that I have created you, loved you, been patient with you, redeemed you from your captivity, listened to your prayers and answered them, provided for you, healed you, restored you, and so much more.

“Why do you need to remember these things? Because if you forget the context of our relationship, you will often hear Me through the wrong perceptions. When I give you instructions you don’t want to follow, you will feel as if I’m unfairly imposing My will on you. When I give you extravagant promises, you will question whether I’m going to carry them out. When I correct you, you will take it personally and assume that I’m angry with you rather than lovingly drawing you into freedom. When I tell you that I love you or that I’m with you, you will take My words as empty encouragement, without realizing how emphatically I’ve proven them to you. Do you see why I come to you with a reminder of who I am? You need to know, because the way you perceive Me shapes everything you hear from Me.

“I want you to hear Me without distortions from your own insecurities and wounds. Listen carefully when I remind you of who I am and what I’ve done for you. Your hurts and struggles will fade into the background as you embrace My goodness toward you. Then I can speak words of love, instruction, encouragement, correction, and guidance that will transform your life.”



Lord, let me hear You with a pure and whole heart. Cut through my distorted perceptions to help me hear the truth in Your words. Let my heart be shaped by the history of our relationship.

JANUARY 29

[The Lord said,] “I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.”

EZEKIEL 36:26-27

If a cat wanted to become a dog, it would take a lot more than learning how to bark, dig, and slobber. It would require having the heart and mind of a dog, taking on the entire canine lifestyle, being doglike—not just because that’s how dogs behave, but because it’s who the cat has become. It would take a new set of instincts, a genuinely transformed nature that results in new behavior.

A cat can’t become a dog, of course; it’s impossible. But so is the transformation from a person who does the right things because they are right to a person who does the right things because that’s his or her nature. It’s one thing to do good because we’re told it’s good and therefore we obey. It’s quite another to do good because we’re good deep down inside and goodness is what naturally flows out. That’s the new heart we’re promised and the new nature we’re given by God’s Spirit. That’s what it means to partake of the “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

That’s also the process for hearing God’s voice. We often look to Him for information, when really He is transforming our inner nature so that the direction and motivation we seek comes out of who we are deep inside. He is after a deep, inward relationship, not just a conversation about facts. And as He transforms us, we find more and more that His voice comes from within us, because that’s where He resides. This is our goal—not merely a voice from beyond, but a voice from within that springs from our new nature. This is where God reveals His heart.



Lord, I want to hear Your heart and share Your heartbeat. I want to carry Your voice within me, not just hear words. Please plant Your will deep within me.

JANUARY 30

It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13, NIV

We talk a lot about our own sinfulness and depravity—how there’s nothing good in us, how we want “all of Him and none of me” in our relationship with God. This is a very humble attitude, of course, but it isn’t very scriptural. Yes, in and of ourselves, we have no righteousness, but God hasn’t left us in that condition, has He? According to His Word, He has filled us with His Spirit and given us a new heart. He has transformed us, not replaced us. We were created for a reason—to partner with Him, not fade out of the picture. And Paul assures us that it is God who works in us both to will and to act in order to fulfill His purposes. In other words, there are many desires inside us that are from Him and many actions we want to do that are exactly what He wants for us. He has implanted His will and His voice within us.

It’s true that we have other desires and voices within us at times; not everything we think or do is godly. But we are moving in the direction of godliness if we’re growing in Christ and allowing Him to be the source of our life, and He is rearranging our internal environment so that we become one with Him.

This is the context for hearing God’s voice. There will be times when we don’t know whether it’s our own voice or His because our minds and hearts are being shaped by Him. It is God who is working within us to desire and to do His will. As long as we have any vestige of fallen nature, we can’t make that truth absolute and say that it’s *only* God at work within us. But neither can we downplay this truth. This is God’s preferred method for speaking to us: *being within us*.



Lord, work powerfully within me to desire and to do Your will. Let Your thoughts and dreams become my thoughts and dreams.

JANUARY 31

[Jesus said,] “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me.”

JOHN 17:22-23

Normally, Jesus’ prayer for oneness is seen as a call for Christian unity. When He says, “so they may be one,” we instinctively add the words “with each other.” It certainly includes that, but it’s more. We can just as easily add the words “with Me” and understand this as a prayer for oneness with God Himself. After all, the rest of the sentence implies something far more supernatural and mystical than we’re accustomed to. Jesus is praying that we may be one with Him in the very same way that He is one with the Father.

How is Jesus *one* with the Father? In motives, in desires, in mission and purpose, in character and attributes, and even in substance. He has already made that clear in His teachings: “The Father and I are one,” He said to an infuriated crowd (John 10:30). Now He prays for that kind of oneness with *us*. It’s an invitation into the fellowship of the Trinity. We are united at our very core with the life of God Himself.

So when Ezekiel and Jeremiah prophesy a new heart, and Acts describes the coming of the Spirit, and Paul says that it’s God working within us, the picture we get is far more than a new set of motives and desires. It’s an inner union between us and the substance of God. The practical aspects of this union aren’t inevitable—many Christians live in rebellion or apathy—but they are certainly available. We can truly know that He is powerfully dwelling in us and that His life within us has very practical implications. One of those implications is that the Word Himself speaks. Within. Almost constantly. And we can hear because this is why He came.



Jesus, fulfill this union in every way possible. Let me have Your heartbeat and breathe Your breath. And may Your voice flow through me and out of me constantly.