

HOW TO HEAR THE

# THE JOURNEY

# TO HEAR

DUSTIN BATES

VOICE OF GOD







# THE JOURNEY TO HEAR

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Second Edition: March 2025

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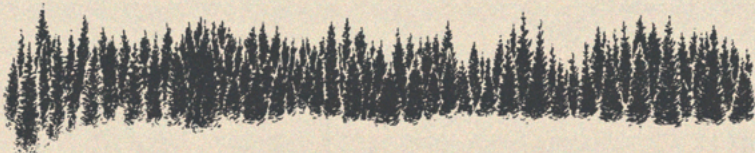
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**Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)**

*19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*



# INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a new software was released for the iPhone. I updated my device without even checking to see what was included in the latest version. The next morning, I saw that the update had been downloaded and installed, but I didn't notice any differences.

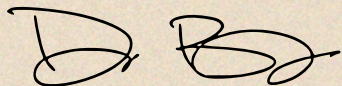
As I went about my day, it seemed like everything was going well. There were no phone calls, texts, or emergencies—just a silent, peaceful day.

By that afternoon, my peace turned to concern that I had not heard from anyone the entire day. As I looked closer, I realized that the update had installed different “focus modes” on my phone, and I had accidentally turned it on and muted all of my notifications! To my disappointment, I had several missed messages and calls. People tried communicating with me all day, but my notifications were off!

God is always speaking, and we can hear His voice. But sometimes, when He seems silent, the reality is that we might not have our “notifications” turned on.

Throughout this curriculum, we will learn how to tune in to God's voice and receive notifications from Heaven. Whether you've walked with God all your life or are just getting started on your faith journey, I pray that you will begin to hear His voice clearly and consistently as you go through these lessons. You were created to hear God's voice and He wants to speak to you!

- Pastor Dustin Bates

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a stylized 'B' and a flourish.



# CHAPTER ONE | CAN YOU SEE IT

## **Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)**

*19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*

**Big Idea:** God is always doing something, but it requires spiritual perception to see it.

## **Recognize that God is moving.**

Have you ever bought a specific type of car that you thought was unique, and then suddenly you see that same car everywhere? Your eyes were opened to notice something that had been there all along. The same is true with the movement of God. You will begin to see Him everywhere once you learn to recognize His movements.

The first step in recognizing God's movement is simply knowing that He is *always* moving. He is not stagnant, immobile, or stuck in the past. He is in our present and doing something right now. The question is not "Is God moving?" but "Can I *perceive* it?"

## **Recognize that we need spiritual intervention.**

The problem for most of us in identifying God's movement is we try to see it with our natural eyes. It is difficult to decipher what God is doing with our natural senses. To receive spiritual senses, we need the help and intervention of the Holy Spirit.

We were created to have a spirit, soul, and body. God designed our spirits to connect with Him and hear His voice.

## **Recognize that we can develop spiritual perception.**

Strengthening your spiritual perception is like strengthening a physical muscle—it requires intentional practice and training. If we don't develop our perception, it will sometimes feel difficult to tune into God's voice.



Throughout this journey, we will learn how to grow in our spiritual senses so that we can see what God is doing and hear His voice more clearly.

## ACTION PLAN

- **Step 1:** Sit for 5 minutes and worship. Don't try to hear yet; just enjoy the presence of God.
- **Step 2:** Ask God to speak to you; ask Him to open your ears to hear.
- **Step 3:** Listen for an impression or a persistent thought and write it down.

## NOTES

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



## This image shows a full page of blank, cream-colored paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



***17 HOW PRECIOUS TO ME ARE YOUR  
THOUGHTS, GOD! HOW VAST IS THE  
SUM OF THEM! 18 WERE I TO COUNT  
THEM, THEY WOULD OUTNUMBER  
THE GRAINS OF SAND— WHEN I  
AWAKE, I AM STILL WITH YOU.***



Psalm 139:17-18 (NIV)



# CHAPTER TWO | GOD'S THOUGHTS

## ***Psalm 139:17-18 (NIV)***

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.*

**Big Idea:** God thinks about you a lot.

The Psalmist of this chapter compares the amount of God's thoughts to the grains of sand on the seashore. God is thinking about His creation a lot! In his book *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer says, "We have almost forgotten that God is a person; and as such, can be cultivated as any person." God has thoughts about us like a person would, and He wants us to know those thoughts.

## **God's thoughts towards you are thoughts of love.**

So often, I talk to people who are afraid of God and think that He is judging them and mad at them. I would propose quite the contrary. God is madly in love with you, and His thoughts towards you are not only vast and immeasurable; they are all thoughts of love! So the question becomes, if God is thinking these thoughts of love towards us, how do we know them?

## **God wants to speak to you.**

Voice is how we give expression to thought. To hear God's voice is to know His thoughts. Anyone can hear the voice of God. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says that "we have the mind of Christ," which means we can tune into His thoughts. You don't have to be super spiritual or extra holy to be able to hear; you only need to have an open heart and a listening ear.

God desires to speak to you out of an overflow of His love for you. He was thinking about you before you were formed in your mother's womb. And even now, He's thinking about the good plans He has for you. But in order to know those thoughts, it will require learning the discipline of hearing His voice.



## ACTION PLAN

- **Step 1:** Ask God to help you know His thoughts and heart towards you.
- **Step 2:** Listen for an impression or persistent thought.
- **Step 3:** Identify three thoughts God is thinking about you.
- **Step 4:** Write them down or communicate them verbally to a friend or family member.

## NOTES

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*27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know  
them, and they follow me.*

**John 10:27 (NIV)**





# CHAPTER THREE | TUNE IN

**John 10:27 (NIV)**

*27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

**Big Idea:** God is always speaking; we must learn to listen.

So, if God is moving, thinking, and wants to speak to us, how can we learn to hear His voice? There are a couple of things that we need to know if we're going to hear Him. The first is that He is always speaking, and the second is that we have the ability to hear Him.

Growing up, my dad used to say the voice of God was like an old FM radio—you have to tune in to hear it. The question was never if the radio was on that night or not; it was if we were tuned in or not. If we were able to tune in, the radio was always playing. The same is true with the voice of God. There are many ways for us to tune in, but I will list a few simple ones below to help get us started in our journey to hear His voice.

**“There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it.”**

*- Brother Andrew*

**Create time and space.**

If you want to hear God's voice clearly and consistently, you must create space where you are in God's presence. This sounds simple, but we live in a time where it is easy to get distracted by life and caught up in multi-tasking. Find a time and place to be with God, and let your thoughts settle on Him. Take time to meditate on His word, worship Him, and give Him your undivided attention.



**Practice makes progress.**

The voices we recognize the best are the ones we hear the most. The same is true of God’s voice, so we must make room to listen to Him frequently.

If you’re waiting to hear the audible voice of God, you could be waiting for a while. God’s voice often sounds a lot like your own thoughts. It’s subtle, soft, and is more like a whisper or an impression in your mind. It requires careful attention to hear. As you spend time in God’s presence, ask Him to speak to you and then pause and listen for His voice. Write down what you hear or what you sense, and then do it again and again. The more you practice this, the more you will be able to discern between what thoughts are yours and which are God’s.

**ACTION PLAN**

- **Step 1:** Identify where and when you will spend time with God today.
- **Step 2:** Eliminate distractions and ask Him to speak to you.
- **Step 3:** Listen for an impression or persistent thought and write it down.

**NOTES**

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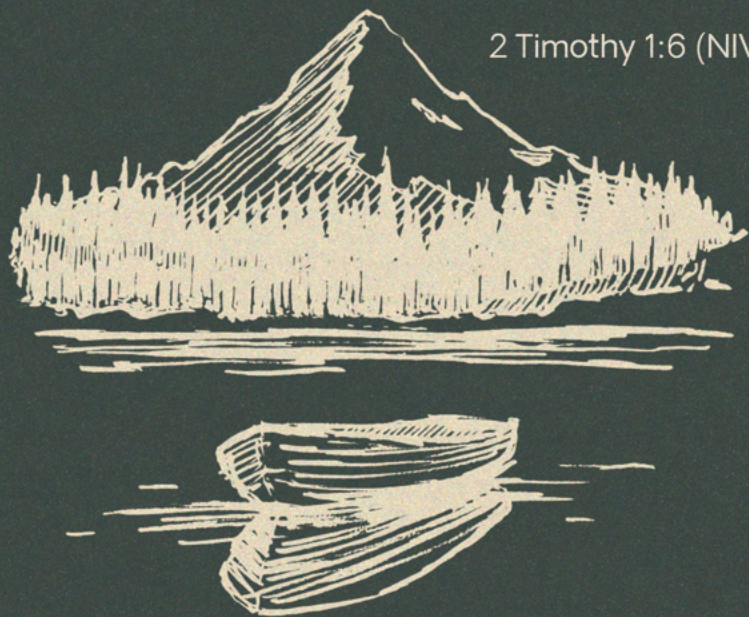
# NOTES

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*6 For this reason I remind you to fan  
into flame the gift of God,  
which is in you through the laying on  
of my hands.*

2 Timothy 1:6 (NIV)





# CHAPTER FOUR | WORK IT OUT

## **2 Timothy 1:6 (NIV)**

*6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

**Big Idea:** The more you listen, the more you will hear.

If you're going to hear God's voice, you will have to work at it. Paul told Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God," meaning he had the ingredients he needed, but he had to coax it into full fruition. It would be nice if you could naturally hear God's voice, which you can, but it takes practice and time to learn to recognize it. I often wonder if God did it this way so that we wouldn't resign ourselves to a formula but would have to lean into a deeper relationship with Him continually.

**Hearing God is like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it gets.**

If you never listen, you will never hear. So, as we learned in the previous lesson, we will have to make time to be in God's presence and practice listening to His voice. Because God's voice goes through the filter of our minds, it will take time to learn to distinguish the difference between God's voice and ours. As we practice listening daily and consistently, our spiritual ears will be strengthened to hear clearly.

**If you can hear for yourself, you can hear for others.**

One of the greatest ways to grow in hearing the voice of God is to hear God for someone else; this is called prophecy. New Testament prophecy is for the encouragement, edification, and building up of one another. Prophesying can sound daunting but it is simply the overflow of God's heart of love communicated to us through someone else. Practicing fanning into flame the gift of prophecy is a way to quickly grow in hearing God's voice. Seeing the impact of God's voice in other people's lives through prophecy will help build faith in you to hear for yourself.



God’s voice is usually accompanied by a call to action. When He speaks to us about someone else or a situation in our lives, our responsibility is to be obedient and act on what He’s asked of us. As we hear and obey, it strengthens our ability to hear more clearly and more frequently.

## ACTION PLAN

- **Step 1:** As you’re in your place of prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to put someone on your heart.
- **Step 2:** Ask God to speak to you something to encourage that person.
- **Step 3:** Listen for an impression or a persistent thought and write it down.
- **Step 4:** Be obedient to what God has asked you to share with them.

## NOTES

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***4 The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.***



**Isaiah 50:4 (NIV)**



# CHAPTER FIVE | I CAN'T HEAR

## ***Isaiah 50:4 (NIV)***

*4 The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.*

**Big Idea:** If I can't hear, it doesn't mean that God is not speaking.

John 10 teaches us that we are sheep, and we hear the voice of the Shepherd. Isaiah 50 says that God wakens our ears to listen. And as we have learned already, God is always speaking.

We were created to have a relationship with God, and every good relationship requires communication. Our relationship with God was not designed to be one-sided. If we can't hear, it's usually because something is blocking our signal. When God feels quiet or silent, we must learn to ask, "Why can't I hear Him?" When we can identify these blockages and learn how to remove them, we will begin to hear clearly again!

Here are some common signal blockers to our ability to hear the voice of God:

## **Distraction**

Sometimes, we can't hear simply because there are too many other competing noises and voices. In the same way that it is challenging to hear someone speak to you in a noisy room, God's voice can feel difficult to hear when distractions surround us.

Not all the other voices in our lives are negative or need to be removed permanently. But when we have a hard time hearing God, it's important to know how to eliminate distractions and silence other competing voices so our signal to His voice will feel stronger.



**Disobedience**

Why would God continue to entrust us with His word when we haven't stewarded well what He's spoken to us? Disobedience sounds heavy and intentional, but it's not always a deliberate rebellion against His word. Sometimes, disobedience can be as simple as pushing aside or turning a deaf ear to His nudges and still small voice.

If we can't hear God, one of the first questions we should ask ourselves is if we've obeyed the last thing He told us.

**Doubt**

If you don't believe God can speak to you, then you won't hear Him. If you're not leaned in ready to hear what He has to say, you will miss out on what He's trying to tell you. We must believe that He can speak and wants to communicate with us.

If you're having a hard time believing He can speak to you, be faithful in reading His word. Romans 10:17 says "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

**ACTION PLAN**

- **Step 1:** Ask the Holy Spirit to identify any blockages that you have in hearing His voice.
- **Step 2:** Ask the Holy Spirit to wake your ears to listen as one being taught.
- **Step 3:** Eliminate distractions, believe God will speak to you, and listen for His voice.
- **Step 4:** Be obedient to what God has spoken to you.

**NOTES**

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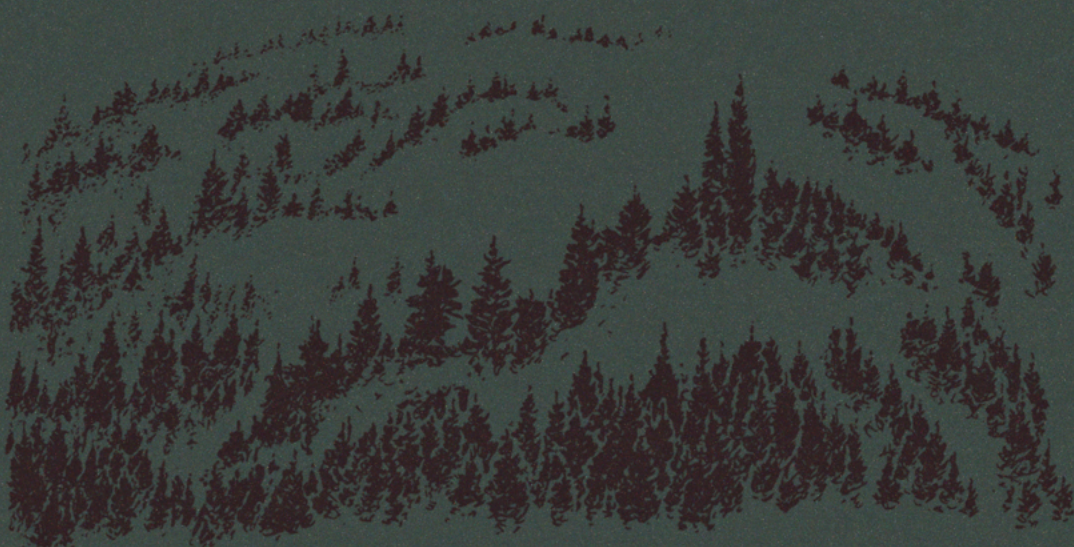


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*3 'Call to me and I will  
answer you and tell you  
great and unsearchable  
things you do not know.'*

Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)





# CHAPTER SIX | SELECTIVE HEARING

## **Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)**

**3** *"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."*

**Big Idea:** The Word of God holds us accountable to what we hear.

Some people like to pick and choose what they hear God speak to them. We call this “selective hearing.” If you have kids, then you are familiar with how naturally selective hearing comes to us. You can be telling them to clean their room or to get dressed, and it seems like they can’t hear a thing. But when you’re telling them it’s time to go get ice cream, they are suddenly standing at attention and ready to obey. You didn’t change your voice or your volume, they just chose to hear what they wanted to hear.

If we’re going to hear the voice of God, we have to be committed to hearing *everything* that God has to say. A couple of ways that we safeguard ourselves against selective hearing are:

## **The Word of God**

There are two primary words used for the Word in the Bible: “logos” and “rhema.” Logos is the written or logical Word of God. Rhema is the spoken or uttered Word of God.

Whatever we hear God speak (*rhema*) must always line up with what He has written (*logos*). If there’s ever a difference or disconnect between what we’re hearing and what we’re reading, then we need to submit to the written Word of God. God will never contradict His written Word.

The more we read, study, and memorize His word, the more we will recognize His voice as He speaks. To be familiar with His voice, we must be familiar with His Word.



## **A Pure Vessel**

We are humans, and as such we have the propensity to filter everything that we say and do through our personality and preferences. Because of this, we have to be aware to leave room for error in our hearing of God's voice. We must be committed to having the integrity to yield our hearts to what He's actually speaking and not attempting to manipulate the outcome of His voice.

We must prioritize submitting to the Word of God as our final authority. If we do this as well as approaching him with humility, an eagerness to be instructed, and we do our best to keep our vessels pure, it will help safeguard us from selective hearing.

## **Accountability**

Having trusted voices in our lives to help give us feedback as we are learning to hear God is another effective safeguard against selective hearing. The only way to really learn that what we're hearing is accurate is to test what we hear against the Word of God and then share it with trusted voices in our lives for feedback.

Trusted voices should be people who are similarly submitted to the written Word of God, planted in a local church, and submitted to their local church pastor. If they are lacking in any of these areas they should not be trusted to give us feedback on if we are hearing the voice of God or not.

## **ACTION PLAN**

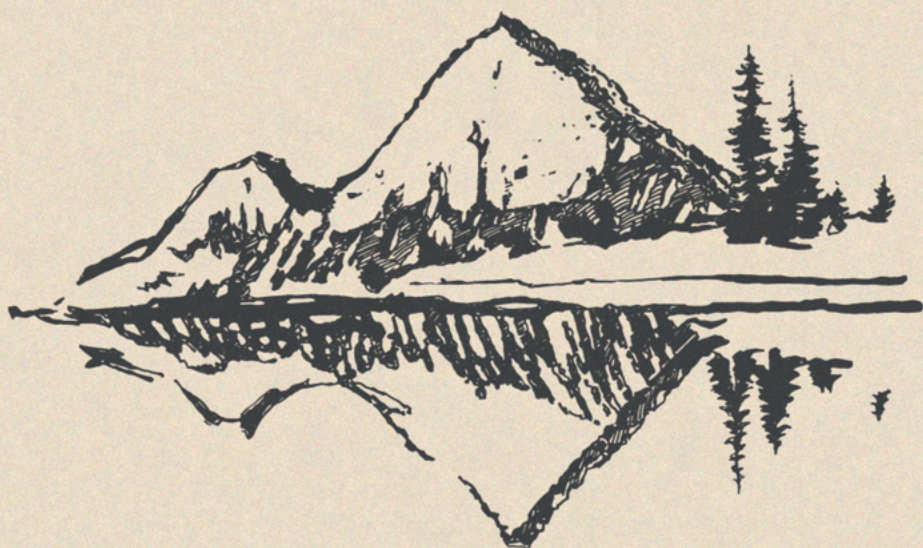
- **Step 1:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where you're not submitted to the Word of God.
- **Step 2:** Start a Bible reading plan.
- **Step 3:** Practice hearing the voice of God.
- **Step 4:** Get feedback from a trusted voice on what you heard from God.



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*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful  
for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training  
in righteousness,*



*17 so that the servant of God may be  
thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**



# CHAPTER SEVEN | SILENT SEASONS

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**

*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**Big Idea:** There is never an excuse not to have a Word from God.

We have all had seasons where it's difficult to hear the voice of God or moments where we come to the conclusion that God is just being silent. As we learned earlier, God is always speaking, and we have the ability to remove things that block the signal of His voice. So what do you do when you've checked all the boxes, but it still seems like you can't hear God?

## **“When you can't hear God, read Him.”**

God gave us His word so we would never have to be in a “silent season” or live without His voice. His written Word is always speaking, and through His Word, He will awaken your ears to hear.

We must be careful not just to read the Word as a common text but really immerse ourselves in the Word and allow God to speak to us through it. Here are a few tips to help you as you read:

### **Ask God to speak to you.**

We have emphasized this point throughout the curriculum because although it seems obvious, we often go through our prayer times or Bible reading without asking the Holy Spirit to speak to us. If we want to hear at a greater level, we must also increase our level of intentionality.

### **Eliminate distractions.**

This is just as important to do when reading as it is when praying.



It can be tempting to multitask as we read, especially when using the Bible on our phones or listening to the audio Bible. If you are finding it difficult to focus, I've found it helps me to pull out my paper Bible and create a distraction-free environment to read.

**Read slowly.**

Read not to find but to discover. When I read to find, I already have in mind what I am searching for. But when I read to discover, I am coming to God with a blank slate for Him to speak to me. As you slow down, get curious and ask questions about the passage you're reading. You'll be surprised at how much you will discover!

**Watch for the “pop.”**

What pops off the page as you're reading? God's word is alive, and He will use it to lead you, guide you, and teach you to hear His voice. You might be reading a passage unrelated to your current circumstance, and God could highlight a phrase or word that speaks directly to your heart and sparks faith in you.

If you want to hear God's voice clearly and never have a silent season, prioritize immersing yourself in His Word.

**ACTION PLAN**

- **Step 1:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.
- **Step 2:** Spend 10 minutes reading slowly.
- **Step 3:** Be aware of any impressions or persistent thoughts.

**NOTES**

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*1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

1 Corinthians 14:1-3 (NIV)





# CHAPTER EIGHT | DELIVER THE PACKAGE

## **1 Corinthians 14:1-3 (NIV)**

*1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

**Big Idea:** We should eagerly desire the gift of prophecy.

In simple terms, prophecy is communicating in human words what God brings to mind. When God speaks to us about someone else, and we share that thought with them, we are operating in the prophetic gift. It can sound daunting, but prophetic words are simply an overflow of God's heart of love for an individual communicated through someone else.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14, prophetic words should strengthen, encourage, and comfort others. When I'm sharing a word with someone else, I remind myself to think through the lens of "does this word build up, stir up, and cheer up?"

The Bible speaks about the office of the prophet, which we will not be studying in this curriculum. But even those who do not operate in that office can still operate in the gift of prophecy.

The prophet John the Baptist was described as a voice preparing the way of the Lord. In the same way, prophetic words today prepare the way for what the Lord wants to do. God's voice always comes before God's hand. God's word always comes before God's work.

**"The word of the Lord makes way for the work of the Lord."**



We cannot know the will of God when we have not been awakened to His voice. To grow in the prophetic, you need to:

**Use your gifts to grow them.**

God always wants to use us to speak to others. But if we do not obey, our ability to hear clearly will lessen.

**Take every opportunity to step out.**

As you go about your day, stay sensitive to what God is doing and ask the Holy Spirit to give you opportunities to step out.

**Stir your gifts up so they won't get stale.**

What you don't stir will become stagnant. When we don't activate our gifts, it can feel like we've lost our ability to hear. But the moment you begin to stir it up, you will be able to hear again.

As you begin to operate in the prophetic, here are a few accelerators that will help you fan your gift into flame:

**Praying in the Spirit**

Prayer is progress. When we pray in the Spirit, it is our Heavenly language that is connected right to the heart of God. As we pray, we are taking ground, opening our ears to hear, getting rid of our natural senses, and tapping into spiritual senses. The more we pray in the Spirit, the easier it is to tune into the conversation of Heaven.

**The Laying on of Hands by Spiritual Authority**

In 2 Timothy, Paul says that the gift in Timothy was given by the laying on of his hands. If we want to accelerate our gifts, we have Biblical precedent to find someone well-versed in those gifts and ask them to lay their hands on us and pray for us. Timothy didn't just receive a gift; it was imparted to him by the laying on of Paul's hands.

Lastly, as we operate in the prophetic, we must remember that we are just the messenger. I like to think of myself as an Amazon Prime delivery guy. They get the orders, pick up the package,



drop it off at my address, and leave. They don't wait for me to open it and check for my reaction to see if I liked what I ordered or not. They are not emotionally attached to the outcome of their delivery.

In the same way, our job is to catch the Word from Heaven and release it. As we discussed earlier, it's important that we have accountability to God's written Word and other trusted voices. But after we've done that, our job is simply to be obedient. It doesn't mean we'll never get it wrong, but we must learn to trust and obey God to the best of our abilities.

## ACTION PLAN

- **Step 1:** Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a Word for someone.
- **Step 2:** Listen for a persistent thought or impression.
- **Step 3:** Deliver the package.

## NOTES

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# CONCLUSION

Now that we've completed our journey learning to hear the voice of God, I hope that these lessons have blessed you and helped you to hear the Lord more clearly and frequently.

It's been my experience that in some seasons, hearing God comes more easily than in others. After finishing a study like this, hopefully you are feeling in tune and connected to what God is doing. But when seasons come where it feels like God might be silent, or the signal to His voice is not as strong, I pray that these lessons will be a resource you can come back to over the years that helps reestablish that connection.

*Lord, I thank you that you have given us ears that hear Your voice. We have been created and designed to have direct communion with You. I pray right now, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that You would speak to each person reading these words in ways that You never have before. Lord, speak loudly that they can hear, and clearly that they can understand.*

*I pray that they would be proficient in hearing and translating the communication of Heaven to themselves and to others. Lord, awaken them to prophetic words, words of knowledge, and words of wisdom, like they've never experienced before. Even right now, I pray that they receive a fresh sensitivity and awareness to Your voice.*

*Lord, help us not to have blocks to our signal or selective hearing. Help us to hear clearly and obey quickly. Thank you for the privilege of hearing Your voice. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After pastoring in Washington state, Dustin and his wife, Jamie, moved to Allen, Texas, in 2008. There, they founded The MVMNT youth ministry, which grew from 15 students to over 500 in just three years.

In 2015, Dustin became the Lead Pastor at Church Eleven32. During his tenure, he has founded private-education Christian schooling for the next generation, including The Preschool, The Academy, and the Leadership College at Church Eleven32.

Additionally, in 2020, he founded Dream Center Dallas, a community-focused initiative addressing local needs in Oak Cliff, Texas and surrounding areas.

Dustin ministers to thousands weekly, whether at one of Church Eleven32's four campuses in the DFW area or as he travels, delivering messages and empowering leaders in both Christian and secular contexts across the globe.



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