

HEARING GOD

and What's Next

12 WAYS TO HEAR GOD
3 THINGS TO DO ABOUT IT
6 WAYS TO KNOW YOU'RE NOT CRAZY



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Introduction

This book is for Christians. Many religions have gods that spoke a long time ago, and live far off in a galaxy far, far, away. Not so the Christian God. Not so the one, true Living God – God the Father who sent us God the Son Jesus and gives us God the Holy Spirit. This God is very close.

God wants to speak often more than we want to hear.

You see, hearing from God is an adventure. It'll challenge your life, and change it if you take up the challenge.

God is inviting us on an out-of-the-box, off-the-map adventure. It's not safe out there around the edge of the map. But it's exhilarating, and in the end, it's good. If you stay the course, you'll always be glad you did. Eventually. God will always pull you through if you can stand the pull.



“It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.”

Bilbo Baggins to Frodo Baggins
(JRR Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*).

Are you ready to get swept off to only God-knows-where?

Part 1

12 Ways to Hear God ...



“So how do you get God to talk to you ???”

You don't. You can't. The fallacy is in asking the question. We can't get God to talk to us. We can't control or manipulate him. He just isn't going to play any game we try to set up. He just won't. I don't know why; he thinks he's God or something.

He talks to us because he wants to, not because we've jumped through some spiritual hoops and now he owes us.

The good news is we don't have to force him. He longs to talk to us. And the truth is, he already is.

So the question isn't, *How do we get God to talk to us?* The question is, *How do we hear what he's already saying?*

Although we can't control what he says, when or how often, or by what method he speaks, we can control whether or not we choose to hear. We can make our lives an environment where we'll hear him when he speaks.



Tuning-In to God's Frequency

In general, hearing God is a lot like tuning your radio. Personally, I listen to 91.9 FM, WGTS, one of our local Christian music stations here in the Washington, DC, area. I also listen to 107.7 FM, WWWT, for news.

Say my radio is set on 107.7, and I want to listen to some Christian music, not news. So I turn on my radio, and all I get is news. Then I begin to grumble against WGTS. *“Why don't they broadcast? Why can't I hear Christian music like everyone else can? I've been listening all day!”*

You'd probably say to me, *“You goof! You've got your radio set to the wrong station. Tune-in to 91.9.”* And you'd be right.

There's nothing wrong with WGTS; they've been broadcasting all day. I've just got my radio set to the wrong frequency. I'm not going to hear the Christian music station if my radio is set to the news station.

Duh! That's pretty obvious. None of us would really do that with radio stations, webinars, or Pandora. But we do it all the time with God. We think he's not speaking to us when in fact he's speaking all the time. We're just not tuned-in to his frequency.

So how do we tune-in to God's frequency? Our first 5 ways to hear God are ways to tune-in your spiritual radio to God's station, creating an environment in our lives where we can hear God.

1 Corporate Time

Spend time with God's people in God's house. Go to church.

If your family is spread out geographically, the holidays when you all together are very special. Even when filled with family conflicts and strife, that time of having all the adult children together is very special to the parents. They long for it. Whether you're the adult child or the parent, you know this is true.

God feels the same way. When his family comes together, even with all of their problems, it's a special time for him. He can't help but speak.

It may be surprising to some, but if you're trying to hear God, church is a great place to be. Go to church.

Private Time

In the Bible, "knowledge" means "experience." There's no such thing as knowing God without experiencing him. We can have phenomenal God-experiences corporately, at revivals and conferences and regular church meetings, but if we never experience God privately, then we'll never have the lover-close relationship with him that he longs to have with us.

If we're not intimate privately with God, if we're not that close, it's hard to hear his lover's whisper. The enemy tries to drown out God by constantly shouting at us. But God whispers, because he wants our focus, our attention, our intention, and most of all, our closeness.

So our next 4 ways to tune-in to God's frequency are things we can do privately. These are really great ways. I'm sure you can think of more.

2 Pray

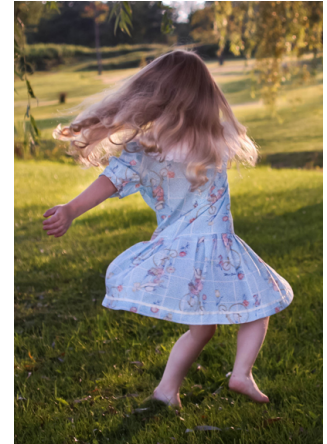
Say you had two estranged siblings who weren't speaking to each other. Then one of them, wanting relationship healing with the other, asked you how to go about it. What's the first thing you would say?

Probably something along the lines of, "Talk to them. Start the conversation." If you want someone to talk to you, start talking to them. People often speak back.

It's the same with God. If you want him to talk to you, start talking to him. He often speaks back. He longs to interact with us.

3 **Worship**

Put on your favorite worship music. (Personally, I recommend the Jesus Culture or Hillsong channels on Pandora). Sing and/or dance to him. Let yourself get lost in abandon in the music, focusing on Jesus. Psalm 22:3 says the Lord inhabits the praises of his people. God often speaks in worship. It's a wonderful way to get close to God.



4 **Read Your Bible**

It's God's love letter to us. It's really got it all: political intrigue, drama, history, poetry, wild adventures, personal letters, prophecies, promises, songs, and a lot of crazy stuff. And it's a living book. It comes alive when you read it and the Holy Spirit talks to you through it.



When I was in high school, I read my Bible before going to bed each night. It was a wonderful time of growth in my life. The Holy Spirit was constantly (and lovingly) showing me how my actions that day in high school didn't line up with the Word of God. He explained his word to me, and what it meant in my situation. I learned so much. I first learned to hear from God by reading my Bible.

5 **Read and Listen to Teachings**

There are tons of great books and great teachings out there. Read or listen to teachings you feel drawn to. Maybe that's the Holy Spirit because he wants to speak to you through that teaching or book.



Consistent Time

The catch is, tuning-in your spiritual radio needs to be even more than a regular activity. It needs to be a lifestyle. Whether it's corporate or private time, God's not into one-night stands. You can't say, "*Well, I read my Bible every day for a week and God didn't talk to me. That didn't work.*" Try it every day for a year.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with your whole heart." We'll never hear God if we're only listening half-heartedly. We need to commit.

The clock in my car tends to run slow, and every 3 to 4 weeks or so I have to catch it up a couple minutes. Our spiritual radios are like that. We're immersed in a culture that's intentionally trying to distract us from hearing God, and our fleshly nature needs no help getting distracted. So if we're not regularly tuning-in our spiritual radio to God's frequency, our tuner drifts, and pretty soon, although we're still hearing a broadcast loud and clear, we're not listening to God at all anymore.

6 Radio On – Faith

There's a couple things that can go wrong, even if your radio's set to the right station. First of all, it has to be turned on. The on button of our spiritual radio is called Faith. Just like trying to listen to a radio that's turned off, we can't hear God without faith.

"If God talks to me, then I'll believe in him." We often want proof first, and then we'll believe. But God (usually) refuses to work that way. Just like your radio operates on electricity, the Kingdom of God operates on faith. After we believe and make him Lord of our life, then we get the proof that he's real, by his presence and work in our lives (and often even in more tangible ways, like miracles).

If we do the above activities because we really want an environment in our lives where we can hear God, because we're longing to hear God and interact with him, then at some point or other, in some way, God will talk to us.

But if we do these only because we know we "should", so we don't feel guilty about our life, God may be talking but we're not listening. So we're not going to hear him because we're not seriously trying or even wanting to. We're just checking off a box so we feel good about ourselves. Our radio's off.

God can talk to us anyway, and sometimes he crashes in. But it's unpleasant, for us at least. When Saul (soon to be the Apostle Paul who wrote half the New Testament) was on the road to Damascus to persecute the church (see Acts 9), the radio on his horse wasn't even on. That's probably why, when God started broadcasting, the initial burst of static knocked him clean off his horse.

Hearing God goes much better if our radio is on and our faith is active.

7 Turn Up the Volume – Focus

There are other reasons why we might not hear the radio station's broadcast. Even if our radio's on and set to the right station, but it's on softly, other distractions in our environment can steal our attention away so we miss the broadcast. We often can't control the other noises in the environment, but we can turn up the volume on our radio.

So how do we turn up the volume to hear God's broadcast? What in the Kingdom of God is analogous to volume?

Focus. Way #7 to hear God is focusing on him even through the storms raging in our lives. We turn up the volume of our spiritual radio by clearing the distractions in our life so we can focus on God. Often, we can't control the circumstances in our lives, but we can choose what we focus on.

A great example of this is Peter walking on the water (see Matthew 14). When he took his focus off Jesus and focused on the wind and the waves instead, he began to sink. But while he was focusing on Jesus, even in the middle of the storm, the dude actually walked on the water! Go Peter!

When things explode in your life, it could be that out of God's great love for you and his longing to speak to you, he's giving you chance to focus on him instead of the storm. We don't get the chance to do that if he doesn't bring a storm. Fierce storms in our lives are often a sign that God wants to speak to us. The storm's not punishment or anything – it's just an opportunity to uber-focus on God so we hear what he has to say.

Get in the Broadcast Booth

It's hard to not hear the broadcast if you're in the broadcast booth with the DJ. These last 5 ways to hear God are ways to actually climb into the broadcast booth with him.

8 Baptism

This is a once in a lifetime, public statement that you belong to Jesus. He loves it and often speaks to you during it, either directly or through a word someone else gets for you.



Communion

9 Also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, it's a great way to hear God. Most churches offer communion during the service on a regular basis. You can also get some bread and wine (or grape juice) and do communion with your family, Christian friends, or by yourself. Family members usually have something to say over a meal, and God's no exception.



Solitude

10



Our constantly connected culture has completely lost this, but it's so important (and effective when trying to hear God). Unplug. Turn off your cell phone, so not even its vibration will distract you. Log out of email, or better, turn off the computer altogether. Close the door. Get away somewhere private, just you and God alone on the moon.

Fasting

11

This is another lost art in our culture today, but it's one of the most effective ways to get on the fast-track (ha-ha, pun intended) to hearing God. Fasting doesn't mean just not eating. It means taking the time you would've spent eating (and cooking and prepping) and instead spending that time with God.

You can actually do that with just about anything. Take the time you would've spent doing an activity (watching TV, surfing the Internet, Facebook, etc) and instead spend that time with the Lord.

In fact, not everyone should fast food (diabetics or pregnant women, for example), but there are plenty of other things you can fast. Ask the Holy Spirit. The first thought that pops into your head is probably him. Believe me, he's all over this one.

12

Accountability

Very often God speaks into our life through other people. So find a few godly people you trust and be voluntarily accountable to them. In the old days, this was called *confession*. James 5:16 says, “Confess your sins one to another.”



Without relationships with other Christians where they can speak into our life and we can speak into theirs, it's really easy to go careening down a rabbit hole and not even know it. Other people keep us balanced. We need other people. And, honestly, truth be told, other people need us.

And we need the relationships. Just hanging out and being in relationship with other Christians is tremendously healing and helpful to hearing God. They love us to life. And God so often speaks through them.



You don't need to tell everything to everyone, but you need to tell everything to someone. And God often speaks in that place of vulnerability with another.

So Have the Conversation

God is dying, literally, to talk to you. Jesus died to restore that relationship. Hearing God's not the hard part. Sometimes, like Shrek said to Princess Fiona about talking Donkey, “It's getting him to shut up that's the trick.” But, unlike Donkey, we really need to hear what God has to say.

Part 2

... And 3 Things to Do about It ...



Only the Beginning

Hearing from God is called *revelation*. And while extremely cool, it's only the beginning. There's a lot more to it. Hearing is just the first step. There's 3 more parts to correctly walking out what we've just heard from God.

The good news is, the environment we created in our lives to help us hear God, the 12 things we just talked about, they also help us navigate the 3 things we need to do about it.

1 Interpretation

Interpretation answers the question, “What’s it mean?” Without knowing the interpretation of our revelation, the revelation is useless.

Ezekiel got a pretty wild revelation from God that would’ve made the special effects team from the movie *The Mummy* proud. Check out the “Valley of Dry Bones” vision in Ezekiel 37:1-10. God shows Ezekiel a valley filled with dry bones and asks him if these bones can live. Ezekiel, after many long years of service to God, has learned not to offer his opinion about what is possible and what is not. So he punts back to God and says, “O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.” God has Ezekiel speak to the bones, telling them that they will live, and they do! They miraculously come together, and get covered by tendons, and flesh and skin, layer by layer, until a vast, living army is standing before Ezekiel.



So what’s it all mean? God himself gives the interpretation in verses 11-14. Israel is currently in bondage in Babylon, and thinks their nation is destroyed forever – they are like dry bones never to rise again. Against this backdrop, Ezekiel’s vision is a powerful statement of hope for the Israelites. God is saying he will restore their nation, no matter how hopeless it looks to them.

Interpretation makes it mean something.

Without interpretation, revelation is just cool special effects.

It's quite possible, and unfortunately very common, to get the revelation right and mess up the interpretation. This is like getting on the interstate at the right on-ramp but going the wrong direction. You just aren't going to get there from here.

So keep pressing into that place where you can hear God, that environment, that lifestyle, until he reveals what it means. And he will. He wants you to know.

2 Application Wisdom

The *application wisdom* answers the question, "What am I going to do about it?" The application is the wisdom of what to do with the information God has divinely provided. We can get the revelation and the interpretation right, but if we mess up the application wisdom, we're still heading in the wrong direction.

A good example is the story about the Apostle Paul going to Jerusalem in Acts 21:10-15. Paul is heading for Jerusalem, when the prophet Agabus comes to see him, takes Paul's belt and ties his own hands with it. Then he says, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "



Ok, so that's the revelation. We heard God. But what's it mean? Is it figurative or literal? Will Paul's ministry be bound or hampered, or will he actually be physically arrested? Based on previous revelations (see Acts 20:23), they correctly decide it is a warning that Paul himself will be physically arrested.

So we have the interpretation, which wasn't too difficult in this case. But what's the application wisdom? What do we do with this? The general consensus is this means Paul should not go to Jerusalem. Duh. This seems fairly obvious. So the brothers plead with Paul, even with tears, not to go.

But Paul has the correct application wisdom. He knows that while it is a warning from the Lord, it is not to prevent him from going to Jerusalem, but to prepare him for what will happen to him when he gets there, so he responds correctly and not in a way that dishonors the Lord he preaches.

You see the two possible but diametrically opposed application wisdoms? They agreed on the revelation and the interpretation, but over the application wisdom they were worlds apart. And the correct application wisdom wasn't the obvious one.

So stay in that place, the environment in your life where you can hear God, until he reveals the application wisdom. And he will. He wants you to know.

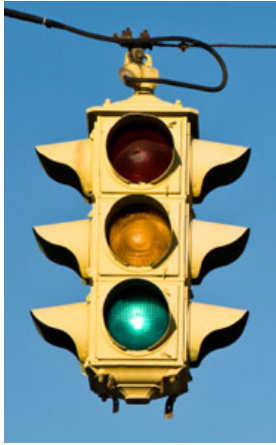
3 **Timing** People have a tendency to forget this part even when they nail the others. So we heard from God (revelation), we know what it means (interpretation), we know what to do about it (application wisdom), but do we know *when* to do it? Maybe the revelation is right on, and we have the correct interpretation and application wisdom, but it's for a year from now. Maybe it's for ten years from now.

David was anointed king at least 15 years before he began his rule (see 1 Samuel 16 & 2 Samuel 5:4). Joseph's dream about his brothers bowing down to him was given to him by God at least 18 years before it happened (see Genesis 37:2 & 41:46, 41:53). Abraham and Sarah were promised a son 25 years before it happened (see Genesis 12:2, 12:4, & 21:5).

Yes, it's important to correctly hear, interpret, and apply what God is saying. But it's equally important to get the timing right. Unfortunately, this is often ignored. For example, we might say, "My Pastor acknowledges the word I got is from God to the church, and he says that he knows the interpretation and the application wisdom – so why isn't he doing anything about it!?" Well, just cool your jets – it may be a good word, but it may not be for right now.



The timing is just as important as the other parts.



Say you're trying to make a left turn (without a traffic signal) onto a busy boulevard. We've all been there. We've been driving for years. We know how to execute a left turn flawlessly. But it's all in the timing, isn't it? Miss the timing, and it doesn't matter how perfect your left-turn execution is, you're in an accident.

The same is true with spiritual things. Keep praying and seeking the Lord, stay in that environment where you can hear God, until you have a peace in your heart about the timing. That's God's green light.

Search it Out

Proverbs 25:2 says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings." God reveals things in mysteries because he loves the partnership with us. He loves the journey of our seeking him while we search it out.



So you have a chance to be a king. God is giving you a chance to reveal in kingly glory by searching the matter out. Have fun and enjoy the hunt!

Part 3

... And 6 Ways to Know You're Not Crazy



The big error we tend to make is throwing out everything if somebody messes up one part. For example, just because somebody botches the application wisdom and ends up doing something really stupid doesn't mean the original revelation and the interpretation were wrong.

This error works in the other direction also. Sometimes we think that because we got this awesome revelation, we automatically have a lock on the other parts. Nothing could be further from the truth. God often gives others the interpretation, the application wisdom, and the timing. Because he made us all different parts of one body, each with different gifts, and it takes a plethora of giftings to hear God and act wisely. There are no Lone Rangers in the Kingdom of God.

So how do we know if we've made an error? How do we know we haven't fallen off the deep end? How do you know you're not crazy?

Here are 6 ways to stay grounded as we navigate this out-of-the-box process of hearing God.

Consistency with Scripture

1 Duh. The Bible is still the yard stick to which everything is measured. If it contradicts scripture, it's not God.

That doesn't mean there has to be an explicit example in scripture, however. John 20:30 says, "Jesus did many other things in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book."

In fact, the very last verse of John's gospel, John 21:25, says, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."



So the Bible is not the deluxe-anthology of the works of God. Our infinite God won't be limited by anything, not even the finite pages of his own book.

But nothing in any of the parts of hearing God can contradict scripture. God is nothing if not consistent. He will not contradict himself.

So if we "hear God" telling us to leave our spouse for that person at the office, for example, or to go ahead and cheat on our taxes, that's not God. He will never contradict his written word.

Ask Others You Trust

2 Proverbs 15:22 says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed." Usually, if we're right and the rest of the world is wrong, it's probably the other way around.

Listen for trends. While not always true, in general, if many unrelated people are independently telling us the same thing, we need to start paying attention. And don't just ask people you know are going to tell you what you want to hear. That's cheating. Ask people who you believe have the greatest wisdom and discernment, especially if you don't always agree with them.

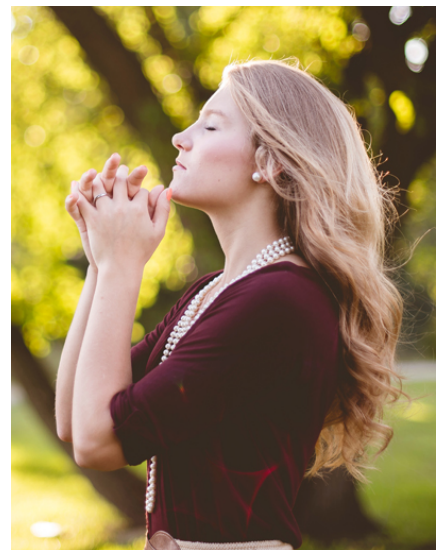
I'm not saying to listen to the majority. God's voice is often in the minority and the Kingdom of God is not a democracy. But if people you trust to discern the Holy Spirit well are all independently telling you essentially the same thing, then what they're saying needs to be at least considered.

Ask Your Pastor or Priest

3 Pastors and priests typically are filled with wisdom, and can greatly aid in deciding what practical steps to take in attempting to walk out the revelation of God in our lives. They do not have all the answers, but they are experts in pointing us in the right direction. And more often than not they have an anointing for wisdom, even if they don't understand the full revelation we got. So even if you think your pastor (or priest) doesn't get your experience, God may still be talking to you through him, revealing great wisdom about the application.

Pray, Pray, Pray

4 Every minute of every day, in one form or another, as part of your lifestyle. Prayer is an essential ingredient, if not *the* essential ingredient, for discerning what is God and what is not. It's easier for God to talk to us, or more correctly, it's easier for us to hear him, if we're already in a dialog with him. God wants to give us revelation, interpretation, application wisdom, and the timing. But we can't manipulate it out of him. Any communication comes best through relationship, and communication from God is no exception.



5 Humility

AKA, honesty within your own heart. The Bible says God rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6). So if you are honestly seeking the truth, honestly looking for God, honestly trying to hear what he's trying to tell you, won't God reward your search by letting you find Him? Won't he give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17)? Won't he fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9)?



Of course he will. He will protect you and guard you, his face will shine upon you, and he will not let you miss his will for your life.

But if we are seeking revelation, interpretation, application wisdom, and timing so we look spiritual, or to satisfy our own spiritual pride, or to validate our own insecurities, or to be accepted, and are living in rebellion to our church leaders because they're not giving us the platform we think we deserve and aspire to, or they don't agree with our predefined prejudices, then have no doubts we will go astray with the interpretation, application wisdom, and/or timing, until, if we do not repent, even our revelation will be corrupt and no longer from God. Yikes!

6 The Peace Test

Even if we can't explain it all or even understand it fully, when we've heard God correctly, there's a peace about it in our hearts. Do you have a peace in your heart about the action you think you hear God telling you to take? If not, I'd encourage you to sit on it a little longer to be sure.



Even when God calls me to do something way out of my comfort zone, like write a book, or go give a stranger a prophetic word, in my heart I have a peace about it. I know it's God.

Our hearts are easily deceived, so this test shouldn't be the only factor. But there's nothing wrong asking God, "Hey, if this crazy thing is you, give me a peace about doing it." And he usually does.

Conclusion

Hearing God and discerning what to do about it is a process, not an event.

God will prayerfully lead us through all the parts of hearing him, understanding it all, and walking it out. And God is such a God of grace – making an error, even a serious one, in any one of the parts does not invalidate the others. If your heart is truly to hear and follow him, he will give you the grace to make it happen. He is with you, and he wants it even more than you do.

So let me know how it goes for you. Was this book helpful? I would love to connect with you on my website at www.IdentityInWholeness.com.

God bless you on your journey to connect with him & hear his voice in your life.

Want to Go through this Book with Us?



Ready to live it instead of just read about it? Janet and I (Dave Wernli, the author) are leading 8 weekly group Zoom sessions to walk through this book. We will learn to hear God together. Are you in? Join here:

www.IdentityInWholeness.com/HearingGod



Enjoy the Journey - Love the Learning!