



Title: How to Hear from God: Practicing His Presence

Introduction

We spoke last week about footholds about what the World, Flesh and the Devil seek in our lives. Tonight, I want us to think about the DNA that God gave us – the Best Version that he created – the gap that exists between that and our fallen nature with rooms to be cleared out! And as we step into Saturday how do hear from God – for the DNA and for the areas that need cleaning!

So tonight I want to start with a simple question: How do we hear from God? We all long to hear His voice, right? But the challenge is, how do we distinguish His voice in the midst of the noise of everyday life? It's like trying to hear someone in a crowded room. It's difficult, unless you learn how to tune your ear to their voice.

So today, I want to share some powerful insights on hearing God, based on the wisdom of some incredible Christian leaders: Bill Johnson, Tim Keller, Jon Tyson, Rick Warren, Nicky Gumbel, A.W. Tozer, and Tyler Staton. Not only will we explore their thoughts, but I'll also give you practical exercises you can practice to help you start hearing God more clearly.

1. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit – Bill Johnson

"Royalty is my identity. Servanthood is my assignment. Intimacy with God is my life source."
"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

(Romans 8:16, NIV)

We'll start with Bill Johnson. He often speaks about the importance of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Bill reminds us that God is always speaking; the problem is, we're often too distracted to hear Him. The Holy Spirit is the key to hearing God's voice, and we need to cultivate sensitivity to His whispers.

Bill teaches that God speaks in the stillness, and to hear Him, we need to become quiet and receptive. God doesn't always speak loudly—often, it's a gentle nudge or an impression on our hearts.

It's in Your Nature to Hear God's Voice – Bill Johnson

Right now in this room, there's music, pictures, videos—all kinds of things. You just need the right receiver. In the old days with radios, you could slowly turn the dial across the AM band to pick up possible stations. But no matter how much you claim it, bind and loose, or prophesy, you will not pick up something on the FM band. The carnal man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.



It is already written into your nature as a born-again believer to hear and to know the voice of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9 says:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

This is often read at funerals, but it’s not really a funeral verse, because the very next verse says:

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.”

You are now part of a tribe where it is normal to receive things that eyes have never seen, ears have never heard, and hearts have never imagined. What could never be anticipated in all of history is now your responsibility.

Verse 12 says:

“We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.”

We haven’t received the spirit of the world. We’ve received the Spirit of God—so that we might know what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no heart has imagined.

The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God. He is the greatest search engine that ever existed, searching the biggest hard drive ever—the mind of God. He searches through the treasures, insights, imagination, and wisdom to give to you—so that you can be more complete in expressing a full gospel of power.

Psalms 139 says that God's thoughts about us outnumber the sands of the seashore. Every grain of sand—on every beach on the planet—represents thoughts for our welfare, not calamity. When the Holy Spirit searches, He is looking for one of those thoughts to make your day.

But verse 14 says:

“The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.”

Right now in this room, there are pictures, music, videos, sporting events—it's all here. You just have to have the right receiver. If you put a TV receiver in here, you could watch a movie or a sports event. It's actually here—just invisible until received.

In the same way, spiritual things are all around, but the world centred person cannot receive them. We don’t need a well-trained worldly discernment; we need a surrendered believer,



where the Spirit of God fills the individual and enables them to hear from God. It has been given to us to know the Kingdom. This is our assignment.

We are to know the mysteries of another world, and live from the reality of that world—to inspire a generation to hunger for what we carry. We’re not called to blend into the world system or to live just to be accepted. Our responsibility is to demonstrate the reality of a world that truly satisfies the deep cravings of the human heart.

Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice.” It was written into your nature as a born-again believer to hear and to know the voice of God. You may become anxious, fearful, bitter, and pile things onto your capacity to hear—but the ability to hear is still in you. It is part of your nature.

Sometimes, it’s simply stripping away all the distractions and getting to the purest level of who we are as followers of Jesus that reactivates the capacity to hear.

1 Corinthians 2:14 says:

“The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them.”

I pray this is a great strength and encouragement to you. My prayer for all of us is Psalm 20:4—

“May He grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans.”
May this be a season of rich fulfillment.

Bible Verse (original focus for this section):

Exercise #1: Practice Sensitivity to the Spirit

Here’s your first exercise: 5–10 minutes of quiet before your day starts. Sit in a place where you won’t be disturbed. Close your eyes and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Don’t rush. Don’t try to force anything. Simply listen.

As you sit there, remember: *It is in your nature, as a born-again believer, to hear His voice.* You’re not trying to earn something; you’re tuning the receiver. Pay attention to the thoughts, feelings, or impressions that come. With practice, you’ll get better at distinguishing His voice.

2. Hearing Through Scripture – Tim Keller

Next, we turn to Tim Keller. Keller emphasizes that God speaks through His Word, the Bible. He says, “The Bible is God’s primary way of communicating with us.” Hearing God’s voice begins with the Scriptures. When we engage with the Bible, we begin to understand who



God is and how He speaks. The more we read and meditate on His Word, the clearer His voice becomes.

Keller also reminds us that hearing God through the Bible doesn't just mean reading it casually; it involves meditation and reflection. God speaks through specific passages that apply directly to our current life situations.

Bible Verse:

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

(Psalm 119:105, NIV)

Exercise #2: Scripture Meditation

For this exercise, pick a short passage from Scripture—maybe something like Psalm 23, or Matthew 6:25–34. Read it slowly, and meditate on each verse. As you do, ask yourself, "God, what are You saying to me through this?" Sit with it for a while, reflecting on how it speaks to your current circumstances. Let God's Word wash over you and guide you.

3. Silence and Solitude – Jon Tyson

"The joy and satisfaction that come from being faithful to Christ will always be richer than the mere ease that comes from drifting along the cultural currents."

Now let's look at Jon Tyson, who talks about the importance of silence and solitude. Our world is so loud, isn't it? There are always things competing for our attention. But God doesn't always speak in the chaos—He often speaks in the quiet. Silence is a discipline, and in that silence, we can hear God more clearly.

Tyson teaches that in solitude, we make space for God. It's about learning to be still and create room for God to speak. Remember how Elijah heard God in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12)?

Bible Verse:

"Be still, and know that I am God."

(Psalm 46:10, NIV)

Exercise #3: Practice Silence

Take 10 minutes today to find a quiet place. No phones, no distractions—just you and God. Sit still. Close your eyes. Let your thoughts settle. Don't say anything—just listen. It might be hard at first, but over time, you'll notice that the quieter you get, the clearer God's voice becomes. Practice silence regularly, and you'll begin to hear Him more clearly.



4. Peace and Purpose – Rick Warren

"It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose."

Rick Warren emphasizes that God speaks with purpose. God's voice will often bring a sense of peace and direction. If you're uncertain about a decision or direction, God's peace will often confirm that you're on the right track. Warren also teaches that hearing from God is about discerning His purpose for your life.

When you hear from God, you won't just feel a random impulse or emotion; it will align with His plans and bring peace to your heart.

Bible Verse:

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."

(Colossians 3:15, NIV)

Exercise #4: Listening for Peace

If you have a decision you're facing, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to show you His will. As you pray, pay attention to whether you feel a deep peace or discomfort. If you feel peace about something, it's a good sign that it's in line with God's will. If you feel uneasy, it may be worth pausing and asking for more clarity.

5. Hearing God Through Community – Nicky Gumbel

"If God answers 'Yes', He is increasing your faith. If 'Wait', He is increasing your patience. If 'No', He has something better for you."

Nicky Gumbel reminds us that God speaks through community. We don't hear from God in isolation. Often, He speaks to us through the counsel of other believers. In a supportive Christian community, God can use others to confirm His voice in our lives.

Gumbel emphasizes that discernment is shared—God will often confirm what He's saying to you through a trusted friend, mentor, or church leader.

Bible Verse:



"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."

(Proverbs 11:14, ESV)

Exercise #5: Seeking Godly Counsel

If you're struggling to hear from God, reach out to someone you trust—a mentor, pastor, or a mature believer. Ask them to pray with you and provide wisdom. Often, God will confirm His direction for you through the advice and encouragement of others in the community.

6. Hunger for God – A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer teaches us that hearing from God is deeply connected to our hunger for Him. Tozer says, "The key to hearing from God is hunger for His presence." If we are truly hungry for God, He will satisfy that hunger by revealing Himself to us. The more we seek Him, the clearer His voice becomes.

God speaks to those who earnestly seek Him. It's not about perfection, but about a sincere desire to know Him more deeply.

Bible Verse:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

(Matthew 5:6, NIV)

Exercise #6: Cultivate a Hunger for God

Take a moment to reflect on your desire for God. Do you feel a deep longing to know Him more? If not, ask God to stir that hunger in you. You can do this through worship, prayer, and meditation on His Word. As you grow in your hunger for Him, you'll find that His voice becomes clearer and more frequent.

7. God's Whisper and Daily Discernment – Tyler Staton

Tyler Staton (Bridgetown Church) helps us see that hearing from God is not usually about dramatic moments, but about learning to recognize His whisper in the ordinary.

Tyler points out a powerful biblical pattern: God often "passes by" quietly—He's close, but easy to miss. Think of:

- Elijah on Mount Horeb: God was **not** in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the **gentle whisper** (1 Kings 19).



- The disciples on the road to Emmaus: Jesus walked with them for miles, teaching them, yet they didn't recognize Him until the breaking of bread (Luke 24).
- Jesus walking on water: Mark says, "He was about to pass by them" (Mark 6:48).

The lesson? **God's native language is a whisper.** A whisper is easy to ignore and hard to hear. We often look for the dramatic, but He is speaking in the ordinary.

Tyler also teaches that discernment is like what John Cassian called becoming a "**prudent money changer**"—you become so familiar with the real thing (God's voice) that you can spot a counterfeit quickly. The key is not only *what* the voice is saying, but *what it does to you* as you listen:

- God speaks to the **depths of your soul.**
- The enemy pulls on the **shallow places of your ego.**

Does what you're hearing draw you to humility, love, trust, and Christ-likeness? Or does it inflate your ego, pride, and self-importance?

Finally, Tyler gives us a very practical, daily rhythm to train our ears: the **Prayer of Examen**—reviewing your day with God so you learn to recognize His presence in hindsight, and then in real time.

Key Bible Verses:

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."
(John 10:27, NIV)

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"
(Luke 24:32, NIV)

"And after the fire came a gentle whisper."
(1 Kings 19:12, NIV)

Exercise #7: Practice the Daily Examen (Tyler Staton)

At the end of your day (or on your commute home), take 10–15 minutes to pray through these simple steps:

1. Review the day with God

Talk to God about your day as if you're telling a close friend what happened—from morning to evening. Just walk through it with Him.



2. **Where did I feel closest to God?**

Ask: “Lord, when today did I feel most aware of Your presence? When did my heart ‘burn within me’?”

3. **Where did I feel furthest from God?**

Ask: “Lord, when today did I feel distant from You? Anxious, angry, tempted, numb, or closed off?”

4. **Pray one simple request for tomorrow**

In light of what you’ve seen, pray one concrete prayer for the next 24 hours:

“Tomorrow, Lord, help me to...” (trust You there, listen there, respond differently there).

Conclusion: A Life of Listening

In conclusion, hearing from God isn’t just about having a one-time experience; it’s about building a lifestyle of listening. It’s about being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, grounding yourself in His Word, seeking silence, listening for peace, growing in community, cultivating a deep hunger for His presence—and, as Tyler Staton reminds us, learning to recognize His whisper through daily discernment and the practice of examen.

Hearing from God is a journey—one that takes time and practice. But it’s a journey that’s worth taking. The more you practice these exercises, the more you’ll find that His voice becomes clearer and more familiar.