

HEARING
GOD'S
Voice
TODAY

PRACTICAL HELP FOR LISTENING TO HIM
AND RECOGNIZING HIS VOICE

James W. Goll



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With an overflowing heart of thanksgiving, I wish to dedicate this book to two of my mentors in hearing God's voice. The Holy Spirit brought these two gifted men into my life, and they have made a dramatic impact on my destiny.

Years ago, Mahesh Chavda, of All Nations Church in Fort Mill, South Carolina, taught me some of his best-kept secrets about hearing God. I watched, I listened and I learned from a man who spent time with God.

May the Lord reward you, Mahesh.

I also wish to acknowledge and give honor to my “prophetic papa,” the late Bob Jones. This dear, gifted man took me under his wing in the early years of the prophetic movement. Bob was a “seer of seers” in modern Christianity.

Thank You, Lord, for Your gift to me in Bob Jones.

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Foreword

I don't know many people with more experience in prayer and intercession combined with years of prophetic ministry than James Goll. He is a general in the Kingdom, and I have been privileged to know him for close to twenty years. In his newest book, *Hearing God's Voice Today*, James goes back to the roots of his ministry and leads us on a journey into hearing the heart of the Lord.

Much like learning to walk as a baby, listening to the voice of God is a skill that can be developed through teaching, instruction and practice. You first learn to crawl, take a step and fall down, get back up and, with perseverance and determination, take some more steps. Eventually you find yourself running a race to win! As my friend James expresses it, you can take entry-level classes and graduate to higher levels of learning in the School of Hearing the Voice of God.

In spite of the increasing fascination and intrigue of many with the dark side of the supernatural with psychics and palm readers, James reminds us that there is a growing hunger for authentic, real spiritual encounters. Most people are simply unaware that God has designed a way of reaching through the

veil of eternity to communicate with His beloved people. But He has an answer, and this book is full of some of the Holy Spirit's tools to assist you.

Do you want to accomplish your destiny and have a clear understanding of your calling, anointing and gifting? Then look no further. James has done a masterful job of communicating in a simple, understandable way some of the practical steps to hearing God's voice today. He doesn't just honor the God of yesterday, but teaches us how to have a greater hunger to hear God's voice now.

The foundational revelation in this book will open the door to new dimensions of your relationship with God. It is a must-read for every Christian who longs to hear the Lord's voice and be transformed into the image of Christ in order to change the world.

Don't miss out! You can be part of the growing community of believers who hear the wonderful words of life and learn to share them with others.

Kris Vallotton, co-founder,
Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry;
author, *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty*,
Spirit Wars and many more;
leader, Bethel Church, Redding, California

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Deep gratitude goes to the past and present staff at Encounters Network, formerly called Ministry to the Nations, for their support in every project I undertake. My personal Prayer Shield faithfully intercedes, holding up my hands, for which I am thankful. I am forever grateful to my dear family, who stands by my side, cheering me on.

I also wish to thank my friend Quin Sherrer, who opened the door for the initial publishing of the original manuscript of this book with Servant Publications/Vine Books. Later, the book became a part of the Beginner's Guide series that was adopted into the Regal Books family. There, it went through two revisions, as well. Kathy Deering became my consistent mainstay as my writing and editing assistant through all of these transitions. Kathy has been a gift from God to my life, and thus to yours.

Eventually, the book was reenvisioned and reshaped by my longtime publishing friends at Baker/Chosen Books into this book you hold in your hands now, *Hearing God's Voice Today*. What started out as my shortest book for beginners has been flipped into a marvelous book full of Scriptures, stories and practical tools meant to help anyone at any point or time in their life in order to help them cultivate a closer relationship with God.

Introduction

God Still Speaks Today

God still speaks today! Are you listening? What are you hearing? Is your faith growing as a result of your interpersonal communion with God? While we agree that the canon of Scripture is closed, we also believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). What He did before, He continues to do. God has spoken, God speaks and God promises to continue to speak to us.

One of the ongoing activities of the Holy Spirit is listening and then communicating. The Holy Spirit speaks to us what He hears: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:13).

One of the most overlooked ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of listening, as He listens before He speaks. We need to take some lessons from the nature and character of the Holy Spirit, it seems to me!

Let’s take a quick look at this Old Testament verse quoted by Jesus in the New Testament:

Introduction

He *humbled* you and let you be *hungry*, and *fed* you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you *understand* that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3, emphasis added

The first half of this verse is essential to grasp in order to receive the promise stated in the second half. Look at these progressive steps: first comes humility; second comes hunger; third comes being fed fresh manna; and last, you are made to understand.

Spiritual hunger is what it is all about. Are you hungry for God and His ever-proceeding word? It is the hungry who are fed things they formerly knew nothing about. There are always new things to learn from God. There are always new things in God's heart He wants to share with His people.

Satan himself confronted Jesus, and Jesus overcame the devil by declaring the written Word of God. Matthew 4:4 states, "But He [Jesus] answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'""

You see, man lives by the ever-proceeding word of the Lord. God has spoken. God speaks and God will continue to speak in the future. This requires a listening relationship on man's part—one like the Holy Spirit has with the Father and the Son.

This is why I composed this practical and, I trust, inspirational book, *Hearing God's Voice Today*. I wanted to give you some of the practical yet personal tips that have been given to me.

Are you listening? God is still speaking today!

Blessings to you in Christ Jesus,
James W. Goll

I

As It Was in the Beginning

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

John 10:27

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

Revelation 3:20

Does God really speak today? Will He speak personally to me? If I listen, will He speak in such a manner that even *I* can understand? Thank God, the answer is yes! And, believe it or not (I expect you will believe it by the time you finish this book), God Himself wants all of us to hear what He is saying—more than any of us do!

Each of us was created with a deep inner longing to hear our Master’s voice. He did not make us to be mechanical robots

that just march around, doing preordained things. Our Father God created us to have fellowship with Him. It is our birthright to have an actual relationship with our God.

If our yearning for an intimate relationship with the lover of our souls is to be fulfilled, hearing His voice is a must. We cannot grow in our relationship with God unless we draw near to Him, trusting that He wants to speak to us personally.

Jesus came to restore humankind into the sweet fellowship that Adam and Eve first had known in the Garden. Sin cut them off from God, and they could no longer be close to God. Sin, in the same way today, cuts off each of us from God. But sin does not have the final word. Because of the cross and the shed blood of Christ Jesus, we can be restored to fellowship. One of the main reasons Jesus came was to enable us to walk in restored communion with God.

From my perspective, the greatest need in the Church today is for believers to clearly hear the voice of God for themselves. For us to reach our potential for an intimate relationship with God, we must be able to communicate with Him. Communication with God goes two ways: (1) talking to Him and (2) listening to Him when He talks to us. To have good communication, we must learn how and when to speak up and how to push the pause button in order to listen.

Most of us seem to do okay on the first one. But we have to take the time to learn the second one, the lost art of listening to Him expectantly.

It Takes Two

Fellowship is not a one-way road. It takes at least two, with both parties—in one another's presence—sharing attentively in some kind of communion. Our relationship with our heavenly Papa was never meant to be a long-distance telephone conversation.

“Available” is God’s middle name. He is just aching to spend time alone with each of us. He yearns to hear from us. He wants us to know how attentive He is.

A lot of things have changed over my forty-plus years in full-time vocational ministry. I was often away from my beloved family for days at a time, but I diligently attempted to keep in touch with what was happening at home. Sometimes I did a better job than at other times. Using wonderful modern technology—cell phones, email, texting and such—my late wife, Michal Ann, and I attempted to keep in touch. But phone calls and email messages did not compare to or replace being with my dear wife and family. Sometimes I just needed a hug! True love requires being together. The greatest key to hearing God’s voice is cultivating a love-based relationship.

Mark Virkler states it this way: “The voice of God, I’ve discovered, is Spirit-to-spirit communication, the Holy Spirit speaking directly to my spirit.”¹ True fellowship requires that both parties speak and listen, both sharing their hearts deeply with one another. This is the key to keeping all relationships fresh and alive. In an atmosphere of trust, we share our heart with someone else. Communion with God is much more than a ritual or “information time.” It is Spirit-to-spirit time!

Dutch Sheets said, “What topic could possibly deserve more of our attention than listening to God? When the source of all life and wisdom speaks, those who would be wise listen. The foolish either don’t care to or don’t learn how. The fruit of both is the same: destructive ignorance.”² We do not want to walk in the path of destruction but in the path of life. *Oh, God, deliver us from formulaic Christianity, and restore to us the pathways of constant dependency. Teach us the ways of life. Teach us to live transparent, shared lives.*

As for me, I want to hear His voice and intimately know Him, not just on a casual basis, but also on a daily, vibrant

one. Join me and thousands of others who are learning to hear the Master's beckoning voice by leaning our ears toward Him. Come with me now on a journey of beginning to hear (and love hearing) God's voice.

How It Began with Me

By the grace of God and the influence of my praying mother and church community, I grew up knowing that Jesus was my best friend. As a child, I would go on long walks in rural Missouri and just talk continuously to God. Often, while gazing into the skies, I would listen to see if He had anything to say back.

As the youngest child, with two older sisters, I always had wanted a brother. So Jesus became the brother I never had. Years passed, and I graduated from high school. But one thing remained the same: Jesus was right there with me as my close friend.

At college, I hungered for more of God. This quest led me into divine collision with a group of people with whom this straitlaced, rural Methodist kid did not have much in common—the Jesus People. When I got filled with the Holy Spirit and released into His gifts in the Jesus Movement, it was like my little black-and-white TV set turned into OmniVision overnight. I was absolutely transformed.

Suddenly, my life was very different. I had attempted to walk with the Lord all along, but now my life in the Spirit took a quantum leap. Somehow I had been able to detect His voice before, but in comparison to what I had previously experienced, now it was as if God had just given me a hearing aid. I really did not know what to do with all this stuff—impressions, mental snapshots, hunches, knowledge, short thoughts and full phrases—that were being released into my heart and

mind. But the Holy Spirit became an awesome tutor to me on this immense learning curve.

Still being quite young in this realm, I thought all believers lived this way. I thought that at last I was living the normal Christian life. (And I still think it is supposed to be that way!) I did not realize how many believers could not point to one single instance of hearing God's voice for themselves. Yet even with my heightened experience of God, I knew I needed more if I was to really advance in maturity in hearing and knowing His voice.

A Desire for Discernment

In the middle of my junior year at Central Missouri State University, this drive to know God led me to cry out for discernment. Late one night, I went to pray with another Jesus freak in an Episcopal church where a friend's father, an evangelical, Spirit-filled Episcopal priest, was the rector. I loved sneaking away when I could to spend time there in quiet reflection, as His sweet presence seemed to reside there. At the front of the sanctuary, on the wall close to the Communion rail, was a lighted candle. It was a symbolic representation of the light of God and presence of God.

While basking in the light of God's presence late that night, I began to vocalize my desire to hear and know the voice of God better. I proceeded logically, telling God:

Based on John 10:27, You have stated, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Now, I don't have any problem with the first part of the verse, "My sheep hear My voice." I know I have heard Your voice, because in Revelation 3:20, it says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and

opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” I have heard Your knock at the door of my heart, and I am one of Yours.

I continued with my line-by-line presentation:

So, Father, I accept by faith that I do hear Your voice. The second part of the verse, I don't have any problem with either. I know that You know me, and You know me better than I know myself. I don't have any problem with that. But it's the third part of that verse that I have a big problem with: "And they follow Me." So, God, I need to do more than just hear Your voice—because I also hear my voice, the voice of my flesh, the voices of others, the voice of the world and the voice of the enemy, Satan. Therefore, if I'm going to be able to follow You, I must do more than only hear Your voice. I need to be able to discern Your voice from the other voices.

That night, my friend and I knelt in prayer and simply said, “Lord, we ask that You enroll us in Your School of the Spirit. Teach us not only how to hear but also how to discern Your voice from the voice of the stranger and all the other voices that contend for our attention. Please do this so that we can truly follow You.”

Perhaps there is a book in heaven called the Book of Godly Desires in which God keeps records. All I know is that night, in November 1972, it seemed to me the Lord wrote down my name in His book. I enrolled in His School of the Spirit. Forty-plus years later, I am still taking various classes in that school. I don't think I have graduated from it yet. I want to be among those who are continually learning how to hear and discern His wonderful voice and how to follow Him.

How about you?

Lessons from the Original Couple

A good starting place in this School of the Spirit is the lessons we can learn from the original couple, Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis 3. After they tasted the forbidden fruit, God came looking for some fellowship with Adam and Eve—to walk and talk with them (as He does with you and me). In *The Coming Prophetic Revolution*, which was later revised to *The Lifestyle of a Prophet*, I wrote about what this must have been like:

Can you imagine, after Adam and Eve had known God, and He knew them, how quickly the spiritual climate changed? As a result of their disobedience, they experienced instantaneous barriers to their intimacy with Him. Walls shot up. After their sin they plucked off leaves from the nearest bush as quickly as they could and sewed coverings for themselves. They were hiding from the Lord their Creator for the first time in their lives.

But God, in His passionate pursuit, was still drawing close. A new reaction stirred within them as He drew near. Previously they had run toward the sound of His footsteps. Now they ran in the opposite direction. Before, their response had been for joy: “Oh, wow, it’s Father!” Now it was dread and fear: “Oh, no, it’s Father!” They were guilt-ridden. Never had they had such an emotional reaction or even such a thought before! They had not known condemnation or fear or shame. Now, as a result of their disobedience, they ran and hid from the voice of God.³

This pretty well sums up the difference between the joy of hearing God and obeying His voice and the dilemma of hearing God’s voice and *not* obeying. Big difference!

Here’s the good news: God is searching for us. He is drawing near—whether we want Him to or not! He is the glorious intruder. God does not give up on His beloved; He wants to walk and talk with you. But there can be some sad news also: Barriers to intimacy result when we choose to ignore what He

tells us. So let's listen up and learn. We need Him. We need to hear His voice. Let's cultivate a heart and life that responds when He speaks.

Lessons from the Pioneer

Many pilgrims of the faith have walked this path before us. We can look to them and learn from both their failures and their successes. They needed to hear God in their day, just as we do in ours. And God drew near to them in His loving grace, just as He will draw near to us.

With this in mind, let's look at the life of Abraham, who is called the father and pioneer of our faith. This man heard impossible promises from God, things that would require God's presence for their fulfillment. (By the way, a good test of whether we have heard God speak is that He rarely asks us to do something we can do in our own strength or by our own effort. God does not want to give us a mere word. He wants to create a constant need in us for more of Him!)

Abraham had to feel rather desperate and dependent, don't you think? God required everything of him. Through miraculous intervention, the promised son finally was born—in Abraham's old age. But when this precious son, Isaac, reached early manhood, God spoke to Abraham again and told him to take his son and offer him as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah (see Genesis 22:1–2). What a test! But Abraham obeyed, and what an outcome! At the zero hour, God supplied a ram that could be sacrificed in place of Isaac, and God was satisfied. This makes Abraham our finest example of believing God and obeying Him fully.

Have you ever had to learn the grace of yielding? Have you ever wanted to hold on too tightly to every little bit you have? I know I have. But as I see more of the revelation of God's

great love for me, I, like Abraham, eventually melt and yield to His Kingdom ways. So will you as you, too, learn to walk this pilgrimage of faith.

Abraham was called the friend of God (see 2 Chronicles 20:7). How did he become God's friend? Maybe by being with Him so much. Abraham became familiar with God's voice, and he learned to recognize even God's shadow when He was walking past.

I, too, want to be the friend of God. In fact, that is what I think hearing God's voice is all about.

We Have a Desperate Need

Many other people in the Bible are examples for us of how to maintain a personal relationship with God. As distinctly different as they are in personality and circumstances, they all show us a desperate face. Oh, to be like Moses, who talked to God face-to-face. (*But please, Lord, save me from forty years of wilderness wandering!*) If we want to hear God in the gentle breeze, as Elijah did, then we must be aware it might involve getting the moody blues and hiding out in a cave. If we want angelic encounters, like Daniel had, then we must get ready for the fire of God's furnace, as well. If we want to do the impossible, we must respond as simply as a young teenaged girl named Mary responded when she received the words of an angel and conceived a gift from God. (*But, God, that was a onetime deal, right?*) Or we must be like Paul, the amazing apostle, who recognized that the words he heard from the Lord were given to prepare him for the costs that lay ahead.

There are scores of others, of course. They may seem famous to us now, but Abraham, Moses, Mary and Paul were only ordinary people like us. Each person ever created has a need and a longing to hear our Creator's voice. Each person can talk to

God, and we can hear Him, too. Each person is created with the need to be continuously dependent on His voice. I think of the words of an old hymn: “I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; every hour I need Thee.”

We all need to hear and know the voice of our Father, the voice of the Son, Jesus, and that of the Holy Spirit, our Helper, Guide and Comforter. All three desire to speak to us. It is all about being in God's presence.

The veteran teacher and author Fuchsia Pickett wrote:

We must enter into unity with God's will for our lives through divine revelation. Christ wants our minds to think His thoughts and our wills to choose His will to be performed in and through us. [This happens as] we cultivate our relationship with Christ.⁴

Perhaps you, too, will add your name to the list of those who heard God speak and then became strong in faith, doing mighty exploits in His great name. Remember, “faith comes by hearing” (Romans 10:17 NKJV). Take time to listen for His voice with all your heart.

Are you ready to get started with a few lessons?

You Can Start Now

You don't have to wait any longer—classes start every day! School is in session at all times. You can enroll right now and be a student with me in the School of the Spirit, where we learn to hear the voice of God. If this echoes the cry of your heart, pray:

Dear Lord, I want to hear Your voice and learn Your ways. Be my teacher and guide. Enroll me in the School of the Spirit, and teach me to hear Your voice. Write down my name! I want to know You, to be a disciple of Christ Jesus and to have sweet communion with You. I want to hear

*You, have more faith and obey what You tell me. Help,
Lord, for Your servant wants to listen. Amen.*

THINK ABOUT IT

1. If we are satisfied and content with the status quo of our spiritual lives, we will never try very hard to hear God's voice. But when we are desperate for guidance or reassurance, we will hasten to consult Him. On a scale of 1 to 10, how desperate are you to hear God's voice? (The 1 represents complete satisfaction with your present life, and the 10 means you feel trapped and stuck and that you would do just about anything to be able to hear from Him.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Have you ever heard God's voice? What did it sound like? Were you aware at first that it was the voice of God?