

# HEARING GOD'S VOICE

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



## INTRODUCTION

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them,  
and they follow Me!” (Jn. 10:4)*

The tenth chapter of the Gospel of John describes the deep sacrificial relationship that Jesus has with His people. He pictures Himself metaphorically as the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep, and who then watches over them, protects them against the thieves and robbers, and leads them by His voice into the abundant life that He promises to all who will follow Him.

Our ability to follow Him, to experience the security of being in His will, and to enjoy the “life” of His presence depends upon hearing His voice. According to His own promise, His voice is always available to His sheep, those who have set their heart to know Him and obey His commandments and leadings. This booklet will describe some important facts and keys to knowing when and how He speaks to us.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Title</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Introduction . . . . .	2
Some Beginning Facts . . . . .	4
The Person Behind the Voice . . . . .	6
Sorting Out the Voices . . . . .	8
Living in His Greater Purposes . . . . .	14
We Have the Mind of Christ . . . . .	16
The Language of the Spirit . . . . .	18
Keys to Hearing the Lord . . . . .	20
Discerning the Voice of God . . . . .	24
Keeping a Prayer Journal . . . . .	26
Conclusion . . . . .	27

## SOME BEGINNING FACTS

Before looking at keys to hearing His voice, we need to address some important facts.

- 1. When we refer to “God’s voice” we are speaking about His “means of communication” with us.** The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways (i.e. dreams, visions, inner voice, impressions, burdens, prophecy, circumstances, etc). In this booklet we will mostly be dealing with discerning His voice within us, that is knowing by our own inner witness when He has spoken.
- 2. He is speaking all the time.** He is constantly guiding and leading us whether we discern His voice or not. Sometimes we are not listening. Sometimes we are not hearing Him say what we want Him to say. Sometimes He is speaking about things we don’t want to hear and dismiss what we have heard as not being from Him.

- 3. We are all at different levels of maturity regarding hearing His voice.** As children grow and mature they increase in their capacity to understand and communicate with their parents. Although the youngest believer call hear the voice of God, time and maturity will increase our ability and consistency to know when and how He speaks.
- 4. We should never claim infallibility in consistently hearing His voice.** Although there will be many times that we absolutely know He has spoken, we must rest on a foundational awareness that we still “know in part” and “see in a mirror dimly” ( 1 Cor. 13:9, 12).
- 5. God speaks to each of us somewhat uniquely depending on our gifts and callings.** Some receive more visions; some more deeply felt burdens. Some consistently sense the still small voice. Develop a sensitivity to how He speaks to you and avoid comparing yourself to others.

## THE PERSON BEHIND THE VOICE

*“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17).*

**There is a spirit of wisdom and revelation that allows us to know God and then flows from the knowledge of Him.** The Greek word for knowledge “epigknoisis” means an “exact knowledge, discernment and recognition.” It implies a participation of the knower in the object known, therefore requiring a process of growing in knowledge through relationship.

To grow in hearing the voice of God, we first must grow in our knowledge of the nature, character, motives and ways of God. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus declares that it is “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” If we do not know the nature and heart of God, we are likely to misjudge what we think He is saying. James and John, not knowing the Father’s heart, wanted to call down fire from heaven upon a village of Samaritans (Lk. 9:54).

**The best thing we can do to know His voice is to seek to know Him: His character, nature, attributes and ways.** Colossians 2:3 speaking about the Father and Christ says, "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" Our first quest must be to know God, above knowing our gifts, our place in the church, etc. As our revelation of His love, mercy, righteousness, goodness, justice, patience, etc. increases and our understanding of how these work together in His ways with individuals and the human race, the spirit of wisdom and revelation will increase within us.

How do we grow in this understanding? Through study of the Word of God and prayer. The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind since creation. It records God's actions, reactions, visitations, and prophetic messages. Jesus came as the living word of God, perfectly expressing His nature and person (Jn. 1:18). **Study God in His word; study the life and ministry of Jesus; apply your revelations of Him to your own personal life.** Cultivate a life of communion and prayer. The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowlege of God will increase.

## SORTING OUT THE VOICES

*“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers” (Jn. 10:5)*

A major key in hearing the voice of God is the ability to discern His voice from other voices. There are three main voices that sound within tis: God, Satan, and self. The best way to avoid the counterfeit is to know the genuine. **To know which of these three voices is speaking we must be familiar with the character, motive and fruit of the source speaking to us.**

### THE VOICE OF GOD

- 1. Character:** God is love, just, good, merciful, holy, all wise, unchanging, omnipotent, omniscient, patient, kind, sovereign, etc. (Gal. 5 :22, 23; Ps. 145; 103). His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, etc. (Isa. 9:6). When He speaks He speaks from the nature of who He is.



2. **Motive:** When God speaks it is always in the context of His good purposes for our life. He comes to give life abundantly (Jn. 10: 10). He desires to bring us into a first love relationship with Him (Mk. 12:30). He works to conform us to the image of His Son (II Cor. 3: 18). He comes to free us from bondages, fears, oppressions, etc. (Lk. 4: 18). He chastens and convicts us out of love (Heb. 12:6). He fills us with hope and faith in our future (Jer. 29: 11). He will carefully guide us into His will and truth (Jn 16: 13).
  
3. **Fruit:** James 3:17 gives us a capsulized sense of the fruit of God's voice. *"But the wisdom that is from above is first **pure** (no sense of selfish end), then **peaceable** (it is not contentious or judgmental), gentle (it respects others feelings), **willing to yield** (not forceful or coercive), **full of mercy** (contains compassion and sympathy for others) **and good fruits** (expresses qualities of God's character), **without partiality** (not biased or prejudiced, but fair and just) **and without hypocrisy** (nothing phony or pretentious)"* (James 3: 17).

## THE VOICE OF SATAN

- 1. His character:** Satan is called the “adversary” because he opposes everything purposed by God for our lives. He is the evil one, the spoiler, the prince of this world, the father of lies, the accuser of the brethren (I Tim. 5:14; Jn. 12:31; 8:44; Rev. 12:10).
- 2. His motive:** He works to destroy our relationship with God, undermine our faith and destroy our divine destiny. He does this through lies, deceit, bringing upon us pain, oppression and discouragement. He will use every possible circumstance to dishearten and depress us. He takes advantage of our failures and woundings, intensifying the burden and weight. He can also come as an angel of light enticing us through false revelations into pride and self exaltation (Jn. 10:10; I Pet. 5:8; Lk. 4:6; II Cor. 11:14).
- 3. The Fruit:** The fruit of listening to His lies is always negative. Sometimes it is quickly discernable and sometimes not. We can detect the

fruit of listening to him through the attitudes and thoughts that begin to prevail in our hearts and minds. Negativity, unbelief, confusion, bitterness, an oppressive spirit, independence, rebellion, a critical spirit, disillusionment, depression, etc. are all fruits of listening to his voice. **He primarily attacks our minds, seeking to set up stronghold areas in our lives.** A stronghold is a collection of thoughts in agreement with Satan. Our feelings are linked to the lies that become entrenched within us. He works upon our mind and emotions together seeking to capture and direct our heart.

**One of his key tactics is to target our self esteem.** He does this by making self esteem, as seen through the eyes of others, rather than God's esteem of us, our main concern. He especially attacks through condemnation and accusation, causing you to become self absorbed through focusing on your faults, failures and weaknesses. If he can bring us here, he can separate us from our sense of God's love, mercy and forgiveness. The fruit of listening to his voice is always spiritual weakness, self centeredness, and distance from God.

## SELF TALK

- 1. Character:** Self talk is the voice we hear within ourselves that comes out of our own carnal nature and uses the world as its reference point. **The voice of self talk echoes the teachings, values, and cultural standards of this world, rather than the truth, values and attitudes of the kingdom of God.** It expresses the needs and desires of the flesh instead of the purity, love and self control of the Spirit of God. Mark 7:20-23 states, *“And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’”*

Self talk is motivated by our need to be acceptable and accepted. It is deeply ingrained in us and reflects the values of our parents, personal experiences, culture, and peer group. It can be full of pride or failure based upon how we are evaluated by significant others. This inner voice often is shaped by past successes or failures. It must be discerned in contrast to the voice of God.

2. **The motive:** the motive is self evaluation and self direction, usually using the world and its standards as your reference point. Self talk emerges from the self and can vary in the kind of message it sends, but its message always is in reference to self. Whether it is self exalting or self demeaning, the message stays within the sphere of how I look and feel apart from God.
3. **The fruit:** the fruit will usually be a conviction or a course of action with self alone in mind. We may attempt to justify this course with a spiritual reasoning but before God we are thinking and moving independently. What we decide or do may not look bad but it is not God's way and not within His plan for us.

Satan often finds easy access to the desires of our carnal self life. Choosing an independent "self" direction always weakens our relationship with God and makes us more vulnerable to the enemy.

## LIVING IN HIS GREATER PURPOSES

To grow in our capacity to hear the voice of God, we must understand and embrace His greater purposes for our life. God is very much interested in our present situation and will speak to us about things that concern us in our practical daily life. However, if we are to know the reasons behind many of our circumstances and fellowship with Him on deeper levels, we must know and agree to His greater purposes for our life. Following are two critical areas:

- 1. Identity and Destiny:** Our identity is who God has made us to be. Our destiny is what we are called to do. **Identity is critical to securing our destiny.** If we see ourselves as primarily living our life and view God as serving us as we pursue our own agendas, we will misjudge much of His voice as well as miss our destiny in Him. We will experience confusion when things do not go the way we thought they should. We will misinterpret the dealings of God and the circumstances He uses. The Father sees us as crucified with Christ having a new life that is hidden with Christ in God (Rom. 6:6, Col. 3:3).

To stand on the higher ground of Christ's greater purposes you must repeatedly ask yourself the questions: "What part of my old selfish nature may be in the way of hearing His voice?" and "How can I see my situation from God's perspective?"

- 2. Process:** Children go through a long maturing process guided by their parents and society. They are affirmed in who they are but also encouraged to stretch and change. They are disciplined, trained, instructed and warned, all with their future maturity in mind. Our ultimate destiny is twofold: to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), and to spend eternity in a glorious relationship with Him (Rev. 19:7). Understanding this, what do you think is His overriding purpose in all of the conditions and situations of your life?

**Instead of "Lord speak to me!" our cry should often be "Lord show me your greater purpose in what I am going through."** When we can see this and combine it with a spirit of trust, knowing we have a loving Father guiding our life, peace will settle upon our spirit.

## WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?  
But we have the mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2: 16)*

The Greek word for “mind” here refers to “the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging, and determining.” What I Corinthians 2:16 is saying is that **believers have resident within their spirit, through the indwelling Holy Spirit access to how God sees and feels about things.** We have “the mind of Christ” available to us in every situation or circumstance!

Sometimes He will give us a specific word for a situation, but more often the Holy Spirit will convey a general sense or witness of how He sees or feels about something. The mature believer has grown in a knowledge of God’s word and His ways and does not need to hear the voice of God all the time. His internal witness of the mind of Christ gives him the sense of God’s feelings and wisdom for many of life’s circumstances.



## **Four keys to learning to walk in the mind of Christ:**

- 1. Learn to love, live and discern righteousness (Heb. 1:9).** Our sense of morality, character, godly principles, fairness, etc. comes from God and is a witness of the attributes of His personality.
- 2. Cultivate an attitude of humility before God and others.** (Phil. 2:8). Genuine humility increases our access to the mind and heart of God.
- 3. Cultivate a view of life and others through the Father's heart (Phil. 4:8).** God's heart is so much more loving, patient, merciful and wise than ours. We should step back from circumstances and ask ourselves, "How does God see and feel about this?"
- 4. See your natural circumstances in the light of His eternal plan and purpose.** Ask yourself, "How is this possibly working to fulfill His purpose with my life?"

## WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST

*“However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth . . . . He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16:13a, 14)*

The only reason we can hear the voice of God is because the Holy Spirit dwells within the spirit of every born again believer. He has been sent by the Father to guide us and lead us into all truth, to declare the things of God to us. **We must realize that relationship with God is the foundation and purpose of all of His communication with us.** He speaks to us because He loves us and wants relationship. We are not to come to Him as if He were a fortune cookie or an astrological chart but rather as our Father in heaven, a loving personal God desiring intimate fellowship with His children.

The language of the Holy Spirit is much greater than human language. In most cases it is simpler. He communicates God’s will through burdens,

senses, leadings, impressions, pictures, visions and dreams. When God speaks He can say more by one picture than by a thousand words. His communication carries His authority, taking root in our spirit in deep and life changing ways. Just one of His spiritual impressions is like a package containing volumes of truth and guidance. We unwrap the package through receiving, considering, and praying through what He has communicated.

**The language of the Spirit communicates to our spirit or heart first and then is understood by our mind.** It is opposite natural knowledge. The language of the Spirit often appears strange to the natural mind. The education system of our western culture strongly conditions us toward logical, linear, rational thinking. We are taught to require scientific and empirical validation. But the things of God must be spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14). He communicates in His way, and we must understand His language if we are to hear His voice.

As soon as we feel God has spoken to us we should seek to know the fullness of what He is communicating. He wants to show us what He is doing, why He is doing it, and give us His wisdom from His reference point.

## KEYS TO HEARING THE LORD

In this final section we will look at hearing and discerning the voice of the Lord in times of prayer. God can speak to us any time and under any circumstance that He chooses (circumstances, visions, dreams, prophetic words from others, godly counsel). It is not in the scope of this booklet to cover all of these means.

We want to focus on how to specifically hear Him in times of seeking His will or direction. The following steps will outline a course we can take in prayer to position ourselves to hear His voice.

- 1. Set a time and place where you can meet with Him.** The prophet Habakkuk states, *"I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me (Hab. 2: 1)."* Times of prayer cultivate intimacy with God. Although He can speak to us anytime through many means, the best thing we can do to hear Him concerning any matter is to get alone with Him in prayer.

- 2. Cultivate His presence through a time of worship.** It often takes time to bring our spirit to a place of sensitivity. Worship from the heart is one of the best ways to do this. Remember that the Lord usually speaks to our heart sooner than our head. As we begin prayer our minds are often in full gear, active with thoughts of the day or the problems around us. Worship and prayer brings our center more from our mind to our heart.
- 3. If you have definite problems or concerns affecting you, ask Him to speak to you about them (Phil 4:6). If not, invite Him to lead your prayer time and speak to you concerning anything He chooses.** We can often arrive at the mind of the Lord concerning a problem or situation through a process of “prayer consideration”. Put your situation before Him and ask Him specific questions about it, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you to conclusions on each issue. By arriving at a sense of His will on each related aspect of a situation, He will give us wisdom concerning His will on the overall issue (Jms. 1:5). If He does not speak

clearly in your prayer time look for Him to bring the answer later in other ways.

- 4. Still yourself enough to hear Him if He does speak (Ps. 46:10).** Once we come to a place of greater sensitivity to His presence, we seek to maintain it in quiet listening worship.
- 5. As we wait before Him, we should “watch” by using our spiritual senses to detect the manner in which He may communicate to us (Hab. 2:1).** Often our habit is to pray but not to “watch” for the answer. In Israel the watchman would station himself on the wall in order to see whatever would approach the city from the outside. We need to be attentive and use our spiritual vision when we pray.
- 6. He may communicate through a flow of thoughts, a spiritual burden, or through pictures in our mind (Hab. 1:1; 2:1).** It is important here to discern the real source of whatever thoughts, pictures or burdens that come to us.

- A. He may speak to us in a sense of inspiration or faith in scripture or a “flow of thoughts.”** We usually refer to this as receiving a “rhema word” from God. Rhema is the Greek word meaning a “specific utterance or saying.”
- B. He may communicate by allowing us to sense His burden or feelings concerning a matter or person.** Jesus often knew the heart and will of the Father through His sense of compassion (Mt. 9:35). God can reveal His will to us through a range of emotions from joy to grief or from compassion to peace. While waiting on the Lord you may experience a burden for someone you know or a conviction about some unkind behavior on your part, etc.
- C. He may speak to us through a vision or picture in our mind.** All of us have a mental screen where pictures can form. We can freely imagine country settings or mountain lakes through the imagination faculty of our mind. In prayer the Lord may drop a picture onto our mental screen that will communicate His will or perspective. It is our responsibility to discern whether the picture is from the Lord or just of our own imagination. If we believe it is from Him we should then ask Him for understanding concerning all He wishes to speak to us through it.

## DISCERNING THE VOICE OF GOD

The following are three important keys to discerning between our own thoughts and imaginations and the voice of the Lord.

- 1. God's voice communicated through our thoughts will contain a sense of spiritual wisdom and truth and will be "life producing". These thoughts will have a sense of Holy Spirit authorship and will be higher and wiser than our own thoughts (Jms 3:17; Jn 10:10; Isa. 55:9).** God communicates His mind through our thoughts but there is a qualitative difference between the two. We can discern His voice in our thoughts by this difference. His thoughts will come with a sense of life, truth and wisdom that is above that experienced by natural reasoning or thoughtful consideration. Prayerful consideration itself may bring us to the mind of Christ but this is different from the sense that God has spoken directly. In addition, when He speaks directly to us, His thoughts or impressions will seem spontaneous, as if they just dropped into our mind.



- 2. God's voice will never contradict His personality or character as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. Thoughts inspired by God will never be self serving, critical, judgmental, manipulative or sensual (Jms 3:14-16).**

Many thoughts can be eliminated as being from the Lord by nature of their character, source and motive. We must recognize these and identify their source: natural mind, self talk, demonic. God's thoughts will always express His personality and ways. All negative, judgmental, critical, selfish, angry, depressing, hopeless, etc. thoughts are not from God but come from self or Satan.

- 3. God's voice through a picture, burden or "flow of thoughts" will stand the test of time and be witnessed by other mature spiritually minded Christians (Eph. 5:21; Heb. 13:17).** We should be willing to submit any major life changing direction or decisions we believe we have received from God to other mature spiritual leaders. We should always be open to counsel and correction in our journey into the will of God.

## KEEPING A PRAYER JOURNAL

*“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry (Hab 2:2-3).”*

Keeping a prayer journal, especially of the more significant things you receive from the Lord, can be very helpful. Journaling helps “make it plain” in that writing something down causes us to remember and consider it. As time passes we easily forget parts of what we received. Writing it down while it is fresh gives us ongoing access to all that we felt was important in what we received from the Lord. Sometimes fulfillment may be weeks or even years off. **Having a record in writing gives us a reference point for our faith as we seek to apply what He has spoken.** We can record the highlights during prayer and add more details later so that our entire prayer time is not interrupted.

## CONCLUSION

Growing in our capacity to hear the voice of God is an exciting adventure. Our ear is usually never closer to Him than our heart, at least on a consistent basis. **Learning to hear His voice is dependent upon cultivating an intimacy with Him.** Relationship is what God is ultimately after and He talks to His friends the most often and the most intimately. Communion requires heartfelt pursuit and desire to know Him. He rewards the seeker. *“And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart (Jer. 29: 13).”* Make pursuit of Him a lifestyle, a commitment that strengthens you through the good seasons and the dry. He is always present and always for us. It is our constant pursuit that pleases Him and brings us the abiding communion that we seek.



# CAMPUS LOCATIONS

## PORTLAND CAMPUS

9200 NE Fremont St  
Portland, Oregon 97220

## TIGARD CAMPUS

12244 SW Garden Pl  
Tigard, Oregon 97223

## MILL PLAIN CAMPUS

14311 SE Mill Plain Boulevard  
Vancouver, Washington 98684

## EUGENE CAMPUS

89780 N Game Farm Road  
Eugene, Oregon 97408

## ONLINE SERVICE

[live.mannahouse.church](https://live.mannahouse.church)  
Youtube and Facebook

[WWW.MANNAHOUSE.CHURCH](http://WWW.MANNAHOUSE.CHURCH)

503.255.2224



SCAN FOR SUNDAY  
SERVICE TIMES

WRITTEN BY: TERRY EDWARDS

COPYRIGHT © 1999 CHRISTIAN EQUIPPERS INTERNATIONAL | [WWW.EQUIPPER.COM](http://WWW.EQUIPPER.COM)