Surprised by the Voice of God

How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions

by Jack Deere

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358 pages

Focus

- Spiritual
- Prophetic
- Physical
- Financial
- Leadership
- Relationships
- Communication
- Recreational
- Technology
- Business
- Concepts

Relevance

What You Will Learn

- Ways God has spoken in the past and reasons why He is speaking today.
- How you can hear God’s voice more often and more clearly.

Recommendation

Prayer is a conversation between God and man. Conversation requires effective listening as well as speaking. If you want to learn how to hear God's voice in your life, absorb what this book offers, test it against scripture, and apply it in your life.

This is the most impactful book I've ever read.

Abstract

Surprised by the Voice of God takes you to the Bible to discover the variety of creative, deeply personal ways that God still communicates with us today. You'll learn how God speaks with people apart from the Bible, though never in contradiction to it.

Jack Deere first describes the ways God revealed his thoughts to first-century Christians. Then he tells why God continues to speak to us using the same methods. Finally Deere tells how accurately God speaks through prophecies, dreams, visions, and other forms of divine communication.

With candor, sensitivity, and a profound understanding of Scripture, Deere identifies our hindrances to hearing the Holy Spirit and calls us beyond them to a more intimate relationship with God.

Filled with fascinating stories and personal accounts, Surprised by the Voice of God is for all who want to walk in the dynamic
scope of Christianity.

Take-Aways

- Many Christians today read the Bible and consciously do not expect its experiences to be repeated in their lives.
- Elijah was a man just like us (James 5:17).
- If we don’t hear God’s voice today in special ways, we assume He is not speaking in special ways anymore.
- If we don’t see miracles today, we assume He’s not doing miracles anymore.
- If we read the Bible making the two previous stated assumptions, two effects invariably result:
  1. We experience very little of God’s supernatural power. This leaves us with a moralistic version of Christianity that believes discipline is the key to the spiritual life – our discipline.
  2. We stop reading the Bible since we don’t relate to the experiences in our own lives. Or else we take it in regular doses, choking it down like medicine.
- There are a number of examples from the New Testament that show us that God still speaks today in ways other than the Bible – examples from the lives of Jesus, the apostles, and others.
- The birth of Jesus teaches us something very important about the voice of God. No one found the way to the baby Jesus without direct revelation from the Holy Spirit.
- Another major lesson in the birth of Jesus is how utterly humble God is.
  - The Light of the world entered Bethlehem in the dark of night.
  - His first home on earth was in the womb of a young woman. His second home was in a stable – crude, first-century stable filled with steaming piles of manure.
  - The Word of God became a speechless infant.
  - The One destined to clothe a heavenly army was wrapped in course strips of cloth.
  - The Bread of Life was laid in the feeding trough of an animal.
  - His highest purpose for the earth was birthed in a stable. His highest purposes are still being birthed in stables.
  - God is so humble He doesn’t mind the shame of the stable and the stigma of illegitimacy.
  - God’s humility is both a blessing and a very great problem for us. A blessing because His humility lead Him to fellowship with people as low as we are. A problem
Recap

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<th>The source of Jesus’ power</th>
<th>The divine pattern for ministry</th>
<th>Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and us</th>
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<th>The Holy Spirit reveals</th>
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because His humility leads Him to come to us in ways that make it easy for us to reject him.

- The birth of Jesus teaches us that the humble will be the first to hear the voice of God. **The quality of humility is essential for hearing the voice of God.**
- Even though Jesus was fully God, He took on the limitations of humanity in such a way that He did not heal, prophesy, or minister out of His own divine power.
- Scriptures are extremely clear that Jesus’ supernatural ability came from the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 1:1-5, 42:1-4; 61:3; John 5:30, 7:16, 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 24, 14:31).
- Jesus said His ministry was guided by what He saw His Father doing (John 5:10, 5:30, 7:16, 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 24, 14:31).
- Even the Holy Spirit conforms to this same pattern (John 16:13).
- **Hearing God in order to serve God is the New Testament pattern, even for the Spirit of God.**
- Jesus listened to God, and then as one empowered by the Holy Spirit, he spoke and acted. He passed this same method of ministry on to His apostles, promising them He would send the Holy Spirit to empower them.
- Paul’s prayer is that all Christians would come to recognize the inheritance that belongs to them through the presence of the Holy Spirit and know “His incomparably great power for us who believe.” (Ephesians 1:19)
- Right at the beginning of church history, we are being taught that the church will be built by supernatural revelation, not by cleverly devised human programs.
- Acts 1 and 2 depict a church birthed in revelation. These chapters teach us that apart from supernatural revelation the church will never fulfill the redemptive mission on the earth.
- With the exception of chapter 17, every chapter of Acts contains an example of, or reference to, supernatural revelatory communication from God to his servants.
- The Holy Spirit may speak directly to individuals, telling them where to go and what to do (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20), or He may speak to the whole church, telling them how to begin a new missionary enterprise (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit can hinder or forbid a missionary team when they unwittingly begin to leave the biographical will of God (Acts 16:6-7). On other occasions the Holy Spirit may compel a person to go to a certain destination (Acts 20:22). And the Holy Spirit may warn a faithful servant ahead of time about the suffering that will accompany the fulfillment of the
Jesus reveals

- Jesus appears to Stephen as he is being stoned to death (Acts 7:55) and to Paul on the Damascus road. The Lord also appeared to Ananias and gave him specific instructions for His ministry to Paul (Acts 9:10).
- Neither the book of Acts in particular, nor the scriptures in general, ever credits anyone’s salvation to his or her own disciplined study or pursuit of God. It is always God who takes the initiative and opens a person’s heart to believe.
- Angels were famous for engineering jail breaks (Acts 5:19-20, 12:7-11). They also appeared to various servants of the Lord with specific directions.
- The Biblical evidence is clear: Jesus heard His Father’s voice both within and outside of scriptures. So did the apostles and the first-century Christians.
- Luke taught his readers that neither they nor the early church could do without God speaking to them in diverse ways characteristic of the creativity of an omnipotent and omniscient God.
- Teaching, reminding, testifying, guiding, and showing are all normal functions of the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13)
- If all things are possible for him who believes, and Acts shows us some of these possibilities, shouldn’t we make the Christianity of Acts our goal? Better yet, why should we assume that Acts represents the apex of Christian experience? What if the Lord of history really has saved his best wine for the last days?
- The more is His ways that we can hear, the more we will hear.
- None of the people we trust are right all the time.
- All prophetic words outside the Bible are subject to the Bible’s authority.
- In scripture, false prophets are those who contradict the teaching and predictions of the true prophets and attempt to lead people away from God and His Word.
- Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:15 that the way to discern between false and true prophets is to examine the fruit of the prophet’s ministry.
- There has been a conspiracy against the supernatural by more recent writers of theology and church history. Historians (editors) have:
  1. Changed original texts recording testimonies of prophetic expressions to align with their own personal theology.
  2. Explained away prophetic ministry by claiming the...
original accounts were not true.
3. Ignored prophetic events entirely.
- Nobody really persecutes the church in America because it doesn’t threaten anyone. And it won’t until it becomes a praying church.
- Why should we expect God to speak to us when we spend so little time with Him?
- The presence of a Christian praying in the power of the Holy Spirit is always enough to render the occult inoperable.
- The One who heard the Father’s voice better than anyone said, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:10)
- The most common way the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus and speaks to us today is through the Bible.
- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- The secret of Joshua’s success was not found in the leadership skills or discipline, but in the first person singular pronoun “I.” God promised, “I will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- Joshua had one main responsibility in order to fully enjoy the promise of God’s commitment:
  - Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:7-8).
- Joshua had scribed much of the Book of Law, and knew it better than any other human. Why should he have to meditate on it day and night at this stage of his life?
- The answer is: There is a realm of obedience called careful to do everything written in it (Joshua 1:8).
- The greater the responsibility God offers to individuals in His kingdom, the greater their need to meditate on His Word.
- The only people who are successful at resisting the lust and greed and temptations of the world are the ones who treasure the Word of God in their hearts (Psalms 119:9 – 11). The only ones who will successfully persevere through
trials are those who love the Word of God. The psalmist said, “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction (Psalms 119:2). The same psalmist reminds us that, “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble” (Psalms 119:165). All these benefits and more are given by the Holy Spirit to the person who consistently visits the Word of God with a pure heart.

- Although it is rare to find a Christian who will deny the importance of the Bible, it is rather common to find Christians who will say they rarely experience the power of the scriptures to wash them, nourish them, keep them from sin, guide them and inflame their hearts with passion for the Son of God.
- A little Bible reading won’t really change you.
- Over several years, obeying the Bible, not simply reading it, produces Christ-like character. Quick fixes don’t exist in the spiritual realm any more than they do in the natural world.
- Our primary purpose for meditating on the Bible should be to meet Christ, to hear his voice, and to see him more clearly that we might love him more passionately.
- The message of the Bible is spiritually discerned. The apostle Paul claimed that apostolic doctrine did not come “in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:13).
- **Anyone who wants to hear God’s voice on a regular basis will have to become intimately acquainted with the written Word of God.**

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<th>When the Bible doesn’t work</th>
<th>A little bit doesn’t help</th>
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- The Bible teaches us that God often speaks to us in our experiences, that is, through the events and circumstances of our lives. God may use an illness, a tragedy, or some other kind of trial to get our attention and bring correction to us.
- During the time of Malachi, many of God’s people were experiencing economic disaster. Pests were devouring their crops, and their investments were failing. These severe conditions were a message from God to the people. They had been neglecting their obligation to tithe, so God withdrew his protection from their economic endeavors (Malachi 3:6-12).
- The prophet Joel observed a severe invasion of locusts. Joel saw God saying two things to the people through the locusts. First, he saw the locust invasion as the judgment of God on a drunken, pleasure-seeking people who had turned away from God (Joel 1:5). He called the leaders of
Recap

the people to repent (Joel 1:13-14). Second, he saw an even more terrifying message in the locust invasion. He saw the locusts representing an army and the cataclysmic judgment of the last days (Joel 2:1)

- Assuming that negative events are just simply a part of life, some of us grit our teeth and face our trials with a stoic resolve. As a result, some of us never learn what God wants to teach us in hard times.
- Others of us seem to assume that every negative circumstance, every obstacle in our path, is a result of Satan’s personal opposition to our endeavors. This assumption can keep us from hearing God.
- Many trials in our lives are prolonged because we fail to hear what God is saying to us in the trial.
- When we find our attention being drawn to a specific circumstance or event, we should become alert to the possibility that God may be speaking to us through it.
- God provides us with encounters daily that serve as windows for our souls to catch a glimpse of eternity and hear his voice.
- Although the voice of God runs through all experiences, most of us have diligently trained ourselves to ignore his voice and get on with the business of life.
- Ken Gire has written a book called *Windows of the Soul* that teaches us how to listen to the voice of God in the experiences of our every day humdrum lives.
- Miracles are special events that always point beyond themselves to something greater.
- Miracles also speak to us of the character of God, of his power, compassion, and mercy.
- God uses experience to correct wrong interpretations of the Bible and bad attitudes toward people. In Acts 10 he corrected Peter, in Acts 11 he used Peter’s report of his experience to correct the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and in Acts 15 he used Peter’s report along with the experience of Paul and Barnabas.
- The apostles do not share the modern Christian’s fear of experience. Paul explicitly stated that Jesus had called him to witness “of what you have seen and heard” and of “what I will show you” (Acts 22:15; 26:16). John began his first letter by claiming to write about what ‘we have heard,” what “we have seen with our eyes,” and what “our hands have touched” (1 John 1:1). They never seemed to think much of doctrine that was not supported by their experience.
- There are cases where our interpretation and application can be wrong. In these situations, our feelings and our
experience will pass through a faulty filter. An improperly working filter can hurt us in two ways. It may let poison through, or it may keep out the antidote that would neutralize the poison already in our souls. In the later case, our wrong interpretation of the Bible may actually lead us to ignore something God is saying to us through our experience.

- When analyzing bad filters, it’s important to realize that bad interpretations and applications may be due to flaws in our rules of interpretation.
- The Christian who makes acquiring knowledge of the Bible the key to life will be more concerned to give a good explanation of humility than to actually participate in it.
- Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. (1 Corinthians 8:1)
- The Holy Spirit became the apostles’ counselor (John 14:16). Jesus called this counselor the Spirit of Truth because he would perform the following five ministries:
  1. He “will teach you all things” (John 14:26)
  2. He “will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26)
  3. He “will testify about me” (John 15:26)
  4. He “will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13)
  5. He “will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13)

- The key that unlocks the power of the scriptures is a Person.
- “Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this” (2 Timothy 2:7). The first condition for understanding and applying scripture is to reflect, consider, and meditate on the scriptures. The second and indispensable condition is to come before God in humility, acknowledging our foolishness and ask him for wisdom to understand and apply the scriptures. “Those who ask for wisdom in this way will never be turned down.” (Proverbs 2:1-10; James 1:5-8)
- The Holy Spirit is the only Person powerful enough to break through the darkness of the human heart with a conviction of sin which leads to repentance (John 16:8).
- Hearing the audible voice was not a pleasant experience – it terrified the Israelites. But God wanted to terrify them in order to instill a godly fear in them (Exodus 20:18-20; Deuteronomy 4:36; 5:23-29).
- The clearer the revelation, the harder the task.
- A divine impression comes to us from the Holy Spirit, while intuition arises from within our human spirit.
• Sometimes God has to remove our confidence in our intelligence before He can talk with us.
• If we learn to discern the voice of God in our feelings, minds, and bodies, we will become better servants of Christ.
• Only those who are willing to try and fail will ever become proficient at understanding which impressions come from God and which arise merely from their own soul.
• There is always the temptation to hear God for other people instead of hearing Him for ourselves.
• Anyone who becomes skilled at hearing God’s voice will have paid the price of appearing and feeling foolish many times (Hebrews 5:14).
• In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy (Acts 2:16-18).
• We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith (Romans 12:6).
• We'll never be able to recognize prophets if we make the mistake of judging prophetic ministry by the package in which it comes.
• God holds each one of us accountable to hear His voice for ourselves and to obey it.
• When a prophet feels he or she has a directive word for the whole body, that word should be given first to the leadership of the body. Then, with the leadership’s permission and blessing that word may be shared with the body.
• Credibility and authority begins with the calling of the Lord Jesus.
• The first rule regarding revelation is: Don’t assume that just because you received a revelation that you have permission to share it.
• There is a divine timing for the release of every genuine revelation from God.
• The second rule is: Learn to distinguish between the revelation, its interpretation, and its application. The Bible will always be true, but my interpretations – however well-
researched – and my application – however well-meaning – may contain a mixture of truth and error.

- The third rule is: Always give prophetic words with humility.
- Anytime you use the Lord’s name in order to enhance your authority, you are misusing the Lord’s name.
- The fourth rule is: Once you have delivered the prophetic message, your job is over – except to pray. If your advice is not taken, you shouldn’t feel rejected or unesteemed.
- Most of the time negative impressions should never be shared with anyone except the person about whom you had the impression. And then, you should only share a negative impression if you have permission from the Lord.
- Why might the Lord give you a negative impression if you aren’t to share it? In order to prompt you to pray for the person.
- Our goal is not to be awesome in ministry, but to lighten another’s burdens through our love (Galatians 6:1-2).
- All Christians are susceptible to specialized traps.
- Never trust a negative impression about someone with whom you are angry or jealous. Anger and jealousy can lead to great deception (1 Samuel 10:10, 18:10-11).
- Prophetic people are especially susceptible to rejection. The greater the gifting, the greater the rejection that can attack.
- Good prophets have never been liked by the orthodox religious leadership (Matthew 5:11-12).
- People-pleasing is a killer for all ministry (1 Kings 22:6-28).
- Prophecy is meant to testify to the awesomeness of Jesus, not to the prophetic ministry (Revelation 19:10).
- Sometimes a prophetic person has a hard time admitting a mistake because he or she thinks it would ruin their credibility.
- Materialism and money have always been a problem in prophetic ministry (Micah 3:5).
- Public exposure of a believer’s sin is reserved for extreme cases.
- Naming sins takes no gift at all.
- Remember, the goal is not to appear as an awesome prophet. The goal is to please God and help His people.
- Once permission or encouragement is given for any spiritual activity, the natural human tendency will be to abuse that permission.
- The only group in the Bible that seems to confine the voice of God to the Bible is a group that never heard His voice (John 5:37).
- The more we love God, the more we will risk for Him.
Recap

- Humility is the pathway to intimacy with God.
- The path of love and humility doesn’t offer a guarantee against mistakes unless you are perfect in love and humility.
- Perhaps God doesn’t share our concern to avoid pain. Perhaps He lets the prophetic ministry remain imperfect so He can be the answer to our pain.
- If we are ever going to hear all that God wants to say to us, we must adjust to His ways of speaking.
- If God speaks to you in dreams, then it is a good idea to keep a tablet or a recorder near your bed.
- If you wake up in the middle of the night at the conclusion of a dream, do not go back to sleep before you record it. The fact that you woke up may mean that the dream is important.
- One benefit of symbolism in our dreams is that it causes us to depend on God for the illumination of the dream. Symbolism in our dreams also lets us know that we didn’t make up the dream out of some conscious opinion that we hold.
- Another benefit of symbolism in dreams is that it often reveals the perspective of God.
- Also remember the way you felt in the dream.
- Dreams are not given to enhance our stature in the church or give us control over others.
- Why doesn’t God speak to me like that? The answer may be as simple as James 4:2 – “You do not have because you do not ask.”
- Anyone who sincerely asks will eventually hear the voice of God (James 1:5-8).
- God has already spoken to most of us – “For God does speak – though man may not perceive it” (Job 33:14).
- Why would God speak to you? Because you’re his blood-bought child, and if He loved you enough to die for you, don’t you think He loves you enough to talk to you?
- Follow Paul’s example and pray to feel the affection of God resting on your heart (Ephesians 3:14-19).
- The most powerful hindrance to hearing God’s voice is thinking too mush of ourselves.
- Pride separates us from one another and from God. C.S. Lewis wrote, “A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”
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- The worst form of pride is religious pride. Religious pride is not only the *attitude* of thinking we are superior to other people, but also the *belief* that God thinks we are superior.
- Some people seldom discern the voice of God accurately because they are proud of their ability to hear God’s voice.
- It is unlikely that we will receive an uninterrupted stream of messages from God. Paul said it was common for him to be “perplexed, but not in despair” (2 Corinthians 4:8). He also said that “we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9)
- Some don’t hear the voice of God very well because they have overwhelming confidence in their religious traditions. The problem with adherence to religious traditions is we don’t recognize it in ourselves.
- Many Christians agree on the fundamentals of the faith, but are so confident that in the debatable areas their interpretation is the correct one that they separate themselves from those who differ with them.
- We do not progress in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ by intellectual prowess. We progress by becoming like children.
- None of God’s revelation, not even the Bible, can be significantly understood apart from the revealing ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- It is the heart that is the key to understanding God and his Word.
- All revelation can be misused. Even the Bible can be significantly misused. But this is not sufficient excuse for discarding the Bible.
- Any time we say, “The Bible says . . .” we run the risk of usurping God’s authority if our interpretation or application of the Bible is wrong.
- When someone thinks they have mastered the Bible, or mastered it relative to others in their circle, they inevitably become corrupted through the pride of knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1-2, Luke 11:52)).
- When we read the Bible morning after morning but don’t allow God to search our hearts with his Word, we are practicing magic.
- There is something wrong with our relationship with God when we see, hear, and feel nothing from Him, and yet leave our “time with Him” feeling satisfied. That’s not characteristic of any meaningful relationship.
- Never be content with any habitual religious activity where you rarely experience the presence of God.
- Seek the Lord until He comes (Hosea 10:12)
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<th>Fear of looking foolish</th>
<th>Trying to hear God’s voice will probably make you look and feel foolish.</th>
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<td>Fear of intimacy</td>
<td>“the prophet is considered a fool” (Hosea 9:7).</td>
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<td>Who hears His voice?</td>
<td>The apostles were made to look like “fools for Christ” in the world’s eyes (1 Corinthians 4:10).</td>
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<td>Availability</td>
<td>The ones with whom we are intimate are the ones we love the most, and they are the ones who hurt us the most.</td>
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<td>Fear of intimacy will always find a substitute suitable for your own individual personality. Fear of intimacy with God may cause us to seek a substitute – in other words take the place of God in our lives.</td>
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<td>Among all of our friends, no one hurts us like God. But He would do it for our benefit (Hebrews 12:10).</td>
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<td><strong>There are three essential characteristics for hearing the voice of God: availability, willingness, and humility.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>If you study the life of Jesus, one of the first things that will impress you is his unreserved availability for God. He only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19).</td>
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<td>Availability is one of the primary characteristics of friendship. Friends are available to their friends.</td>
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<td>The deeper the friendship, the greater the availability.</td>
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<td>If we want a deep friendship with God, it is important to cultivate a state of mind where we view all our time as God’s time, a state of mind where we are totally available to Him. It is necessary because God speaks to us at the most inconvenient times.</td>
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<td>When Jesus first called his apostles, He made it clear that their first task was not ministry for Him, but rather availability to Him (Mark 3:13-15).</td>
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<td>If you are available to God, He will be available to you (Habakkuk 2:1, James 4:8).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness</td>
<td>“Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:10).</td>
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<td>“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is from God, or whether I speak from myself.” (John 7:16-17).</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
<td>“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30).</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
<td>God will speak to us because He knows we need His voice to obey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>The same chapter of Numbers that proclaims Moses the greatest person of revelation also says he was the most humble man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3). Humility and the ability to hear God’s voice go hand in hand.</td>
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</table>
• Definition of humility: “You were once small in your own eyes...” (1 Samuel 15:17).
• Humility is a profound confidence in the mercy of God rather than in man’s intentions or efforts (Romans 9:15-16).
• A truly humble person knows that no matter how great their abilities or their character, they can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:6).
• Another characteristic of humble people is that they are willing to associate with and serve people of lower position than themselves (Romans 12:10, Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:3-4).
• God is intimate with the humble, but He keeps the arrogant at a distance. “Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar” (Psalms 138:6).
• Both the Lord and the apostles repeatedly emphasized the theme that God exalts the humble but opposes the proud (Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:14, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).
• If we make ourselves available to God, are willing to do whatever He tells us, and set our hearts to pursue humility, He will speak to us.
• Behind many of our questions about God and His ways lies the hope that the answer to something so profound may be in some simple, mechanical formula – a subject we could master and even control for our benefit.
• All private revelation in any form ought to be checked against the Bible.
• God sometimes leads people to do things that make no sense to their friends (Acts 21:10-12, 20:22-23).
• When we are trying to discern whether the voice speaking to us is the Lord, we are not looking for advice in the natural. We are trying to judge, not by our eyes or our ears, but by the Spirit of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2-4).
• God expects us to learn to recognize His voice (John 10:3-4), therefore He will hold us accountable, not our advisors, accountable for hearing His words (1 Kings 13:1-32).
• God’s voice has a consistent character. Observe how He speaks to the woman at the well (John 4:7), to the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16), or to His disciples on any number of occasions. The voice of Jesus does not nag or whine or argue. It is calm, quiet, and confident. It is not mean or condemning.
• When Satan speaks to us about our sins, he makes us feel worthless and condemned. He nags and whines. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins, He brings hope...
Recap

- People frequently say that the major test of a prophet is whether his or her predictions come true. This is not necessarily the best test, because many prophecies, if not the majority of them, contain a contingent element (Jeremiah 18:7-10).
- When a prophecy fails, there are at least three possibilities.
  1. The Lord may not have spoken the prediction.
  2. The Lord may have spoken, but the human messenger may have misunderstood the timing of the event or misunderstood God’s voice in some other way.
  3. It is possible that God has spoken and that the messenger has understood His voice accurately, but a response on the part of others has kept it from being fulfilled.
- In the case of prophetic words to which no time limit is attached, it is hard for the fulfillment test to be applied in a practical way.
- Jesus did not emphasize fulfillment as a test to discern false prophets and true prophets. Jesus said, “By their fruit you will know them . . . A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:16, 18).
- Having the Bible and understanding the Bible are two different things.
- Frequently when God speaks to us, the content of His message will be different, or perhaps even opposite, of our thoughts or our ways.
- God’s voice is not only different from our voice, but He frequently comes to us in ways that make it easy for us to reject Him. He comes to us as a baby in a stable. He comes to us in a shadowy dream. He only lets us prophesy in part and know in part (1 Corinthians 13:9).
- God comes to us like this because he wants a relationship with us.
- Real friendships can’t be forced. They must be chosen, and then pursued and purged of ulterior motives.
- It is wrong to come to Jesus initially for what He can do for us.
- God gives us opportunities to demonstrate our real desire for Jesus by our attentiveness to His voice.
- God makes it easy for us to reject Him because He wants us to choose Him for Himself alone.
- Distraction makes us oblivious to the presence of the Lord.
- Being distracted from the Lord causes us to focus on our service, which then becomes the standard by which we judge the Lord’s servants. See the story of Martha and...
Friends know friends


- Going to church, fellowshipping with other Christians, serving God in religious work can all be done outside the presence of God.
- Friendship with God has always been the key to recognizing His voice. We recognize the voices of our friends.
- Jesus said to His disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).
- Many Christians don’t want only Jesus. We want Jesus and something else. We want Jesus and a good marriage. Jesus and obedient children. Jesus and a successful career. Jesus and a nice home. Jesus and good friends. None of these desires are wrong. It’s just easy to see Jesus as the means for obtaining these things.
- Whatever hinders a friendship with God hinders our ability to hear and recognize His voice.
- Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21). Jesus promises his friends not simply a revelation of truth, but a revelation about Himself.

About The Author(s)

Jack Deere is a former professor at the Dallas Seminary and also a former member of The Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

Jack is currently the senior pastor of Wellspring Church in North Richland Hills, Texas, a church he started in the spring of 2004. The mission of the church is threefold: to help people cultivate an intimate friendship with Jesus; to help people discover and effectively use their spiritual gifts in significant ways in the church; and having learned how to use these gifts effectively in the church, then to use their gifts in the market place where they spend the majority of their time.

For more information: http://jackdeere.com/