HOW TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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INTRODUCTION

My wife and I are close. She knows me better than anyone else. We have been married for four years, and I’m excited for all the years to come. We serve God together. I love it! She has a Small Group that meets in our house. It’s a women’s group, so I try not to attend because I look funny in a wig. I stay in our bedroom that shares a wall with the living room where the group is held. She has roughly 15 people in the room with her, and I can hear some muffled talking from the bedroom, but whose voice, I don’t know. Then, my wife talks, and I know it’s her. It isn’t because of how loud she talks or the fact that she leads the group. It is because I have spent time getting to know my wife. It is through my intimate relationship with her that I can distinguish her voice from the others. I know her so well, I recognize the types of things she says and not her voice alone. I notice the things she would says to me but wouldn’t to others. I see the words she uses and even misuses. That is closeness. That takes time.

Pastor Jason and I have written this book. We believe God speaks, and we have outlined here a couple of ways to hear His voice. Now, let me clarify; there are no shortcuts to intimacy with God. It takes time. It requires communication. I can distinguish my wife’s voice from the others because of my closeness with her. It’s the same with God. If you want to hear Him clearly, cultivate a relationship with Him that encourages deep affection.

If you don’t already have that closeness, pray. Read the Bible, study it too, and yes, there’s a difference. I realize those things take time. They are also forms of communication. And yes, I just said that’s what it takes.

We believe that you are taking steps in the right direction and hope this book encourages your walk with Jesus. He is life, and knowing Him is what life is all about. As Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8 ESV,

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.
CHAPTER 1: THE ONE MESSAGE GOD IS SAYING TO EVERYONE

THE FACT THAT YOU ARE READING THIS RIGHT NOW SHOWS THAT YOU WANT TO KNOW AND HEAR GOD’S VOICE.

In fact, I believe that to know and hear God’s voice is the pursuit of our hearts even before we come to know Jesus.

We all have these inescapable questions of life:
- What is the purpose of my life?
- What does God want from me?
- Is there a God?
- Why do bad things happen when I seem to be doing good?
- What happens after I die?
- What is God saying, or is He talking at all?

*The truth is that God speaks and is speaking to His creation.*

So over the next few pages, we are going to encounter the God who loves us, has plans for us, and is speaking to us.

But how do we hear His voice?

We will get to that. But first, I want to tell you that there is one message, one thing that God is saying to every single person around the entire world. He has a message for everyone. Jesus explained it in a section of the Bible in a book called John:

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” -John 10:1-5 NIV
There is a universal message going out from the throne of God to all the people groups of the earth. Everyone ever created has this God-shaped hole in their life. We are looking for the answers to those inescapable questions. In this section of the Bible, Jesus is telling a parable of sorts but speaking truth through it. He is saying that there is only one way into His presence. There is only one God. He has a Son, and His name is Jesus.

Notice Jesus says- some may try to jump over the gate or the fence, but you cannot come to God except one way. Through the gate. And He says- those who follow Him are His sheep and they know and hear and obey His voice- again signifying that God speaks and is still speaking to us today.

In the following verses, He explains what He just said:

“Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." -John 10:7-10 NIV

Jesus was using the imagery of shepherds with their sheep to describe His relationship to believers. In those times, shepherds would stand by the gate of a separate enclosed area where their sheep were. Outside of the enclosed area were green pastures for grazing food. The shepherd would watch his sheep going in and out for food. The shepherd would then sleep at the entrance to the gate to protect his sheep from thieves and predators. The shepherd guided them to food and kept them safe and secure. The sheep looked to their shepherd for everything they needed.

God is speaking to you today. It is a universal call and message to all who are breathing and living. He says that Jesus is the gate to heavenly pastures. In Him alone will you find the abundant, eternal life offered by God. He is your salvation and security. Look to Him for everything you need.
WHAT IS GOD’S MESSAGE TO ME?

I MUST COME TO HIM FOR TRUE SATISFACTION IN LIFE.

Those questions that eat at your soul lead you to try to find satisfaction in everything and everybody. You try to get this full life Jesus talks about by all sorts of things.

What is your thing?
- Drugs
- Sex
- Porn
- Money
- Relationships
- Being the victim in every situation
- Blaming others
- Just darkness of the soul

The truth is that all of us are born looking for satisfaction, and, like the Rolling Stones’ song says, “I can't get no satisfaction....” It goes on to say, “Cause I try and I try and I try and I try.” Does that describe your life? Do you endlessly try to find satisfaction in life through the many things you do in the day? Do you believe that contentment comes after you have managed well? Nothing satisfies the longing your soul has for God but a relationship with Him. You must enter through Jesus because He is the gate to the abundant life you seek. You will not find satisfaction in this world.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. -I John 2:15-17 NIV
You will not find satisfaction in this world because it is all passing away. It is deteriorating. You can't find eternal fulfillment in what is temporary. Jesus identifies the person trying to find this sort of satisfaction as the one trying to jump over the gate. The thief tries to take you away from the abundant life that satisfies by telling you it can be found somewhere else. They say, “You can work your way into lasting happiness.” However, everything and everyone is passing away. You will have to stand before God someday, and your works cannot satisfy an infinitely righteous God because your actions are not infinitely righteous. You cannot work your way into heaven. But Jesus is the gate. Jesus is the shepherd who opens the gate. Jesus is the way:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." -John 14:6 NIV

The universal call and message going out to everyone and really the first way God speaks to you is when He sends the Holy Spirit to draw you near to Him and brings salvation to you. So, the first thing is to come to him in salvation.

And He is opening the door for you now.

TO COME TO HIM IN SALVATION, I MUST:

REPENT OF MY SINS.

Everyone is born into this world apart from God and has this need for true satisfaction and union with someone bigger than themselves.

To become a Christian and start following Jesus, we first need to repent of our sins. What does repent mean? To turn. We are saying to God and those around us, “I am no longer going to be controlled by these sins. I realize I am a sinner. I need Jesus.”

Say, “Jesus, I NEED YOU.”
Then,

**BELIEVE IN JESUS.**

This is not a flippant belief like, YEAH, I BELIEVE IN JESUS.

It is saying that He is the Lord of your life. You are confessing and repenting of your sins while believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And, as you voice that, an overwhelming faith and power comes into you.

Because you have acknowledged Jesus as Lord, remember that means He is Lord over everything, and from this point forward, you follow Him.

Then,

**BE BAPTIZED.**

Remember that Baptism is not your salvation. You start believing before you get baptized. Baptism is an outward profession of what you have done personally on the inside and before God. You are telling the world you believe. So as we finish this first chapter,

**IS GOD SPEAKING TO YOU TODAY?**

The answer is YES.

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME?**

Are you one of those who need to believe and or be baptized? We have baptism days spread throughout the year. Sign up for the next one after you have placed your faith in Jesus.

If you’ve never entered the gate to the Father, I want to invite you to pray this out loud. You are asking Jesus to be Lord of your life. He alone is the gate to true life. You are confessing belief in Him, His death, and His resurrection.

Say, “God, I know that I am a sinner. I believe You sent Jesus, and He died for my sin. I believe He rose from the grave. Please come into my life, be my Lord and Savior, and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Show me how to find satisfaction in You alone. In Jesus’s name, amen.
If you have already trusted Him for salvation, spend some time in prayer. Ask Him to speak to you with clarity as you seek Him while reading. Pray for guidance and direction in your life and walk with Him. If you have a lot of noise in your head that blocks you, keep reading. The next chapter will give insight into canceling out the noisy distractions so that you can focus on hearing God’s voice.
I don’t think there is anyone who would say they would not want to hear God’s voice. Like I said in the last chapter, this pursuit of wanting to know God’s voice even comes before we have Jesus:

- We all are seeking to know why we are here.
- What is this all about?
- What is the purpose of life?

All of these “inescapable questions of life” are deeply rooted in who we are. Therefore, we have this desire to hear what God is saying to us. However, there is loud noise all around us, blocking us from hearing. Look around, and you find commotion and busyness everywhere vying for your attention. That is, in a sense, the noise that blocks us from being still long enough to hear God speak.

For Christmas, my mom and dad got me Apple Airpods. They didn’t even know that because they just send money. So, mom and dad, thank you for the Apple Airpods. These things are amazing. What is impressive about them is that you can shake your head around, really jamming out, and they stay in your ears. Also, they are wireless and hold a charge for a long time. But the most fantastic thing about them for me is the noise-canceling feature. I have heard music like never before. You tap on them, and the outside noise is gone. I don’t have to listen to all the craziness at home or the office at church. The noise-canceling feature cuts out all the distracting noise so I can clearly hear the message from the music.

WE LIVE IN A NOISY SOCIETY. SOMETIMES, WE HAVE TO PUT THE NOISE CANCELING FEATURE ON THE EARS OF OUR HEARTS SO THAT WE CAN HEAR THE MESSAGE GOD HAS FOR US.

Sometimes we have so much noise and we are expecting God to speak over it. However, He wants us to block the noise and let Him speak directly to us in the stillness.
Check out this passage in the first part of the Bible called the Old Testament in a book called I Kings chapter 19:

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. - I Kings 19:11-13 NIV

This guy Elijah was hiding, not from God, but his enemies. He feared for his life. Elijah had just come off a victory when he called down fire from heaven to burn up a sacrifice, stones, and water. But now he allowed fear to enter his heart, and he went from mountaintop on fire for God to valley hiding from the enemy.

I don’t know about you, but there are times in my life where I feel like I am on fire for God. I can do anything for Him. I can charge hell with a squirt gun! But when we do that, when we feel that way, the enemy, Satan, and his workers begin to perk their ears up. It is like we pop up on the radar beep, beep, beep, “Satan, we got some Jesus activity over there.” Satan says, “Who is it?” “It's those Vertical Church people again.”

Do you know what the enemy does? He deploys every attack internally and externally to hit me and you to keep us from doing what God wants and hearing His voice. And, he leads the attack with fear.

WE MOVE FROM SHOUTING ON THE MOUNTAINTOP TO HIDING IN A CAVE.

How many of you know that God does not leave you? He does not forsake you in those moments. Actually, it is during those times when you can hear God's voice the best.
But we have to cut through the noise that says:

- You are not good enough
- God is mad at you
- You cannot do what He asks
- You are a failure
- You are depression
- You are anxiety
- You are addiction

And on top of that, we have all the noise of our busy lives. But, just like with Elijah, God is speaking. He is not dead. He has not withdrawn His Spirit. He is still speaking to His children all the time. Most of the time we are like Elijah,

WE ARE LOOKING FOR GOD TO SPEAK THROUGH THE FIRE, THE EARTHQUAKE, OR THE NOISE, BUT NOTICE,

GOD SPEAKS IN A WHISPER.

Why would God want His voice to come as a whisper when we would want a loud noise or booming voice? Because a whisper happens as the breath goes out to carry the words. In the original languages of both the Old and New Testaments, the same word translated breath is translated spirit. So, the whisper is not noise; it is the breath and Spirit of God coming into you and working through you as you trust Him. His whisper is what you must seek. He seeks to whisper into your hearts with the presence of His Spirit.

For the rest of the chapter, let’s talk about this:

HOW DO WE HEAR GOD’S WHISPER IN THE MIDST OF THE NOISE AROUND US?

TO HEAR HIS VOICE AND BLOCK THE NOISE, DO LIKE VANILLA ICE SAYS, “STOP, COLLABORATE, AND LISTEN.”
WE MUST STOP.

Check out what God says in Psalm 46,

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging. -Psalm 46:1-3

What a promise from God! He is our refuge, our strength and

GOD IS AN EVER-PRESENT HELP.

What does that mean? That means that God is always there. When you give your life to Jesus, you have an ever-present help in the Holy Spirit. But you forget, why? Because the enemy shoots fear at you. You are fearful that: God is really not there. He is not speaking. You don’t feel Him. You messed up. Or, you think, “I am ____.” You fill in the blank.

This Section of Scripture starts with a promise. Then at the end of the section, He tells us how we can know this:

He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. -Psalm 46:10-11

We have to stop. Have you ever just stopped to sit in silence? The way to know God, know that He is real, and know that He is speaking is first to STOP.
Second,

WE MUST COLLABORATE.

We are not made to hear God’s voice in a vacuum. Why? Because the number one question I get is this:

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS GOD’S VOICE OR MINE?

This is a valid question. We cannot just take every positive thought and assume that it is from God. We have to collaborate with what we know is true and is our compass. What is that? The Bible.

COLLABORATE MEANS TO WORK JOINTLY TO CREATE OR PRODUCE SOMETHING.

The truth is that if you stop the noise in your life, you will have thoughts, you will have promptings, you will see things. But we have to collaborate with the Bible because that is God’s word to us and is useful for teaching correcting, rebuking, etc. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. -Hebrews 4:12

The Bible is a sword that we can use to divide our soul and spirit and thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. It is the only weapon we have to use to determine if what we are hearing or seeing or feeling is from God or from the burrito we ate last night!!

We have to stop, collaborate, and last,

WE MUST LISTEN.

Listen- What is He spontaneously putting on your mind?
PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME, HOW DOES GOD SPEAK?
  • Is it an audible voice? I have never heard that.
  • Is it a picture in the clouds? I have never seen that.
  • Is it just goosebumps? I would say you may just be cold.

So how? In the whisper of your mind, He breathes onto and into you His Spirit and word through what we will call,

**SPONTANEOUS THOUGHTS.**

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK IN LINE WITH THE BIBLE, HIS WORD? THE WHISPER OF GOD, HIS SPIRIT MANIFESTS THOUGHTS IN OUR HEADS THAT WILL LINE UP WITH WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

This is why you cannot leave out collaboration. You have to stop, block the noise, and collaborate with God’s word, know it ahead of time and look at it after the thought to know if this is of God or not.

Some Christians might argue that what we see in the Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, and we will never hear, nor see, nor feel anything else. I don’t agree with that. I believe that through the Bible as a lens, God gives us spontaneous thoughts that light up our mind to show us, tell us, and move us where He wants us to go.

NOW LET ME BE CLEAR, THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD TO US, AND IT IS COMPLETE. HE WILL NEVER TELL US SOMETHING TO ADD TO OR TAKE AWAY FROM IT.

But, with the Bible as our lens, God is still speaking to us, in us, and through us.

The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for,

“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ. -I Corinthians 2:15-16
This whole section of Scripture is talking about when you come to Christ and receive the Spirit. God reveals stuff to you by the Spirit, and those who believe in Jesus have the Holy Spirit. So it is by the Spirit that He speaks and how we make judgments about ALL things.

He asks a question: Who has known the mind of the Lord “so as to instruct him?” How can we know what God wants? How can we know what He has for us? The natural person cannot. The natural person does not have the Spirit and does not follow Jesus. So, there is no way in their natural minds to know God’s thoughts. But for those who have believed, we have the Holy Spirit telling us what God is saying and get this,

WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST!!!

So it is through your mind, in a whisper, that the breath of God speaks and is still speaking today.

So what is He saying to you today?

Have you had spontaneous thoughts about someone or something in your life that line up with Scripture?

If not, God speaks in other ways too. So keep reading.
CHAPTER 3: DON'T WASTE YOUR PAIN

I have never seen someone touch a hot stove and leave their hand on it. Why not? Most people instantly retract the moment they feel pain. Why? I don't like pain. You probably don't like pain. Nobody likes pain; therefore, you will rarely hear someone say, “I just want to suffer for Jesus.”

ONE OF THE FALSE BELIEFS OF OUR CULTURE IS THAT IF YOU ARE FOLLOWING JESUS AND ARE A CHRISTIAN, YOU WILL LIVE A PAIN-FREE LIFE.

Believers are suffering everywhere. Many suffer and are Christians, and some suffer because they are Christians.

EXAMPLES:
- Christians in the Middle East- persecuted.
- Christians in Africa- suffering from diseases because of unclean sanitation.
- The Early Disciples- martyred.
- Jesus Himself- they nailed Him to a cross, and He died.

Just because we are Christians does not mean we will never have pain or suffering. So what do we do with this suffering and pain? The truth is that God often uses pain and suffering to speak to us. He set our bodies up to use pain to speak to us like when we get sick, ache with fevers, and throw-up. It tells us something is wrong. C.S lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

James is writing to us about suffering. James is the brother of Jesus, and this is proof that Jesus is God because it would take a lot for my brother to convince me he is God. No way. But James is the brother of Jesus, and he is convinced that Jesus is God. This book is one of the earliest books written in the New Testament.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. -James 1:2-4
No one considers pain pure joy or a gift but James says it's a teacher and brings maturity.

**IF YOU NEVER FACE PAIN, YOU WILL NEVER BE COMPLETE.**

Sometimes when we go through the pain, we let that define us like, divorce, addiction, loss, physical pain. So instead of letting it define us, we must have a different attitude towards our pain. We must know that God speaks to us through it. And here it is:

**GOD WANTS ME TO NOT JUST GO THROUGH THE PAIN, BUT TO GROW FROM THE PAIN.**

If you aren’t growing from the pain, it is wasted and will be a lesson you still need to learn.

**HOW DO YOU STOP WASTING YOUR PAIN?**

The first thing is that you must,

**UNDERSTAND THAT PAIN PURIFIES YOUR PRIORITIES.**

because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:3

In this verse, the word testing simply means that the pain is producing genuineness out of you. It is refining you. Mostly we use the word “refining” with metals. Metals have to go through the fire. Think of it this way- through the fire of pain you are getting to a place of genuineness that gives you completion.

What is maturity? It is when you have given up every false sense of security.
- Money in the bank- people say when I get money then I will be secure.
- Job- I get that one job I will have security.
- Great spouse- people get married for security. They pray, “Please, God, send someone!”
- Children- Some parents find their sense of security in their kids.

But all of these are false senses of security. One piece of pain, we realize that it starts chipping away at these things. You realize money is not your source of joy, and neither is your job. My wife is not my God, nor are my children.
When seeking to find security in those things, we put them in God's place. There is only one God; His name is Jesus. Pain comes in like a refiners fire and strips away those false senses of securities that are taking the place of God in your life.

*Job* in the Old Testament had wealth, kids, employees, and a strong relationship with God. One day, all the possessions, children, and employees/servants were gone. He still had God, a wife who sounded bitter, and some friends who blamed Job for his losses, and who needs friends that hurt you when you're already suffering. The whole point of Job's suffering was to prove that he trusted in God more than anything in his life.

Have you ever thought of it this way? You are going through pain because God thinks of you as a faithful, trustworthy servant. He has faith in you that you are trusting Him more than anything. Maybe the pain is to purify your priorities.

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
and naked I will depart.
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised.”

*In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.* -Job 1:21-22

The truth is that we cannot see the beginning to the end. God sees it all. Let me tell you my story,

In the last seven years, I have had four back surgeries. My very first back surgery was quite an ordeal. If you have ever had back surgery, you know that they can be very painful. It seems like every part of your body is connected to your back. After this surgery, I had many follow up appointments with the surgeon. It was during those visits that I felt like there was a purpose for my pain. Every appointment turned into a session where I ministered to the doctor about his life situations for about 30 minutes. Then, he followed up with me for roughly 5-10 minutes. God had a purpose for my pain. I was able to share the gospel with my surgeon over and over again. I like to believe that my pain was all for those moments.
Another passage says it like this,

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. -1 Peter 1:6-7

Don’t waste your pain grow through it. Purify your priorities and then,

UNDERSTAND THAT PAIN CHALLENGES YOUR CAPACITY.

Capacity is the ability to receive or contain. If your house has a 200 square foot living room, and you need a bigger one because your Small Group has outgrown your space. The only way to get more space in that room is to knock some walls down. I’m making a point; so, please do not knock down any walls in your house because your Small Group is getting big, and you want to invite more people. What I’m saying is,

GOD USES PAIN TO KNOCK DOWN THE WALLS IN YOUR LIFE THAT KEEP YOU FROM RECEIVING ALL THAT HE HAS FOR YOU.

The only way He can do that thing in your life is if you can contain that thing in your life. It is a blessing, but to receive it, God is going to knock down some walls. It will be painful. I promise you like Paul says in Romans 8:18, God’s revealed glory far outweighs the suffering.

Be ready because God can do more than you could possibly imagine. But first, something has to break. Something has to grow. Your capacity has to be challenged.

What if the better prayer, instead of “God take the pain away,” is “God make me stronger, make me bigger, grow my capacity, I want all you have for me.”?
Years ago, I tried to go from couch potato to 5K. Each day I would walk a little, run a little, then I would walk a little less, and then run a bit more. It was painful, but I wanted to get to the point I could run a complete 5K. So, what had to happen? I had to challenge my capacity, and it had to grow. I had to not just go through the pain, but grow from the pain. Eventually, I made it.

**WHAT IF THE PAIN YOU ARE GOING THROUGH IS TO CHALLENGE AND STRETCH YOUR CAPACITY FOR YOUR NEXT SEASON IN LIFE?**

You might be saying, “Lord, I want a husband!” Or, “I want a wife!” God is saying He needs to challenge your capacity and purify your priorities; so, you don't mess up with that husband or wife. You might say, “Lord, I want my life back. I know I messed up. But now I've been sober for however long it's been, and I want my kids back. Lord, mend my broken relationships, restore what's been lost.” Maybe God is purifying your priorities still and challenging your capacity. Instead, you need to pray, “Lord, bring it on! Get me ready! Grow me!!! Don't just put me in their life but make me beneficial for their life.”

Don't waste the pain, grow through it! Every good thing God has for you in life is found outside of your comfort zone, and your capacity needs to be stretched to go the next step towards what God has for you. This brings us to the last section of the chapter,

**UNDERSTAND THAT PAIN EXPANDS MY EMPATHY.**

I never had empathy for people in pain. Then, I went through 4 back surgeries in 7 years, with the last 3 years being in pain almost all the time. My empathy changed. Before when people would say, “I have chronic pain.” I was like, “Cool! Sucks for you.” Now I react with, “I feel your pain. I am sorry.” Empathy means, you are able to put yourself into someone else's shoes. I can see from a new perspective.

Pay attention: *When I became a Christian, I thought for sure I would bypass pain. But that is not the case. Instead, I have had loss in my life. I have had depression, anxiety, stress, sleepless nights, and chronic physical pain that has lasted for years.*
I often think, "Why?" It's because God wants to purify my priorities, challenge my capacity, but also expand my empathy. Now, I can see from other perspectives. When I talk to someone and they tell me they are dealing with depression, I can speak from experience. When they talk about physical pain, I can hurt with them.

God allows us to go through these things sometimes because He has an ultimate plan for us that will not only make us stronger but will also bless someone else down the road. Don't waste your pain!!!

GOD TAKES YOUR PAIN AND BUILDS A PLATFORM.

Have you been addicted? Don't waste your pain, help someone in addiction. Have you been childless? Don't waste your pain, help someone dealing with this as well. Have you been single for what feels like forever? Don't waste your pain. Reach out and help someone struggling with loneliness. Have you been divorced? Don't waste your pain, reach out, and allow God to use your pain to help someone else going through that pain. God never wastes a hurt, and He has a purpose for your pain.

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE FEEL LIKE THE PAIN WILL NEVER STOP? SURRENDER YOUR PAIN TO GOD, AND LET GOD CREATE A PLATFORM. GOD IS CLOSE TO THE BROKEN HEARTED.

If we can hear God's whisper, He can hear our sigh coming from that place of hurt. As we read through these verses one more time. At the end I want you to let out a sigh:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. -James 1:2-4

Sigh! We can hear the voice of God. We can hear His whisper, and at the same time, He hears our sigh. Don't waste where it's coming from, but use the pain as a platform to help others.
CHAPTER 4: OTHER BELIEVERS

There was a guy I worked with somewhat extensively. He was going through the Crossroads Mission program and truly surrendered to God. He started serving. His life was changing quickly. We are still close to this day. I taught him a lot in the scriptures. When life problems surfaced, I used the Bible to show him how to respond. The thing I once heard him tell a group about that time was that I gave him biblical answers to whatever his struggles were. Hearing that, I realized that God used His word to speak through me to help another believer.

GOD USES HIS WORD TO SPEAK THROUGH OTHER BELIEVERS.

I would not say that God speaks through every believer all the time. However, God will use the believers in your life to speak to you. It is essential to have people that are further along in their walk with the Lord than you to help guide you. This person should be grounded in God’s word. They should not just be a hearer that knows the Bible but a doer who is actively serving somewhere in the church. You should be able to see their responses to the circumstances in their lives and know that God leads them.

Do you have someone like that in your life? Are you willing to seek help to improve your walk with God? Why or why not? If you don’t know where to look, try out some Small Groups. You want to find someone actively seeking to improve their relationship with God and who helps others do the same. You can even look for someone serving in the ministry with you. Often, a mentor can add clarity to the whisper of God, so you don’t have to hear God through as many painful situations.

The Bible says,

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. -Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV
Your body sends electrical pulses from your head throughout your body. This creates movement in the different members of your body. If you tell your hand to move, the information passes through the elbow. If you grab something from the top shelf, a whole system of information gets transferred to different parts of your body to make that happen. In the same way, information is sometimes passed through members of the body of Christ to create a response in other members. This is done for the body to build itself up in love.

**GOD CAN SPEAK THROUGH BELIEVERS TO BUILD UP THE BODY IN LOVE.**

The Apostle John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). He doesn't say God has some love or that He can love. He said, “God is love.” God is the loving author of the Bible. There is nothing He tells you to do that would go against His attribute of love; therefore, if He says to do something in His word, it's because He loves you and wants you to receive the benefit that obedience has on your character. God's character and attributes are seen in His people. If you want to hear God's voice,

**FIND PEOPLE WHO WILL SPEAK THE TRUTH TO YOU IN LOVE AND ARE WALKING WITH GOD.**

Have you ever had a hypocrite in your life? You know, the person who tells you not to lie but says they've never lied. They might sound good and have their Bible memorized, but they are trying to control you more than build you. Don't go to that person.

The person who speaks the truth in love knows that God's plan is best for you. They are trying to introduce you to the life of freedom found in walking with the Savior. They have experienced God in this remarkable way and want Him for you too. These persons know the Bible, but they also know the God of the Bible. Find someone like this and build a friendship. If you have Bible doers like these types in your corner, I'm sure you will hear God's voice regularly. Again, God does not say anything that goes against what His word already says. When you think you hear God through someone, verify what He says with the Bible.

**GOD SPEAKS. ARE YOU LISTENING?**
We have touched on some ways that God speaks in this book. I think the ways He speaks is less important than the fact that He speaks. The Bible says, in the 22nd chapter of Numbers, that God allowed a donkey to speak. I know, it doesn’t say much about us preachers. It does give insight into God’s ability to speak to you in ways that you can’t even imagine. God’s thoughts are higher than ours, and His ways are more excellent. We don’t always grasp the other ways He talks to us, but we have the Bible. Study it. Know it. John 14:26 tells us that the Spirit will bring to our minds Jesus’s words when needed. When God’s word is in you, you can distinguish His voice from the rest. You will know that He is speaking.

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