

WHISPER



How to Hear
the Voice of God

SNEAK
PEEK



SAMPLE
ONLY

Mark Batterson

New York Times Best-Selling Author

ears that have been deafened to the voice of God? And it's that inability to hear His voice that causes us to lose our voice and lose our way.

Let me make a bold statement at the beginning of this book: Learning how to hear the voice of God is the solution to a thousand problems! It's also the key to discovering our destiny and fulfilling our potential.

His voice is love.

His voice is power.

His voice is healing.

His voice is wisdom.

His voice is joy.

If your life is off-key, maybe it's because you've been deafened by the negative self-talk that doesn't let God get a Word in edgewise! Maybe you've listened to the voice of criticism so long you can't believe anything else about yourself. Or maybe it's the Enemy's voice of condemnation that speaks lies about who you really are. If you don't silence those competing voices, they'll eventually deafen you. You won't be able to sing God's song because you won't be able to hear His voice.

Is God's voice the loudest voice in your life?

That's the question.

If the answer is no, that's the problem.

We live in a culture where everyone wants to have his or her voice heard but has so little to say. And that's because we do so little listening, especially to God. The best way to get people to listen to us is for us to listen to God. Why? Because we'll have something to say that is worth hearing.

Ultimately, all of us need to find our voice. And by voice I mean the unique message God wants to speak through our lives. But finding our voice starts with hearing His voice.

Would you be willing to pray a bold prayer at the beginning of this book? It's an ancient prayer. It's a prayer that can change the trajectory of your life, just as it did for a prophet named Samuel. Before you pray it, let me issue one warning. If you aren't willing to listen to *everything* God has to say, you eventually won't hear *anything* He has to say. If you want to hear His comforting voice, you have to listen to His convicting voice. And it's

a dozen such hospitalizations during my younger years. When I was released from Edward's Hospital a week later, Pastor Paul McGarvey and a prayer team from Calvary Church in Naperville, Illinois, came over to our house, laid hands on me, and prayed that God would heal my asthma.

God answered that prayer for healing but not in the way I expected.

When I woke up the next morning, I still had asthma, but all the warts on my feet had mysteriously disappeared. I'm not kidding! At first I wondered if God had made a mistake. Maybe the signals between here and heaven were mixed. I couldn't help but wonder if someone somewhere was breathing great but still had warts on his or her feet. I was a little confused, but that's when I heard the still small voice. It wasn't an audible voice; it was Spirit to spirit. And it was loud and clear: *Mark, I just wanted you to know that I'm able!*

All these decades later it still sends a chill down my spine. I was fourteen years old, and it was the first time I heard God's whisper. Was I disappointed that He hadn't answered my prayer the way I wanted Him to? Of course I was. But those two words echoed for three decades: *I'm able*. And He's not just able; He's "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."¹⁵

Let me connect the dots.

Without that whisper I'm not sure I would have had the faith to pray the bravest prayer. And if I hadn't prayed that prayer, how could God answer it? After all, God doesn't answer 100 percent of the prayers we don't pray! You can guess where this is going, can't you? My miracle was once a whisper. And that's true of every miracle. As I survey my life, I realize that the genesis of every blessing, every breakthrough is the breath of God. It started out as nothing more than a still small voice.

Ebenezers, the coffeehouse on Capitol Hill that our church owns and operates, is a perfect example. When people walk by Ebenezers, they see a coffeehouse, but when I walk by it, I hear a whisper. That's all it was two decades ago. Actually, it was a graffiti-covered building with cinder blocks in the doorframes. Then one day I walked by and a Spirit-inspired thought fired across my synapses: *This crack house would make a great coffeehouse.*

That thought came out of nowhere, which sometimes indicates something supernatural. I call it a God idea, and I'd rather have one God idea than a thousand good ideas. Good ideas are good, but God ideas change the course of history.

That God idea turned into a brave prayer, which turned into a coffeehouse that has been voted the number-one coffeehouse in DC more than once. Since opening the doors a decade ago, we've given more than a million dollars to kingdom causes from its net profits. But every shot we pull and every dollar we give was once a whisper.

The Think Tank of the Soul

For the past thirty-plus years, an acoustic ecologist named Gordon Hempton has compiled what he calls "The List of the Last Great Quiet Places." It consists of places with at least fifteen minutes of uninterrupted quiet during daylight hours. At last count there were only twelve quiet places in the entire United States!¹⁶ And we wonder why the soul suffers. As Hempton noted, "Quiet is a think tank of the soul."¹⁷

Simply put, God often speaks loudest when we're quietest.

Seventeenth-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal once observed, "The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room."¹⁸

That's quite a statement, but it's not an overstatement. If our problems are hearing problems—the spiritual Tomatis effect—then the solution to those problems is a prescription that is as old as the psalms. It's so critical to our spiritual vitality that it's worth meditating on one word or phrase at a time:

Be.

Be still.

Be still, and know.

Be still, and know that I am God.¹⁹

Have you ever tried to quiet a loud room? Attempting to yell above the crowd usually doesn't work, does it? It's far more effective to shush the crowd with a *shhh*. That's the method God employs. His whisper quiets us, calms us, stills us.

By definition, white noise is a sound that contains every frequency a human can hear.²⁰ And because it contains every frequency, it's very difficult to hear any frequency, especially the still small voice of God. As such, chronic noise may be the greatest impediment to our spiritual growth. And it's not just spirituality that suffers.

In a study of elementary-age students at a grade school in Manhattan, psychologist Arlene Bronzaft found that children assigned to classrooms on the side of the school facing the elevated train tracks were eleven months behind their counterparts on the quieter side of the building. After New York City Transit installed noise-abatement equipment on the tracks, a follow-up study found no difference between the groups.²¹

When our lives get loud, with noise filling every frequency, we lose our sense of being. We run the risk of turning into human doings rather than human beings. And when our schedules get busy, we lose our sense of balance, which is a function of the inner ear.

Can I go out on a limb?

Your life is too loud.

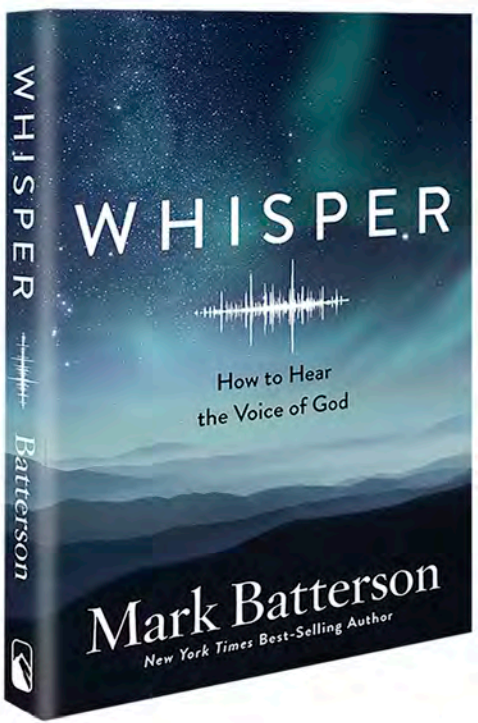
Your schedule is too busy.

That's how and why and when we forget that God is God. And it takes very little to distract us. "I neglect God and his angels, for the noise of a fly," said the English poet John Donne.²² The solution? Stillness. Or more specifically, His still small voice.

Silence is anything but passive waiting. It's proactive listening. The noted author and professor Henri Nouwen believed that silence was an act of war against the competing voices within us. And that war isn't easily won, because it's a daily battle. But each day God's voice gets a little louder in our lives until He's all we can hear. "Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved," said Nouwen, "you

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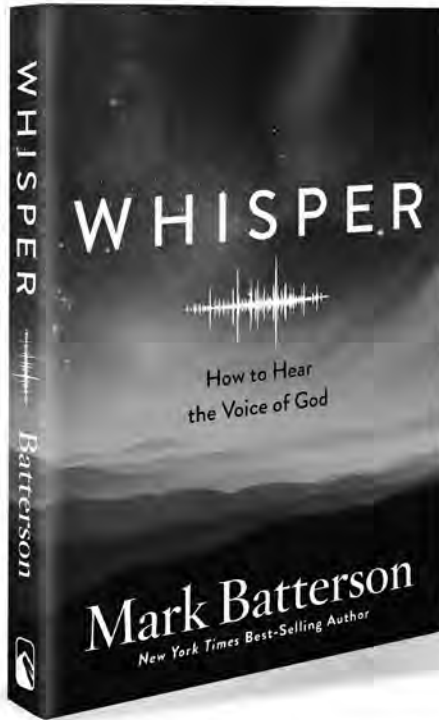


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