

**ELIMINATE MYTHS.  
ENCOUNTER MEANING.**

# **HEARING GOD**

**NATHAN FINOCHIO**

**Teaching Pastor, Hillsong NYC**

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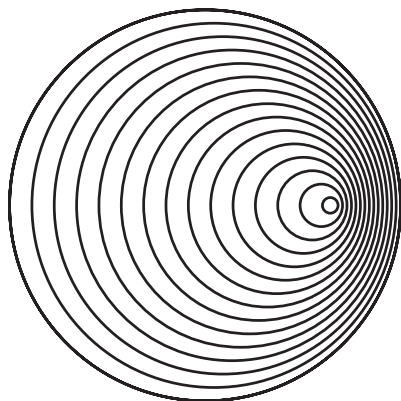
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# HEARING GOD

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## HEARING GOD

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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For Jasmine—the clearest  
voice of God I’ve ever heard

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# Introduction

Have you ever felt like you're just not as "spiritual" as everyone else? I don't mean that you believe less or feel less, just that your number doesn't seem to be saved in God's contacts.

You have friends who seem to be on speed dial with Him. Favorites. They're always talking about how "God just told me . . ." or something great and intimate and personal like that. You find yourself politely nodding as you sit there and blink. You'd love to experience that, but you half wonder if it's even possible. And as they go on and *on*, you also start wondering if what they're talking about is even real. They seem to have their heads in the clouds half the time, anyway.

But then you have a moment in heartfelt worship, or come across a story or verse in the Bible, or some social media post that makes you long for something. It's a moment of meaning or beauty that almost feels like *God said something to you*. Then it's gone, leaving you wanting more.

I'm writing this book because we need to talk about hearing

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God for the rest of us—for the people who struggle with it. Who want it but don't quite know how to sort out what's real or what's true among the conflicting ways Christians talk about it. If you want more and you don't quite know how to find it, this book is for you.

In some ways I'm exactly who you'd expect to write a book like this: a pastor and a worship musician. But in other ways I'm not. I've had to struggle to come to my own understanding of how God speaks to us.

Here's the thing: if God is really speaking to His people, then the most important things we can do are to stop, learn, and listen. We need to *stop* what holds us back, *learn* what can move us forward, and then simply *listen* to what He's saying. He's not trying to make this hard. He's not playing games. But getting to a place where we can hear Him with clarity and confidence does require growth from us.

My prayer is that you'll walk in freedom as together we step into an understanding of this world as a place where God's talking. Like, *a lot*. That's what this book is about—how God is speaking through all kinds of channels. He's probably speaking to you right now, but you don't even recognize it's Him!

Every one of us buys into some sort of myth about God's voice and how to hear it. With that in mind, I've divided this book into the myths we believe about each of the big ways of hearing and the truths that can smooch those myths like a Philistine between Samson's sweet anointed pecs.

So I guess I'm saying there's good news. God's voice is closer than we think, and He wants us to hear Him. You don't need to

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buy oil from Israel or blow a shofar to hear God. You don't need to hang out at a hip church. You don't need a PhD in theology. You don't need to wear a leather jacket and skinny jeans. You don't need to become a hermit. You don't need to become a televangelist. You can be *you*. I can be *me*. In fact, that's exactly how God wants it.

We don't need to change who we are, but we do need to change how we listen.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Myth of Easy Conversation

## Good Grief! Why Is It So Hard Sometimes to Just Communicate?

When they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

—Acts 1:6–9

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Sometimes when my wife, Jasmine, talks to me, I feel a bit like a conversational Indiana Jones. Deep beneath the ancient sands, I'm trying to make out the hieroglyphics that hold the information I need. *The secret must be here!* I think, frantic. *The treasure!*

For example, let's say she says "Whatever." This does *not* mean a casual "Whatever," like the "Whatever" one of my guy friends employs when I ask what movie we should watch or where we should grab a bite. When Jasmine says "Whatever," it means I have somehow, in some way, failed miserably and that I need to retrace my steps and *immediately* make further inquiry to determine what I'm repenting for.

In this example, I ask what's wrong, and she responds with "Nothing." What she's really saying is precisely the opposite, that there *is* indeed something wrong and that I'm in a relational minefield. Explosives are hidden, and I must throw out every possible "Is it . . . ?" or "Did I . . . ?" scenario until I hit the mine. *Boom.*

Now let's say that Jasmine answers "It's fine." With the correct tonal inflection, this means *nothing* is fine. Everything has gone to the dogs. The world is about to end. I brace for impact and

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begin to apologize for anything that comes to mind, including the sins of my childhood.

Admittedly, we've been married for only five years, and we do still have a ton to learn about communication. But we *are* learning, slowly. It's not that Jasmine is bad at communicating; she's great. And it's not that I'm bad at listening. But I'm still learning to listen to *her*. She's not a high-maintenance person—quite the opposite. Our goal is to converse more effectively. Why is that necessary? Because we're different as people.

The good news is that difficulty doesn't doom possibility. As my relationship with Jasmine grows, so does my understanding of how she talks. How she expresses herself is not what I am used to. *Okay. Buck up, Nathan!*

Through time spent, understandings, and misunderstandings, I've had to unlearn certain meanings of words and tones and learn Jasmine's. And she's had to learn mine. It's taking longer than I had hoped, but it's happening in the context of relationship, and it's clarifying over time. I'm still not perfect, and I still have a long way to go. That process of “two becoming one” and “blending” plays out over a lifetime. But in the end—if we're diligent—I'm sure we'll be finishing each other's . . .

Sandwiches.

Here's the point: conversation grows as we do. Maturity and experience are linked to communication. If Jasmine and I get to our fiftieth wedding anniversary and we're still exactly where we were at our fifth, something's wrong. Why? Because relationships should grow.

There are two myths about conversation that bite at the very

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foundation of hearing God. One is that hearing God is all about *me*. The other is that it is all about *Him*. The truth is that it's about *both*, like any conversation is.

If a conversation is all about the will, needs, wants, and life of one person, it's a monologue. Yet that's how many of us think about our conversations with God. Either they're all about us (this kind of crazy focus on me, me, me) or all about Him (this kind of crazy focus on theology and His will that never considers that we're real people too). Both views are immature on our part.

What's the goal in hearing God? Just as in marriage, it's balance. Just as in marriage, it's mutual understanding. Just as in marriage, it's *conversation*.

## It's All Who You Know

Hearing God begins with relationship. Consider the type of revelation John the apostle had about Jesus and relate that to his proximity to Jesus. John was probably Jesus's best friend. He was the last of the twelve disciples at the cross and the first one at the grave. John took care of Jesus's mother, Mary, after Jesus's death—at Jesus's request. John laid his head on Jesus's breast at the Last Supper. Five times in his gospel, John calls himself the one whom Jesus loved. It was his identity. And in this gospel, we have the most intimate glimpse of Jesus. About 80 percent of the material is also unique, telling us things the other three gospels don't. We get an in-depth, transparent picture of Jesus—aside from what we see in the incredible (and terrifying) book of Revelation, which begins with a vision of Jesus in crazy power and glory.

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It's easy to hear all that and think *Goody for John. Must be great. So . . . what am I supposed to do?* Here's what: Start by understanding that Jesus desires closeness and intimacy with you. Understand that, through the Holy Spirit, that kind of relationship is possible, and that just as in relationships with friends and spouses, that relationship can grow in intimacy.

If that's true, then there's hope for each of us to learn how to hear what God is truly saying. We *can* understand. He *wants* us to. But don't take *my* word for it.

To begin with, read the Acts passage that opens this chapter. Jesus, resurrected, reveals Himself to the disciples and hangs out with them over a period of forty days, speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Don't you wish they had recorded that discussion? Think about it. The risen Jesus is doing some crazy explaining to the disciples, filling in the gaps of what they didn't understand about His death and resurrection. Not only has He been with these guys for more than three years—healing people, walking on water, showing them unparalleled signs, and telling secrets about Himself—but now He's just been raised from the dead. He is Next-Level Jesus; He is Death-Defying Jesus; He is Walk-Through-Walls Jesus. And He's explaining both Himself and the kingdom of God to them in a fuller, more robust way. All this is amazing, but what happens next is mind blowing.

Here's how the Finocchio Amplified Version tells the story:

They're all at some secret, Jesus-followers-only location, and Jesus is thinking, *Perfect—I've just come back from the dead and have spoken to my future church planters about*

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*the kingdom at length. They get it! Now I'm gonna go to the Father. Everything is perfect—mission accomplished.*

Jesus looks down at the ground, about to engage thrusters and blast off into the clouds, but just as He says *Launch!* internally and begins to lift into the air, the disciples grab His ankles and yell, “Wait! We have one more question!” Jesus is four feet off the ground, and they’re holding Him like small children gripping clusters of helium-filled balloons.

Okay—so maybe it wasn’t *quite* like that. Just humor me for a minute.

Hovering above the sand, Jesus answers, “What is it? What could I have possibly left out?”

The disciples answer, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Is that what You’re floating off to do? Destroy the Romans and Herods in an air assault? Should we meet You at the palace or temple, where You’ll assume command of the country and sit on the throne of Israel as the rightful heir of the Davidic dynasty? And do we all get sweet rings of power and large country estates from which we rule and reign over our beloved country with You?”

Jesus sinks down like a deflated balloon and somewhat impatiently exclaims, “Look, it’s not for you to know what the Father is doing with respect to all that stuff. And yes, you’ll receive power—when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Then you’ll be My witnesses in Jerusalem and

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throughout the world. Like I said before, it's better that I go so that you have the Paraclete with you. He's going to help you understand all this stuff you're a bit hazy on, and even more! I'm out of here, guys. Peace!"

After Jesus whips up into heaven, the disciples are all looking up like children who lost balloons, in a mix of befuddlement and grief. Two angels appear immediately as the guys are gazing into the distance, wondering what just happened.

"Guys? Um, Jesus is gone. What are you staring at? Jesus will return the same way, so maybe stop staring so hard at the clouds, 'cuz He isn't coming back right this moment. Go chill in Jerusalem and wait like He said."

The Gospels culminate in the total victory of Jesus and the almost-total failure of His disciples. The beginning of the book of Acts continues that narrative: Jesus is constantly explaining Himself and the kingdom of God to the disciples, and the disciples are constantly missing everything He's communicating. But that same book of Acts shows this formerly wavering, dense, and impulsive group transformed into bold leaders and witnesses through the power Jesus promised. God's fullest revelation of Himself is given to His friends, to those with whom He has close relationship. They are then asked to take it to others—everywhere. But it doesn't get off to the smoothest start, does it?

Here's the point: God isn't the problem when it comes to hearing Him; we are. In our minds we often put the burden of hearing God on God Himself. We walk around with our prover-

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bial fingers in our ears or our cognitive and spiritual iPods on blast, and then we pray prayers like *God, speak to me!* But what if He *has* spoken to us? What if He *is* speaking to us? What if we're missing the point—and we have been for years?

My wife isn't an alien; she just doesn't think or speak the same way as I do. And the truth is that God doesn't think or speak the way I think or speak either. If I want to hear Him, I'm the one who must change, not Him. But most Christians treat God as they treat others: they place themselves at the center of the universe and demand that others and God adopt their *modus operandi*.

That's how the disciples are acting in this passage: their ears are completely incapable of deciphering Jesus's clear messages because they have an agenda that needs losing. Or better yet, they have a theology that needs losing.

I need to stop and say something important before we go on with this. You may have read the preceding few paragraphs and thought, *Yeah, I always knew the problem was with me. I knew I wasn't good enough. I always find a way to mess up everything. Why would my relationship with God be any different?*

Stop that. Right now. Would you expect a guy married for five years to be able to communicate with his wife as though they'd been married for fifty? Of course not. Would you expect a toddler just learning to walk to run a marathon? Of course not. You jump up and down and praise them when they make it from the coffee table to the couch. There's no shame and guilt in needing to grow.

Because God is so humble and so foolishly in love with us (who are unfaithful and hard-hearted), He constantly climbs down to our level (as He did when he took on the form of a bondservant),

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speaking to us right where we are—even in the middle of our distorted agendas.

John 21 is an incredible passage that illustrates Jesus's rhetorical descent to Peter's level. The depth of the exchange is easy to miss in English because there's only one word for "love." But the Greek language has four words—how nice! The first time Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, Jesus uses the word for "unconditional" love, asking, "Do you *agape* Me?"

Peter replies *with a different word*, the one for "friendship love": "Yes, Lord, I *phileo* You."

Jesus asks again, "Peter, do you *agape* Me?"

Peter replies, "Lord, I already told You—I *phileo* You!"

Peter isn't getting the point, so Jesus descends to Peter's limited understanding of love and finally asks, "Peter, do you *phileo* Me?"

Peter replies, "Yes, Lord, I *phileo* You."

Like a parent speaking baby talk to a toddler, Jesus adapts how He's talking so that Peter will be on the same page with Him. This perfectly illustrates my point: the problem isn't the heart or mouth of God but the hearts and ears of humanity. We need to grow.

Fortunately, what we need is exactly what He wants.

## Central Communication

This means that we don't need to find the perfect recipe to hear God, but we must be willing to grow and do our sincere best to listen for His voice and begin the conversation. We have important things to talk about, and so does He. So when we give up the paralyzing notion that our conversation is *just* us bringing a laun-

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dry list of prayer requests or *just* us waiting in silence for the clouds to part and His *perfect will* to descend inscribed on golden tablets, then we're beginning to get the point. This is a two-way conversation, in service of a growing relationship.

The Father must become central to our world if we're going to hear Him. If we think it's all about us and our little world and that God must speak in our language, on our timetable, in our way, then we're going to be frustrated. We don't even approach celebrities this way, so why would we approach God Almighty that way?

Could it be that one of our communication problems is that we have an unbiblical idea about God? He's not Santa Claus, but many of us treat Him as though He is. Santa exists only for the child; there's no relationship there. He reads the child's list and does his yuletide magic, but he has no suggestions for toys that might be best for the rosy-cheeked little imps pestering him for gifts. Santa has no opinions, and it's a one-way conversation.

God is so much better. Santa is one-dimensional and unimaginative and boring. He's a slave to our dull imagination. God invented imagination. He's in the business of abundantly giving what is truly good for us, not of satisfying our every whim. (And whims we have aplenty, eh?)

Ephesians 3:20 says God can do exceedingly, "abundantly," above all we could even ask or think. So why is what we ask Him to talk to us about often so limited? When I stop and think about it, I realize that I don't want God just to answer my small prayers and requests; I want Him to be good enough to do *more* than I ask. And He is. I don't want God to respond to my thoughtless moments; I want to be stretched. I want to grow until I can consistently

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put the focus on Him, allowing Him to reimagine me. I want to grow into a God-sized life, a God-imagined inheritance, and a God-dreamed relationship with a God-given language.

For this to happen, however, I must hop out of the conversational driver's seat. I can't fall into the temptation to jabber or believe that I don't have anything God wants to hear. I can't go to Him with my list and then assume something ridiculous about His character—that He's "silent," for example—when I don't hear what I want. Maybe I'm just not shutting up and listening, and He's too polite to interrupt most of the time. I need to find the happy balance that all conversations need to really get anywhere. I need to learn how He talks. And I need to share my heart.

God doesn't change (Malachi 3:6)—He's the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). I, however, change a *lot* and need to change even more. God is the anchored and steady one who is always good; I'm the unfaithful and unsteady one who is almost never totally in the right place. But He loves me anyway! So the first step to my hearing God more and better is understanding that need to grow. This isn't a shameful or necessarily sinful thing. It's natural to have to grow in understanding, just as it's natural for a kid to have to learn how to communicate in their first years. Dad doesn't learn to speak Toddler (though he can understand it pretty well); Toddler learns to speak Dad.

I'm Toddler. God is Dad. I must grow to hear Him more, to understand Him better.

Thankfully, the Acts 1 narrative doesn't leave us hanging. Even though Jesus's earthly ministry is finished in Acts 1 and the disciples still seem *so* far away from what He was trying to accom-

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plish, the Holy Spirit comes in the very next chapter. In John 16:7, Jesus had even said this would be better for the disciples: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

Throughout his gospel John remarks that a lot of things Jesus said to him and the disciples were unintelligible to them at the time, *but then later they made sense*. What does that mean? That they grew into their listening. The disciples were “learning” Jesus and had a staggering amount of “unlearning” to do. They had to unlearn their religiosity, and they had to unlearn the broken interpretation of the Scriptures their traditions had created. In the beginning they could catch every single word yet miss the point because they didn’t have the framework to see and hear it.

Besides their natural process of maturing, the Holy Spirit had yet to come and “teach [them] all things” (John 14:26). Jesus continues talking about the Holy Spirit in John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” Many of us think it would be easier if Jesus were here, right beside us every day, wearing His earth suit and whispering that “Footprints in the Sand” poem every time we feel confused. But Jesus explained in John 16 that we have an advantage in His being gone and the Holy Spirit being here. At the end of Acts 1, we see the disciples trying to figure out God’s will by casting lots to see who will take Judas Iscariot’s place on the disciple roster. In the next chapter, they all get filled with the Holy Spirit, and we never see lots cast again. Why? Because they now have the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit!

We’re no different from the disciples. We need growth. We

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need the Holy Spirit to lead us into deeper and deeper truth. Just like a toddler grows in his ability to talk Dad—or like I’m growing, year by year, in being able to understand Jasmine—we need to progress in how we hear God.

Those of us who have received the Spirit of God have an incredible advantage in *hearing* God, because one of the main roles of the Spirit is to teach us all things. He will help us understand God’s Word and will. Let’s talk through the steps typical for us to grow as we continue in the Holy Spirit.

## Just Like Jesus

Hearing God is intimately tied to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. I think we tend to forget that Jesus was Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-dependent, just like us. So why don’t we talk about the importance of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’s life and ministry? Spirit-Filled Jesus seems to be pretty much missing from our teaching.

I mean, for starters, consider Jesus’s birth: He was born of the Spirit. Don’t ask me how that worked, but the Holy Spirit is His biological dad, not Joseph. Now link that idea up with Romans 8:15, which says, “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” If you’re a Christian, the Holy Spirit has begun a work in your life by adopting you and making you part of the family. *Jesus’s* family. You’re Spirit-born—that’s the starting point of your walk with God. Sure, it’s a little different from the virgin birth, but the idea is meant to make you go, “Huh.”

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Check this: In Luke 4:14 we see a new dimension in Jesus's ministry after he'd been ministered to by the power of God and angels. After the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit."

With that truth in mind, we can feel confident that if the Holy Spirit has adopted us into God's family, we don't need to fear that God is going to abandon us or leave us high and dry. It's by the Holy Spirit that we pray, "Father, speak to me!" The Spirit is connecting us to the Father, making sure we're always tethered to His heart and mind.

Embracing this can transform your spiritual life. Knowing that you are the Father's daughter or son will mean that the fear of not being able to hear God or that you'll somehow miss His will can be thrown out the window! You are born of the Spirit and into the family, just like Jesus, your older brother, was. As you grow to look more like Him, you'll notice more similarities along the way.

Spirit-Born Jesus was baptized, and if you're a Christian, you ought to be baptized too. The Bible says that after Jesus's baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove and an audible voice spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Have you been baptized? If not, get dunked! It's a powerful way to connect to the reality that God wants you to walk the same way Jesus did—in surrender and relationship with Him. If you've already confessed Jesus as Lord and been baptized, you can have an incredible assurance that the Holy Spirit is not only in you but that the Father is speaking His Fatherly pleasure over your life. He loves you. He's

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pleased with who you are in your identity, unconditionally loving and delighting in you, apart from anything you do or don't do. (Although obviously He cares about what you do and don't do!)

Back to the point. The Bible says that immediately after His baptism, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). Baptized Jesus was then Spirit-Full Jesus and then Spirit-*Led* Jesus.

When I started writing this book several years ago, I felt that I needed to hear God (the classic preacher move—speak about what you're going through!). I felt as if I were in a wilderness, as if I couldn't hear. I wondered what the issue was. Maybe things weren't going the way I wanted them to because I hadn't made the right decisions. Maybe it was another person's fault (per the usual). Maybe it was the devil's fault (per the *even more usual*).

Luke 4:1 hit me right between the eyes. Strangely, it started bringing back my confidence. Even Spirit-Led Jesus found Himself in a desert. Testing and wilderness experiences don't mean that you've sinned, even if the devil is there. After all, he didn't lead Jesus there—the Spirit did. And if the Spirit led Spirit-Full Jesus to the desert, then that was the perfect place for Him to be at that time. Maybe it was for me too. Maybe I needed "the desert" to grow.

Part of what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in my life is mature me. Because the Holy Spirit is all about making us grow as members of the Father's family, the Holy Spirit will take us to the gym of life and teach us the workout routine. He'll show us the family business: being more than conquerors. Sometimes it takes a while. That's okay, because we can have incredible confidence knowing that we belong to the Father and that the Holy Spirit is leading us

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into the right places. We belong to the Father now. We don't have to fear when we know we belong to Him.

Yet we may say, *Father, I'm experiencing some serious challenges. Believe it or not, there are some things I cannot do. And I'm worried that I'm not part of the family because I haven't yet developed the muscle to be, and do, what I'm called to.*

God's voice to that fear is, *You're Spirit-born; you belong to Me. You're baptized, you're Mine, and I'm pleased. You're Spirit-full and Spirit-led, and you're going to grow into who and what I've called you to.*

I don't like wilderness. I don't like processes. I don't like remote regions. I don't like gyms and testing and push-ups and pull-ups and sit-ups and cardio and planking and all the horrible things the trainer makes me do. I like my will and my way and going to Disneyland with a stop at In-N-Out Burger, double cheeseburger with onions all the way. But I belong to the Father now, by the Spirit, and because He is a good Father, He puts me into the processes that will mature me and bring out the best in me.

I think we miss the specific God-word or God-thought for our lives because we become so ignorant of the ultimate. We forget what God is accomplishing. We start cursing what God is blessing; we think the Holy Spirit is the devil; we view the Trainer as the taskmaster.

I've found that I'm starting to like the gym, little by little. I'm starting to like eating healthily, little by little. I'm no longer calling leafy greens the devil's lettuce. I'm starting to thank God for what seem to be setbacks, and I'm not giving credit to the devil or demons or even my own weakness or others' idiocy. I'm beginning

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to thank God for what He's leading me into, because at the end of the day, I belong to Him and nobody can snatch me out of His hand. I'm Spirit-born, Spirit-baptized, Spirit-full, Spirit-led, and I'm right where I'm supposed to be. No fear.

## Fresh Filling

When I sit down with a friend, I don't always have an agenda; the conversation may go in places I never thought of before. And when I'm sitting down to talk with people who have a lot of influence in my life, I let *them* set the pace. Sometimes they want to talk about things I haven't considered important, yet they see them critically missing from my life. I've learned not to crowd the conversation but to allow them the space to talk about what they consider timely.

This is how we need to go to God. Through all the ways He speaks, we need to let His Spirit lead. God has work in store for us; He knows exactly what we need to hear at the exact time we need to hear it. He knows all our needs before we even ask for His help. Just as Jesus yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit and allowed the Holy Spirit to set the pace and direction, so must we, or else we end up like the disciples, clueless about what Jesus is saying because we're so full of agendas.

Are you able to be led and clear your agenda? When was the last time you set aside time to be filled in a fresh way by the Holy Spirit? Or are you so full of agendas and timetables and topics that you need to discuss that you don't have time to "wait for the LORD"? (Psalm 37:34).

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Just because you're Spirit-born doesn't mean you're Spirit-full. *Filled* doesn't mean "full." In Ephesians 3:19 Paul said that he was praying that the Ephesians "may be filled with all the fullness of God." Filled with all the fullness. There is one Spirit-birth when the Spirit comes to dwell in us, but there are many Spirit fillings when His power in us is increased or renewed. While Jesus was totally God, He was still dependent on the Holy Spirit for power in His earthly ministry and for His resurrection.

The world and the flesh and the devil will all attack your identity as a son or daughter, because if they can destabilize your core, you won't be able to hear God as your Father. You'll see His processes as provocations; you'll see the people He's brought into your life as limiters rather than limit lifters.

This opening chapter is a bit of a lens cleaner: it's meant to refresh how you're seeing God's sovereignty in your life and how you're seeing the Holy Spirit as a source of power. Luke 4:14 shows us a Spirit-powered Jesus. This new paradigm helped Him to hear the Father properly. Our lens with which we see and effectively hear God is vital. As we are solidified as a son or daughter, more of His speech is detected. The Holy Spirit brings a new degree of power to be a son or daughter as we walk this out.

Spirit-Powered Jesus becomes Spirit-Anointed Jesus in Luke 4:18. Jesus reads a passage in Isaiah about who He is and simultaneously fulfills it. Jesus's life and ministry and calling are all Spirit-dependent, and the Scriptures testified to it. As Jesus's identity is solidified and strengthened as a Son, now a clarity in His calling is solidified and strengthened.

What if you asked the Holy Spirit to fill you in a fresh way

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today? What if you asked the Holy Spirit to tell your heart again about how you belong to the Father? Maybe today you should ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears to the son or daughter work He's working in you. Ask Him to help you see what He's trying to shape in you and to open your ears and heart to these powerful, shaping words. Ask Him to tell you where they're coming from and who they may be coming from. Ask Him to give you patience with those voices. Ask Him for His power to receive those words and their formative authority. And as you begin to look back on your life, as John the Beloved did, you'll begin to have those moments when you're like, "Oh wow. That was God speaking to me the entire time, and I just didn't get it until now."

I'm telling you that God, by the Holy Spirit, is speaking His formative words over you from so many angles, but you're just not hearing them yet. You will, though. You'll recognize His patterns. You'll learn His language. You'll figure this out, and you'll grow.

Maybe what we need to do is lean in. Draw close. Ask the Holy Spirit to draw us to Himself, to show us who we are in Him. And then listen when we need to listen and speak when we need to speak.

Just like in a conversation.



**Remember:** Hearing God starts by understanding that He wants a *conversation* as part of a *growing relationship*.

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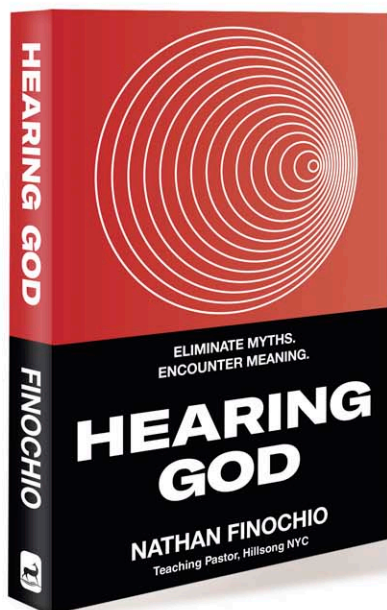


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