

THE
A GUIDE TO HEARING AND
POWER
UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD
OF YOUR
SPEAKS WHILE YOU SLEEP
DREAMS



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STEPHANIE IKE OKAFOR
FOREWORD BY TOURÉ ROBERTS

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WaterBrook

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To my baby girl, Ariel Okafor, I dedicate this book.
Before I had the honor of meeting your father and
holding you in my arms, I heard your name and saw
your sweet face in a dream. You are living proof
that dreams are a landscape where God speaks.

FOREWORD

In the early hours of a November morning in 2020, something extraordinary happened to me that changed the course of my life forever. It was a moment that not only transformed me as a person but also set me on a path of faith, impact, and fulfillment that I am still living today.

If I were to pinpoint the turning point that led to more than two decades of success and significance beyond my wildest dreams, it would undoubtedly be that fateful morning and the life-altering encounter I had with God—through a dream. As I sit here reflecting and writing this foreword, I am struck by the realization that every significant shift in my life’s journey was either foretold or fore-instructed through a dream.

That particular early morning dream was the catalyst for a series of events that propelled me into a life of purpose and meaning. It was a moment of divine intervention that set me on a path I could have never imagined for myself.

If you consider the characters in Scripture, so many were guided and profoundly impacted by dreams. These accounts range from Abraham, the father of faith, to Jacob, who would later become Israel, the namesake of God’s covenanted people. There was Joseph, the dreamer who would ultimately become extremely powerful in Egypt. This Joseph would be second only

to Pharaoh himself and would go on to save multitudes from a devastating, threatening famine.

There was also King Solomon, who through a dream was tested and, once proven faithful, was made to become the wisest and wealthiest person of his time.

There is an overwhelming amount of men and women to whom God revealed things through dreams. In fact, if you were to remove the accounts of dreams and their significance from Scripture, the seminal events that comprise the fundamental truths we stand upon would have never happened. Without dreams, the wise men who honored the birth of Jesus would have exposed His location to Herod who sought to kill Him. If Joseph, the partner of Mary, wasn't enlightened about Mary's immaculate conception through a dream, he would have abandoned her and the union that was ordained to raise the Savior of the world would have been dissolved. There are countless scenarios we can consider that would drastically change our reality if these dream encounters didn't occur. Thankfully, this is not the case. And hopefully the point I am making is clear: Dreams matter, and not just for ancient biblical characters; they matter for you and me today.

I have had the privilege of watching Stephanie Ike Okafor up close for more than a decade. I watched her serve and work her way up to the top ranks within our organization in Los Angeles. I observed Stephanie grow from one who stood in the lobby welcoming guests as they entered our services to standing on our global stage welcoming multitudes of souls into the kingdom. Stephanie's efforts didn't stop there: She went above and beyond by providing her listeners with rich and insightful revelations about the kingdom and the journey they decided to embark

upon. Her voice is one of precision and practicality, and millions have been influenced by her ability to communicate deep spiritual truths, translating them into instantly applicable and implementable disciplines. Stephanie presents *the truth*, and I am hard-pressed to find a better communicator or more compelling voice on the subject of dreams.

I am not only immensely proud of Stephanie and excited about this work, but I am also extremely excited for you. I have no question that the book you're holding in your hands, viewing on your device, or perhaps hearing in your ears will be a catalyst of clarity for you, giving you newfound confidence and a clear path to actualizing God's good plans for your life.

In a world that appears increasingly unstable, uncertain, chaotic, and confusing, the silver lining in it all is that God is still in charge and thankfully still speaking through dreams. This means that there is yet a path through the fog and a guiding light through the obscurity. God is neither in the dark nor will He allow His people to walk blindly. We will know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. One of the greatest truth-revealing tools that God affords us is the enlightening and empowering dreams He sends our way. So, without further ado, let's dive in and become proficient in the meaning of dreams and their interpretation. The journey to clarity awaits us.

—TOURÉ ROBERTS,
bestselling author, entrepreneur,
investor, and founder of ONE

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INTRODUCTION

When I was in the early stages of my pregnancy, expecting to become a first-time mother, the doctors discovered that I had three large fibroids, tumors that were causing me extreme pain. My husband and I were on vacation in Maui when my ob-gyn at the time called to discuss his recommendation, which was to terminate the pregnancy and undergo surgery to remove the fibroids. But I had been having dreams about my daughter for years, even before meeting her father. Despite the intense pain, I chose to keep my baby, trusting that God would see me through.

On a particularly difficult night when the pain was unbearable and I couldn't find relief, I walked around our hotel room, my face marked with tears, and began to pray. It was a desperate cry for comfort and healing. I was supposed to preach at our church in Los Angeles that Sunday, but I thought about calling my senior pastor to cancel because of what I was going through.

After finding a little relief and falling asleep, I had a dream. In the dream, I had a powerful encounter with the Lord. He handed me a black leather Bible and assured me that no harm would come to my child. He reminded me that He's with me in both good times and tough times. And He encouraged me not to cancel preaching that Sunday.

The black Bible symbolized my holding on to God's promises. I contemplated what He had promised regarding childbirth and

healing, confident that my baby girl would be okay. Trusting God's unwavering word became my anchor that no matter what, He was with me and He would bring healing and a supernatural childbirth experience.

That dream became a turning point for me. The word I received from God became my truth and declaration in the face of any negative report. I witnessed how the Lord turned things around. Although I was still in pain during the trip, mentally my mindset shifted; I knew it was only for a season.

After we returned home to Los Angeles, I woke up prepared to preach that Sunday morning, even if I had to do it sitting down because of the pain. But to my surprise, the pain had lessened. When I stepped onto the stage to preach, all the pain disappeared. It was a miracle. Trusting in Him and holding on to the words from my dream changed everything. It turned my worry about losing the pregnancy into confidence as I eagerly awaited my baby girl's arrival.

That dream was holy ground.

Holy Ground

One of the most significant biblical and historical figures is a man named Moses. The story of his life is intriguing and remarkable. He was purposed by God to set the nation of Israel free from slavery and lead them in the ways of God. God spoke to him as one would a friend.¹ The intimacy of their relationship was so admirable that when Moses died, God Himself buried him.

Moses's journey with God was ignited by an encounter on Mount Horeb. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him from within a burning bush that somehow wasn't consumed by the

fire. Moses decided to investigate the phenomenon. From the bush, God called to Moses by name. Moses responded, and God instructed him to remove his sandals, for the ground where he stood was holy.

Horeb is a Hebrew word meaning “desolate.”² It seems ironic that in God’s wisdom, He chose a desolate place—a place defined as barren and empty—as the place to make Himself, the creator and giver of life, known to Moses. However, God is the one who fills all things, and so a desolate place by our standards can become a hidden opportunity for an encounter with God.

Mount Horeb wasn’t a desolate place. In fact, it was filled with the presence of God. Through this burning bush experience, God called Moses into the awareness that this place was actually holy ground. It was at Mount Horeb that God revealed Himself to Moses as the one true God. It was there that Moses discovered God’s wisdom, strategy, and guidance for his purpose as a deliverer to bring the Israelites out of bondage. This location later marked the spot for several life-changing encounters that Moses would have with God.

Dreams are often considered desolate places, seemingly insignificant. But God calls us to holy-ground experiences in our dreams. Through our discovery of God’s voice while we sleep, God can reveal His plans for our lives, show what we’re purposed to do on earth, give us strategy for breakthrough, and so much more.

Everyone Can Have a Holy-Ground Experience

Upon creating the world, God declared everything He had made “good,” but when it came to Adam being alone, He said it was “not good.” This inspired the need for the woman to be revealed

because she represented the fullness of God's plan regarding the establishment of humankind. This leads us to the first biblical record of sleep.

In the Garden of Eden, "God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He [God] took one of his [Adam's] ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man."³ When God put man to sleep, He was creating both what would benefit man and what would release the intention and purpose of God for humankind.

Sleep is extremely beneficial to our lives. We know getting a full night's sleep can enhance concentration and productivity, improve memory, strengthen the heart, support a healthy immune system, and much more. Moreover, not getting enough sleep can be detrimental to our health: It weakens the immune system, leads to weight gain, and may increase the risk of certain cancers, diabetes, and other health problems. But this isn't simply science stating the health benefits of sleep; it is part of God's design. It's not just about what our bodies need; it's about why God created our bodies to require sleep at all.⁴

The average individual sleeps for twenty-six years of their life,⁵ which is equivalent to about one-third of our life span. Why would God create us in a way in which sleep takes up such a huge portion of our lives? If sleep has only natural or physical benefits, does it then take us away from His presence? The answers to these questions can be explored in Adam's experience, and what we find is that while he slept, he was still in God's presence. Sleep simply presented an opportunity for God to reveal His plans and purposes. God, being all powerful, had an infinite number of ways He could have revealed Eve, but He chose to work through Adam's sleep state.

One of many benefits of sleep is that it reminds us that God is ever-present. He is with us at all times—awake or asleep. As you journey through this book, I hope you'll begin to recognize that your dreams are truly holy ground and that they reveal God's wisdom, guidance, and strategy for your life.

Before You Continue

I wrote this book not merely to inform but to equip you to better hear God's voice in your dreams. Here are a few tips to get the most out of this experience:

1. **PRAY:** Take a moment to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to open your heart and deepen your understanding as you start this journey.
2. **ENGAGE:** Each chapter concludes with reflection questions. Resist the urge to skim through them, and instead, embrace the invitation for intentional reflection as you answer these questions thoughtfully.
3. **JOURNAL:** Keep a journal close by to jot down personal notes, respond to reflection questions, and record your dreams, along with any insights into their meanings. This will serve as a valuable tool for tracking your growth, strengthening your memory, and helping you interpret your dreams. Your journal is meant to be a record of your spiritual journey, so use it to capture the evolving landscape of your understanding.

PART I

Hello Dreamer,

I wrote this book with you in mind. The power of dreams is undeniable, but unlocking that power begins with discovering the power of you. You possess infinite possibilities, having been created in the image of the one true, eternal God. For this reason, the first part of this book is dedicated to laying a solid foundation that will equip you with the necessary tools and insights to tap into the full potential of your dreams. By exploring the role you play in receiving and interpreting divine messages from God through your dreams, my goal is to awaken the dreamer in you.

While it's true that I had a natural inclination toward dreaming from a young age, the consistency, intensity, and clarity of these dreams have been enhanced through these insights. I have witnessed remarkable results as people I've mentored have been empowered to have prophetic dreams they never thought possible. Time and again, individuals from all backgrounds have reported how learning to listen for God's voice in their dreams has led to greater clarity about their life and helped them make key decisions with newfound confidence. Such incredible stories serve as a testament to the transformative power of these teachings.

I'm thrilled to be here with you, and I have great expectations of what God will do in and through you as we embark on this journey.

Yours truly,
Stephanie

ONE

GOD SPEAKS TO YOU

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the Word was God.

—John 1:1

During my teenage years, God spoke to me so intensely that I questioned whether I was truly hearing His voice. Everywhere I went, I heard Him speak. He spoke to me about the people around me—friends and family and strangers. He prompted me to pray for, talk to, or encourage. Regardless of the positive impact those conversations had on people, I wrestled with the idea that maybe it was coincidence rather than God. I wondered, *Is this really the voice of God? Does He always have something to say?*

At one point, the church I attended hosted a youth retreat with a guest minister, the late prophet E'vann Walker. My friends and I were excited for the retreat—but for the wrong reasons. We hoped to spend time together and with the boys we had crushes on. Despite all the distractions, that retreat had one of the greatest impacts on my life.

The retreat opened with a worship night. There were over fifty of us seated on the floor in a conference room. When the minister began to worship, he looked at me and said, “Get up!” I looked around, wondering if he was speaking to someone else. Then he said, “You! I’m looking at you. Get up!” As I got up, he continued, “God wants you to know that He speaks to you. The voice you’ve been questioning is God speaking to you. It’s the same voice you’ve known for most of your life. You don’t need to doubt it. You just need to know Him.”

As he was speaking, I felt a power come over me like an electric shock that knocked me to the floor. I missed the rest of the message, and my friends had to fill me in later, but I wasn’t harmed, because the power that came over me was the power of God, confirming the message.

In the following days, I pondered that message, especially the words, “You don’t need to doubt it. You just need to know Him.”

“To know Him” is a weighty statement. It has many layers. For

God desires
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one, there will never be enough time to fully know God. He is the beginning of all things, yet He is not bound to a beginning or an end. He just is. To know Him is the journey of our eternal life.

Knowing God is to study what He embodies. John 1:1 describes Him as “the Word.” Everything created was made through God. Another way to say that is, all things were made through the Word. According to A. W. Tozer, “A word is a medium by which thoughts are expressed.”¹ Hence, creation is an expression of God’s thoughts; creation speaks of Him.² In God’s true essence, He speaks. He

speaks through creation, He speaks through His Holy Spirit, and He is forever speaking.

Throughout the Bible, we see that God speaks in many ways. Although the Bible is the foundation for knowing His voice, it doesn't limit His communication to you. Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "He will guide you into all truth."³ God desires to lead you into truth. He speaks, and He speaks *to you*.

God speaks to us in various ways, and although dreams are one of those channels, I first want to lay the foundation by examining the four primary ways we experience God's voice: feeling, knowing, hearing, and seeing. In a similar way to how our five physical senses allow us to experience humankind and the world around us, our spiritual senses allow us to experience God's voice. When it comes to these senses, it's common to feel a stronger connection to one over the others. Some people might identify as "feelers" more than "seers." Yet, if you were to consider your physical senses, you wouldn't say you're more of a taster than a toucher, right? You're aware of your ability to use both. Likewise, we have access to each of these spiritual senses; we just need to learn how to tap into them.

Humankind was created in the likeness of God. In Genesis 1:26—a passage from the creation account—God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (ESV). How we experience God's voice and receive His word is also a reflection of bearing His image. We have the ability to see like He sees, to feel like He feels, to know like He knows, and to hear like He hears.

So let's dive into a better understanding of these senses, because it's pivotal for us to recognize the richness in the diversity of our spiritual senses and their connection to what happens when we dream.

Four Ways to Experience God's Voice

The Feeler

Feelers are those with a heightened sensitivity to the emotions of God that are connected to our decisions, goals, ideas, plans, and environments. Reading this statement, you might wonder, *Does God have emotions?* John 3:16 is an anchor to our faith, and it says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” The key word to highlight in the context of emotions is *love*. Because of God’s love for humanity, He gave us Jesus. The Scriptures are filled with different expressions of God’s emotions. We read of anger,⁴ compassion,⁵ hate,⁶ joy,⁷ and much more. Nevertheless, it’s important to note that God’s emotions are all rooted in His love for humankind and that He never acts unjustly or makes mistakes.

So how do we experience His guidance through our emotions? You might’ve heard the saying, “I don’t feel peace about this.” Maybe you’ve said it yourself when something looks perfect on paper, yet there is an unrest in your spirit. Though you may not understand the sensation, it represents a sensitivity to God’s emotions nudging you to recognize that not all that glitters is gold.

In a similar way, there are decisions that seem ridiculous to make, and yet there’s a peace you can’t explain that reassures you everything will work out. That feeling is an expression of God’s voice directing you to move toward that path.

Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (NIV). In other words, the peace of God doesn’t ne-

gate what you may be experiencing, but it transcends the natural perception of the situation and communicates His leading.

Peace is the feeling of calmness, which can quiet negative emotions like anxiety, anger, stress, and frustration. It's a directional emotion that speaks to the safety and security of God's guidance in our lives. The *absence* of His peace, however, could speak to being misaligned with your purpose. It could be a signal for you to pause on proceeding with a life-altering decision and to seek Him for clarity.

But notice there's a difference between peace from God and the peace that comes from the world. According to John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Although Jesus reveals the extension of His peace, it is still followed by the command to not be afraid. Regardless of the manner we experience God's voice, it doesn't compel us. We still must make the decision to embrace and live by it.

This gives us a clue for how to discern between God's peace and false peace. False peace isn't the presence of calmness but the drive to quiet our fears instead of following our faith. Although we may be emotionally troubled about making a fear-based decision, we'd rather hold on to what brings us perceived comfort or instant gratification.

Scripture tells of "the rich young ruler," who lived an honorable life, but there was something missing, and it propelled him to inquire of Jesus, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"⁸ Jesus instructed him to "go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."⁹ Jesus wasn't seeking for the man to be poor; rather, Jesus discerned that the man's finances were

his safety, he identified himself by them, and they would always pose a threat and be a barrier to submitting to God's leading because he valued financial security above everything else. Scripture implies that this man chose to hold on to his riches despite being "deeply dismayed" and "grieving" about his decision.¹⁰ The man's dilemma brought much sorrow, yet he allowed his fears of discomfort and insecurity to drive his decisions.

The peace that comes from Jesus is different. It's not always about the absence of difficulty, because a difficult situation can reveal God's purpose; hardship can reveal what God intends for you. The peace of God is anchored in truth. That's why David said in Psalm 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me." The shadow of death speaks to things that are within proximity of death like disappointments, betrayals, denials, delays, sickness, loneliness, and so on. Yet in the heat of it all, David recognized that because Jesus, the Prince of Peace,¹¹ was with him, he would make it through.

In embracing the peace of God, there are foundational truths you must know to change your perspective of difficulty.

- First, regardless of your mistakes, you are loved by God.¹²
- Second, God is for you.¹³
- Third, the circumstance is not working against you; it's working for you.¹⁴

The Knower

You may be a knower if you have an instinctive understanding of what you ought to do and are confident in the decision. This

unshakable confidence is rooted in the faith that comes from the Spirit of God¹⁵ to empower you to take a stand, fight for, or move in the direction of God's purpose for your life.

One example of this understanding is when Jesus met two brothers, Peter and Andrew, who were fishermen. While they were fishing, Jesus approached them and said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."¹⁶ Even without proof of the full extent of Jesus's identity, they instinctively knew to abandon their nets and follow Him. In the same way, we can possess an unshakable confidence that propels us in a direction that manifests God's will for our lives.

I recall a time in 2021 when a pastor friend of mine was hosting a conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and instinctively I knew I needed to be there. I texted her that I would be attending the conference, and I was looking forward to seeing her. While getting ready to purchase my flight and hotel, I received a message from her about a sudden change. Although this conference had been planned and confirmed a year in advance, one of the speakers could no longer make it due to a family need. Being that I'd already planned to come, my friend asked me if I would speak. Immediately, I knew this was connected to the knowing I felt about my being at the conference. I was grateful that I had been obedient to the word of God through my *inner-knower* because so many lives were blessed. People were supernaturally healed and hope was restored. It was indeed a beautiful move of God's power that took place throughout the entire conference.

Through your inner-knower, you can also have knowledge of things you wouldn't normally be able to because God shares part of His unlimited knowledge with you. For example, at the close of a church service at One Church, I saw a certain man and knew I needed to pray with him and tell him not to be afraid, no mat-

ter what he was going through, because God was with him. After I prayed with the man, one of our church staff walked up to me and asked, “Were you just talking to *Black Panther’s* Chadwick Boseman?”

I knew he attended our church, but at the time I didn’t recognize him because he’d gone through a drastic weight loss. Later, I began to wonder why the message to him was about not being afraid, and also noticed that simultaneously when I shared it, I felt a sense of loss (the *feeler* in me at work).

A couple of months later when many, including myself, grieved his passing, it was revealed that the cause of death was colon cancer. He’d been battling it for four years, but the information was never made public until he passed. I reflected on our exchange and was reminded that God’s presence doesn’t mean everything in your life is going great. But He is with you through life’s hardest moments to comfort and guide you through.

Some things in life are beyond our understanding, but God uses them to serve a purpose for our good and the good of those connected to our lives. Though you may not see the why or the good outcomes in your lifetime, your difficult moments can become seeds for the next generation.

When I learned about Chadwick’s diagnosis, it planted a seed in my heart—and in the hearts of millions of others, I would imagine—to never quit, no matter life’s challenges. The diagnosis didn’t stop him from being one of the greatest actors. In fact, through it, he became one of the most influential human beings. Could it be that as I was praying with him, he was reminded that he is still loved by God and, regardless of the diagnosis, God is with him? The purpose for that prayerful moment, I may never know in my lifetime, but I am forever grateful for it. It reminded

me that when our inner-knower kicks in, it's to serve God's purpose—not our own.

The inner-knower can also be experienced as a memory. Some may refer to this as a *déjà vu* moment. *Déjà vu* describes an uncanny knowing that you've experienced something when you never have. This often leaves many with unanswered questions about whether it speaks to a past life, or what indeed it is.

Déjà vu experiences communicate through your inner-knower that you are exactly where you need to be, not just regarding the activity you were doing when it happened, but that your season of life is in alignment with God's purpose. Sometimes we get caught up on the hamster wheel of achieving bigger and better, disconnected from the present because it doesn't seem to be glamorous in comparison to the lives of others. We feel unsettled and unhappy about life because ours seems ordinary. Some of us wonder what's fancy or glamorous about being at home all day with the children, working a temp job, being a waitress, serving in the background, volunteering, or helping to raise our siblings. *Déjà vu* moments can often happen as a reminder that the memory we have right now is tied to the life God already knew about us before time, and we are right where we need to be.

In Psalm 139:16, David shared a revelation about God as it related to his life. He said, "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (NIV). In other words, he was saying, "Before I was formed You knew me, and there's a purpose for each waking day of my life that was already established before I experienced them." Although there's no biblical mention of a *déjà vu* experience, I believe it speaks to the all-knowing nature of God.

He knew you before you existed, and your mind is simply experiencing what God knows, as He, who in eternity, knew these moments of your life would happen. It's not about a past life but a known one.

However, though these *déjà vu* experiences can serve as reminders or as confirmation that you're on the right path, they are not to be solely relied on. If you've never had one, don't start questioning your life; this is merely one of the diverse ways we might experience God's voice.

The Hearer

Hearing God's voice is often limited to the idea of hearing His audible voice, which causes many to rule out the experience because it seems out of reach or intimidating. A gentleman once said to me, "I don't think God wants to talk to me. There are billions of people in the world. Why would He take time out to speak to me? That's a lot of pressure." But we underestimate God's love, His desire to speak to us, and the various ways He does.

The hearer experiences God through a voice. This can be outwardly, as an audible voice, or inwardly through an inner voice.

Samuel was called by God to be a prophet to the nation of Israel.¹⁷ A prophet is a spiritual leader who counsels the people of a region and those in authority about the revealed plans and purposes of God.¹⁸

Through the Holy Spirit, we can prophesy,¹⁹ which is to speak forth the plans of God as they are revealed to us by God. But the difference between being a prophet and being prophetic, the office of a prophet, is a matter of assignment. Prophets are as-

signed to regions; they have a burden and a responsibility for territories and their people. Being prophetic refers to the ability to edify, encourage, and equip yourself and those connected to you with spiritual insight for God's purpose.²⁰ It's important to make this distinction as we learn about Samuel, because although Samuel was a prophet, every aspect of accessing the word of God, including being *the hearer*, is available to all. We just have different assignments.

Samuel, as a young boy, experienced the audible voice of God but initially misunderstood it as Eli's voice.²¹ After Eli realized that it was God who was speaking to Samuel, he instructed the boy on how to respond. Notice that Samuel wasn't hearing a strange or frightening voice; it sounded so familiar that Samuel confused it with someone he knew well.

Being that God is the origin of all things, He can speak every language. He can speak to you in a manner that sounds familiar to you or gets your attention. For instance, there was a day that was particularly challenging for me. A couple of things happened in a manner I didn't expect, and in my frustration, I started questioning God, asking, "Where were You? Why did You let this happen?" Although I was asking these questions, I didn't want to hear a response. I just wanted to vent. I concluded that God had abandoned me. Suddenly, I heard a voice say a word that I don't remember now and at the time I had never heard before, and it captured my attention. I paused to look up its meaning and, to my surprise, it was a language that I neither spoke nor understood, and it translated to "listen." God was trying to get my attention to give me the right perspective, but I was so engulfed in my frustration that the moment could only be disrupted by an unusual occurrence.

When my older brother's wife was pregnant with their first child, my brother had an experience where he audibly heard a voice say, "The boy is coming." A couple of weeks later, he and his wife found out they were having a boy. This experience marked my brother's life in such a powerful way. He began to understand that for God to announce the coming of his son before his arrival meant that our lives didn't begin here. Understanding this gave him confidence about the uncertainties of the future.

Hearing God's audible voice isn't as prevalent today as it was in Old Testament times. Prior to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit wasn't released to dwell within God's people. He was upon them but not within them.²² When He dwells upon you, your natural senses are the more dominant way to experience God's voice.

When Jesus was baptized, after the Holy Spirit rested upon Him, Matthew 3:17 recounts, "A voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Immediately after the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, the audible voice of God was heard by all who were within proximity. There was a connection between the Spirit coming upon Him and the audible voice being heard.

When the Holy Spirit dwells *within* us, our spiritual senses are more sensitive to serve as a channel to experience God's voice inwardly. You might be familiar with the saying "a voice in my head." There's a beautiful aspect to being able to hear God's voice through our thoughts. Inwardly, God's voice often shows up as a distinctive thought (or series of thoughts)—not alarming but still quite different from our own. His voice in our mind informs, directs, or instructs us, without putting us in perceived harm or

danger. That's important to know because it prevents us from confusing His voice with the destructive self-talk that's often triggered by pain or fear.

When I lived with my brother, there was a day we got into a heated argument. I believed he was in the wrong, and I felt justified to dwell in anger. However, when he left the apartment, a distinct and disruptive thought came to my mind: "Go and make your brother's bed." I love making my bed, and though my brother enjoys a made bed, he does not like doing it. This is how I knew there was no possible way the suggestion to make his bed came from me.

Reluctantly, I obeyed the instruction, and I was so thrilled I did, because as I made his bed, I was overwhelmed with love for him. I was no longer upset, and when he returned to the apartment and walked into his room, he saw my act of love as a response to a misunderstanding. He apologized, and we were able to laugh over it without holding on to offense or bitterness. My experience of hearing the voice of God inwardly to make my brother's bed was God's way of communicating to me to let go of the offense and express love to my brother. No matter how we experience God's voice, it will always serve an outcome that draws us closer to the nature and will of God.

When Jesus was preparing the disciples with teachings on how to navigate persecution, He said to them, "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks *in you*."²³ Jesus painted the picture of how God's Spirit spoke inwardly to the disciples, giving them the wisdom and information for what to say in circumstances that went be-

yond their knowledge or exposure. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit can inwardly speak to us to inform, instruct, and direct us.

In God's sovereignty, we can hear His voice both audibly and inwardly. Neither should be ruled out. But in either case, experiencing God's voice as a hearer shouldn't be feared or doubted as a sign of a mental health disorder. A disorder impairs daily functioning, while experiencing God's voice amplifies it. We don't lose our ability to connect, communicate, and engage in society. On the flip side, we become more compassionate, understanding, confident, caring, relatable, loving, and purpose driven.

The Seer

Our natural sight perceives up to 80 percent of all our sensory impressions, and for this reason, many scientists regard it as the most important of all our human senses.²⁴ More than the other senses, the eyes best protect us from danger. But you don't need 20/20 eyesight to be a seer, because seers can experience God's voice through both natural and spiritual eyes.

When God in His infinite wisdom chose to use the apostle John to receive His Word through visions, it resulted in the last book of the Bible—the book of Revelation. The word *revelation* comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which simply means “a disclosure of truth.”²⁵ This book unveils Jesus in such a compelling way. It was written because John experienced God's voice as a seer. God instructed him, “What you *see*, write in a book.”²⁶ In my experience and study, the seeing realm is not of sole importance, but it's the most important.

Natural Sight

What an individual sees in the natural is not all there is. There are angelic beings and supernatural activity hidden from our natural eyes. But there are times when God chooses to open our eyes so we can see how the supernatural world partners with the natural world.

My first supernatural experience was in seeing something others couldn't. It was an encounter with an angel when I was nine years old. I still remember the details of that moment as though it happened just five minutes ago.

I grew up in Nigeria in a single-parent household. My father was murdered when I was eight months old. At the time in Nigeria, the justice systems and structure of the economy weren't designed for women to thrive, especially as single mothers. Nevertheless, my mother, my superhero, is a resilient, disciplined, go-getter woman who doesn't take no for an answer. Her life has been an example to me that there's always a way when you're determined to get results. But despite her tenacity, there were still the in-between moments of uncertainty, fear, and doubt.

Before my father was murdered, he was a very wealthy man, but after his death, his older brother demanded everything from us to the extent of sending death threats to my mother, who was now left with three young kids, myself the youngest.

Fighting for justice in a society that wasn't structured to provide it wasn't worth it to my mother to risk leaving her kids as orphans, so she gave over all she had. My mother became an entrepreneur—some days were good and other days brought about uncertainty.

On one of those uncertain days, my mother told us about an

important document she'd been looking for. I remember asking God—who I wasn't sure existed—to help my mother. I wondered and questioned why my father had to die, because if he was still alive, the burden wouldn't be on my mother. Randomly throughout that day, I kept finding old photos of my father in places I hadn't seen before. That night in my bedroom, I found another photo of my father. Suddenly, I sensed a strong presence in my room. I couldn't see the person, but I knew someone was there and I could tell where they were standing.

In my heart, I was at peace, but in my mind, I was troubled because I remembered the scary movies I'd seen. I immediately ran to my mother, who was still awake at the time. The moment I lay down in her bed and before I could share my experience with her, she fell into a deep sleep. Then I sensed the same presence from my room also in my mother's room. I immediately covered my eyes with the blanket. Yet even with my eyes closed I could see a person whose skin seemed to be made of light. I opened my eyes, and I saw the same person. He sat calmly in the middle of the room.

For some reason, in that moment I said within myself, "God, if this is of you, cause wind to flow through my ankles." To date, I believe those words were inspired by the Holy Spirit because there was no way I would've thought to utter that. Within seconds, there was a gush of wind that went *through* my ankles and immediately I was not afraid.

The man stood from his seated position, walked toward my mother, and placed something in her hands. Shortly after, my mother woke up and I told her all that happened. She initially didn't take it seriously, but later in the morning a pastor called her and said, "There was an angelic visitation that took place in your home last night."

To be honest, I needed that confirmation as much as my mother did. Then, later that day, my mother randomly found a document that had some of the information she was looking for. Immediately, I knew that document was connected to the paper that was placed in her hand. I later understood that God had heard us calling for help and spoke to me through the seeing realm.

Psalm 103:20 says, “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!” (ESV). Angels are part of God’s kingdom strategy to carry out His plans, which is oftentimes connected to bringing assistance to humanity. For instance, when a prophet named Elisha faced threats and an army was sent against him, he wasn’t afraid, but one of his staff was naturally panicked. Elisha prayed, saying, “‘LORD, I pray, *open his eyes* that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”²⁷

Elisha knew God had sent assistance in a time of trouble. Experiencing angels through your natural sight should prompt you to be confident in God, not in the angels, because they do His bidding. And know that if you’ve never seen an angel, it doesn’t mean they’re not with you. Hebrews 13:2 reminds us that many of us have met angels under the guise of strangers who looked and sounded like us.

Since the seer can see in the natural what others may not see, it’s possible for them to also see the dark side of what others don’t see—the activities of the demonic. But it’s important to understand that when you’re submitted to the Holy Spirit, your ability to see is governed by God’s will, so no matter what’s revealed to you, it cannot harm you and it serves a purpose for your good.

Spiritual Sight

Spiritual sight can be experienced through visions or dreams. Visions can be a download of visual information received through your spiritual sight. Nearly the entire book of Revelation was a vision John received.

Often when I'm praying, God gives me visions that provide profound insight into the subject of my prayers. For example, I remember praying over a project that God had put on my heart to do, but there were other work-related activities that were demanding my time. So I wasn't putting as much effort toward this project as I should have. On a certain day, while I was in prayer for the project, God gave me a vision of an hourglass turned over, with a little bit of sand left to spill into the bottom chamber. In the vision, I heard, "You're running out of time." I immediately understood that what God required from me was better time management to finish what He inspired me to start.

Visions and dreams reveal God's word to us. In the Old Testament, they were a primary way God spoke to people—so much so that when God was quiet, for one reason or another, there was a lack of spiritual sight.²⁸ Today, visions are still pivotal to experiencing God's voice. They can sometimes be interactive; while being awake, you may be visually and mentally engaged in a supernatural experience with the Lord. The New Testament also gives examples of interactive visions. Acts 9:10 recounts, "Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a *vision*, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Here I am, Lord'" (ESV). Then God gave instruction to Ananias on how to carry out God's purpose.

The key difference between visions and dreams is that a vi-

sion is given when a person is awake, while a dream, a “vision of the night,” is given when a person is asleep.

Dreams Are Unique

Dreams are unique in that we can know, hear, feel, and see all together, and during the restful state of sleep, we are most receptive to experiencing God’s voice. Because today the Holy Spirit is with us and in us, God speaks to us in our dreams far more often than we might realize—and it’s exciting to harness this. The dream realm provides the opportunity for the intelligence and busyness of humankind to not get in the way. According to Job 33:14–16:

For God may speak in one way,
or in another, *yet man* does not
perceive it. In a dream, in a
vision of the night, when deep
sleep falls upon men, while
slumbering on their beds, then
He opens the ears of men, and
seals their instruction.

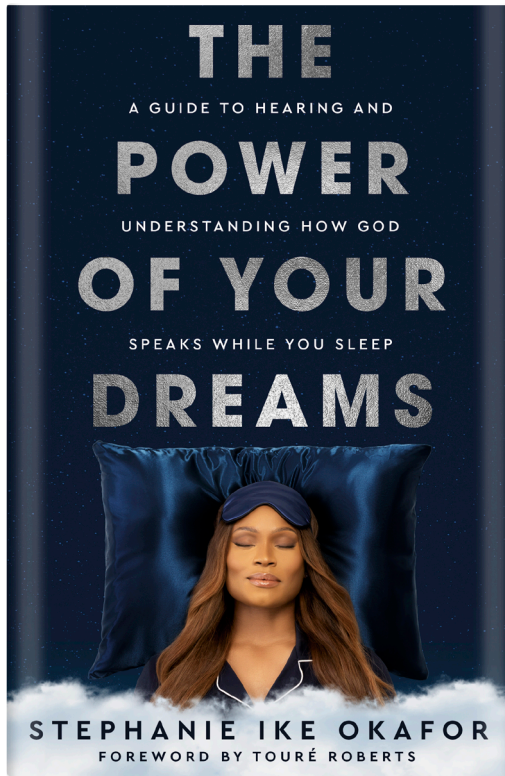
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Could it be that while we are doing life, our ears are closed because of the busyness of our days? While we are aware of our daily activities, are we unaware of the voice of God? Our distracted lifestyles cloud the sensitivity required to experience God’s voice. So the dream realm becomes a great opportunity for God to instruct us.

In that realm, God can teach us without our “rational” minds interrupting. There’s less human argument to counter God’s wisdom and instruction, allowing a clearer flow of revelation. Dreams present the best opportunity for you to experience God’s voice without being frightened or anxious. Through dreams, God encounters you in your rested state to give you guidance and strategy for your life.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on the times you’ve experienced God’s voice in your life. Which of the four ways—feeling, knowing, hearing, or seeing—have you most experienced? Which one would you like to grow in?
 2. God speaks to us to communicate and strengthen His relationship with us. Consider what motive is driving you to grow your understanding of your dreams.
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