

**Hearing God: Learning to Listen to the Spirit of God**  
**A Four Week Summer Session for All**  
By Brad Bailey

**Session Four**  
**Partnering with God in Ministry**

**Welcome / Prayer: Bring ourselves...and welcome God's presence.**

**Introduction**

In this final evening of these sessions, we are going to focus more on hearing God with and for others... on growing as partners with God for the sake of others,

If we look at the life of Jesus... we see that he spent time in communion with God the Father. He "grew in wisdom and stature." (Luke 2:52) He clearly became more rooted in this relationship and in who he was. And this relationship was a partnership between Jesus in this created realm and the Father in heaven. He grew to "see what the Father was doing" and embraced his role of enacting the working of the Father. And....this is what he called all his followers into... to become partners... in the work of the Kingdom.

**Why does God do that?** Not by necessity. God is quite clear that he can sovereignly work without us. I imagine he works with us for a reason similar to a father wanting to work with their daughter or son... he values relationship...not just results. He created us to bear His image and work in the world.

**Jesus is calling us into partnership with God.**

I want to invite us to listen to what Jesus said to his disciples... because it really is what he desires for each of us. Here is what we read in the Gospel of John... from one of his final times with his disciples ,,and then after the resurrection. I invite you to close your eyes.... and allow your spirit to hear Jesus...

**John 15:1, 5, 14-16: 16:12-15; 20:21-22**

15 <sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...<sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name....  
16 ...<sup>12</sup> "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup> He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

And then following his resurrection, John describes

20 <sup>21</sup> Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

**Our partnership with God is empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the purpose of Christ.**

If you acknowledge Christ... as Savior and Lord.... I want you to affirm to yourself....

***"I am a partner with God... continuing the ministry of Christ... by the working of the Holy Spirit."***

The Holy Spirit wants to work in all of us...and gives different spiritual gifting to each of us.

### 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. <sup>7</sup> A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. <sup>8</sup> To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. <sup>9</sup> The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. <sup>10</sup> He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. <sup>11</sup> It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Partnering with God enjoys a diversity of gifting... with unity of participation and purpose.

For those less familiar, the early church recognized and described what they called “spiritual gifts.” These are referred to in three of the writings in the New Testament. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 28-30, and Ephesians 4:11) Drawing from all these references, we have mention of the following that may be included:

#### Spiritual Gifts

Administration	Healing	Prophecy
Apostleship	Interpretation	Service
Discernment	Knowledge	Teaching
Evangelism	Leadership	Tongues
Exhortation	Mercy	Wisdom
Faith	Miracles	
Giving	Pastor/Shepherd	

They are **not describing** that which was ever given any **formal definition**, but rather reflect **what was being seen among the community**. However, many helpful descriptions can be found based on the meaning of the words and practical experiences across the life of the church. [1]

What is helpful...is to appreciate the spirit of this diversity. It's a diversity that reflects our connected life. Listen to how Paul explains this in what he wrote in his letter to the Ephesians....

**There is one God who is the Father of all people. Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us. Christ has generously divided out his gifts to us....** <sup>13</sup> **This will continue until we are united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him.** - Ephesians 4:6-7, 13 (CEV)

He is in all of us ...uses all of us...and divides His spiritual gifting among us.

**God is uniting us as the interdependent Body of Christ. Therefore, it is vital that we don't focus on comparing ...but rather enjoy contributing whatever the Spirit gives you.** [2]

As John Wimber... the father of the Vineyard movement would say...  
**“Spiritual Gifts are tools... not trophies” – John Wimber**

And it's important to understand that...

**Spiritual Gifts do not reflect a complete separation of responsibilities or roles... as everyone is called to practice many of these types of activities regardless of any special degree of gifting. What**

***they represent is that the Spirit “anoints” or empowers each of us with a gifting marked by a unique effectiveness and ease.... “favor and flow.”***

For example....we are all called to evangelize...which means to be witnesses of Christ to the world. But some will do so with unique favor and flow...effectiveness and ease.

Illustration of basketball team... an individual plays their position... it means what they are most natural at and can contribute best at...but that position is not excluding them from every aspect of basketball play... the point guard may be the best in ball handling and passing...but they all do that.... the taller center may be given the position and extra training to guard the rim... rebound... but every play is trained and expected to do that.

That may not be far off what Paul is saying... some are point guards... some are centers... and we should play as a team that both embraces their gifts and positions...but all participate in every facet of the game.

**Partnering with God is always a continuing of the life and mission of Jesus... helping others discover or deepen relationship with him.**

**As Jesus explained... the Holy Spirit will testify to Jesus...and will continue the work of Jesus... now in us and through us. What God began in Christ... he now will carry out through the “church” ...which is why we are to understand that we are the “body of Christ.” We are the new body of Christ. The way that God revealed the kingdom through Christ’s individual earthly body.... he desires to do through all of us. In our distinctly united inter-dependent nature... together we embody the ministry of Jesus with by the same Spirit’s at work now in us.**

And what is that purpose that that Jesus embodied and now has called us to embody? Jesus saw his life as the fulfillment of what the prophet Isaiah had declared. And Jesus stood up in the synagogue and read this text.

**"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." - Luke 4:18-19**

**Partnering with God always begins with the needs of another.**

We must begin with where another person is at... what they understand and experience. From there we cannot jump to another place... or impose what is not understood. We seek the heart of connection to Jesus.

**Partnering with God in prayer is more about the work of the Spirit than the work of counseling.**

The Scriptures give great value to seeking wise counsel....and we can never completely dismiss it's place... but prayer ministry should not assume that role nor focus. If someone shares some significant degree of experience, then responses of empathy, encouragement, and very basic life wisdom are only natural...but we should not shift the focus away from seeking God i with and for the person in prayer.

**Partnering with God involves receiving that which He may communicate.**

**God generally speaks to us by the Spirit’s inner voice that is distinct from our own thoughts, an inner image, that upon reflection or further revelation, offers meaning, a feeling that comes upon us (such as a peace, faith, etc), or a prompting that directs us.**

The Spirit may also communicate through bringing a word from Scripture to mind, a dream or vision, words given by another, and in the context of praying for others, sympathetic sensations in your body.

**What to listen for? Whatever tends to come from outside your own current ideas and thoughts.** Mark Virkler describes this as “Spontaneous thoughts that light upon our mind”

**We should embrace our own natural thoughts as potential God-given wisdom... and inner words, images, or senses “outside” our natural thoughts as a potential God-given “word.”**

## **The Process of Ministry: Five Step Model of Prayer Ministry**

God speaks to us for others. The 5 Step Prayer Model has been used for a long time in the Vineyard as a great foundation for ministering to each other. The Five Steps are based on a series of questions helping to decide what to do next and how effective the ministry is at that point.

STEP 1: ASK – How can I pray for you?

- *Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked -. Matthew 20:32*

STEP 2: INVITE – Ask the Holy Spirit to come and minister

“Come Holy Spirit”... is a part of our Vineyard family’s language. It is not intended to presume that the Spirit is not present or can be controlled by us... but rather that we welcome God to come do what only God can do.

- Wait -- on the Holy Spirit – he works even without our words.
- Listen -- to the Holy Spirit – is he sharing anything with you. Pain in your body?
- Watch – Sometimes you can see something God is doing

STEP 3: PRAY – Pray for what they asked for. Pray as you feel led by both God’s “natural” good sense and God-given words, images, or strong sense.

STEP 4: CHECK IN: - What’s happening?

- *They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”- Mark 8: 22 - 23*
- Observe the person (pray with your eyes open) Ask the person “What’s happening?” If you share a word or image you sensed God was imparting, ask them if it resonated or spoke to them in any significant way.
- If healing – ask if they are feeling anything? Power? Heat? Something changing? Continue to listen to the Holy Spirit. Go back to steps two and three if necessary

STEP 5: FOLLOW UP: Based on the appearance of the Spirit’s current work completing, confirm a sense of closure with the individual. Suggest any follow up or next steps if appropriate.

## Time to Listen (with and for others)

**Listening to God for One Another:** In groups of 4 to 6... pray over each individual as time allows. One individual is to share briefly any element of what they may desire prayer for... with as much focus as they may naturally identify. The group is then to begin praying. For the sake of this time, it is important to **take time to wait and allow an opportunity to listen to what God may impart** for this person. It does not have to relate to what they shared. It does not have to come with complete clarity or certainty. Just wait on whatever you may hear... or an image... or a sense...that seems outside your own natural thoughts. As you pray you may share this. When directed... you will wind up this time of prayer and can take a moment as a group to share what was experienced by both the one receiving prayer and those praying for them. The group may then begin a similar process for another member of the group.

Choose to embrace freedom and feedback... freedom to share without presuming you are certain that what you share was clearly from God...and feedback that allows help in discerning what may have been distinctly imparted by God. Remember that the distinction is not between what is “more spiritual” and less spiritual...or “from God” and not from God. There is a lot that we can pray for one another...without God issuing any unique insight or “knowledge.” However, for the nature of learning to listen to God...it is important to give space to do that.

## Closing Encouragement:

This is the final session of this class...but it can be the beginning of a new or renewed life of communing with God...and hearing His voice. So let me close with a few words of encouragement. We all “hear God.” Hearing God develops as part of developing a relationship with God. There is no substitute for spending time in which we slow down and bring our presence before God.

### 1. Try to spend focused time with God every day.

Continue to create daily time of stopping and becoming present to God. See Him alongside you. Listen to what He may say through words images, and strong senses.

*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. Psalm 5:3*

### 2. Write down what you hear and sense. (Journal)

Write everything that you believe God is speaking to your heart in a notebook. Sometimes clarity and confirmation will come over time.

### 3. See opportunities to pray for others... “on the spot” ...as an opportunity.

Get to love those seven Powerful Words: “Can I pray for you right now?”

### 4. Choose to take actual steps of faith... and enter the larger reality of God.

## Additional Resources:

To speak about how we relate to and hear from God involves some degree of diversity in experience and style. As such, each of the following offer some valuable but different insights.

### Dallas Willard - [Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God](#)

Dallas was a Professor of Philosophy at USC whose writing on Christian spirituality have had perhaps the widest and deepest impact in the past century. (He passed onwards from this life in 2013.) His book *The Divine Conspiracy* restored an understanding of what it meant to follow the way of Jesus in spiritual life and practice. He also became a partner in the Vineyard movement and personal influence. This earlier work on "Hearing God" shares the qualities of thinking deeply about what life with God involves. If one can set aside expectations of a simple "three step" manual for hearing God...and welcome a voice that speaks from deep relationship, this will serve your soul.

### Mark Virkler - [4 Keys to Hearing God - You Can Hear God's Voice!](#)

Mark Virkler has been teaching at large for decades and helped multitudes in hearing God. I have personally valued his insights and general encouragement but would also note that his "process" may be over-simplified / over-stated, some use of Scripture is "bent" in making a point, and I would not endorse some of the "prophetic" ministries he aligns with. However, he has a valuable journey and process to share. This particular resource is the most succinct and is available for free across downloadable videos. His parallel work "Dialogue with God" is described as the more "right brain" (less informational) version of similar material.

### Getting to Know God's Voice: Discover the Holy Spirit in Your Everyday Life (A 31-Day Interactive Journey) by Jenny Randle

I have not read this work but from what I have read of it, it would appear to be among the most practical and helpful works on hearing God, that is developed into a 31 day journey... combining short studies and experiences.

## Notes:

1. Definitions and Descriptions as well as a free "Gifts Test"– Can be explored here

<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>

2. As for our role and purpose... consider also:

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." - 1 Peter 4:10

"you are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood" 1 Peter 2:5

What is emphasized is how this works to create a natural and interdependent "body" of Christ... in which the various parts work together to serve the whole of this body of Christ. It is therefore vital that we do not deem any such gifts as reflecting something more "spiritual ... but rather discover and develop whatever God gives to us... and enjoy the diversity.

*"God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."* - 1 Corinthians 12:24-25

## Appendix:

### Some Central Scriptures to Learn

It's valuable to commit to memory verses like these and others so that when you pray for

someone, you can pray according to God's Word.

- **Forgiveness**

Matthew 6:14-15 – *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

- **Confession of sin**

1 John 1:9 – *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

- **Healing**

Exodus 15:26 – *He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."*

Psalms 103:2-4 – *Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.*

James 5:13-15 – *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.*

1 Peter 2:24 – *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."*

- **No condemnation**

Romans 8:1 – *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*

- **Armor of God**

Ephesians 6:12-18 – *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

- **Transformed Mind**

Romans 12:2 – *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- **Every thought captive**

2 Corinthians 10:5 – *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

### **Some Valuable Statements About Connecting with God**

“St. Teresa of Avila wrote: 'All difficulties in prayer can be traced to one cause: praying as if God were absent.' This is the conviction that we bring with us from early childhood and apply to everyday life and to our lives in general. It gets stronger as we grow up, unless we are touched by the Gospel and begin the spiritual journey. This journey is a process of dismantling the monumental illusion that God is distant or absent.”

— Thomas Keating, [Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit](#)

“The fact that we experience anxiety and annoyance is the certain sign that, in the unconscious, there is an emotional program for happiness that has just been frustrated.”

— Thomas Keating, [The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation](#)

“To live in the presence of God on a continuous basis can become a kind of fourth dimension to our three-dimensional world, forming an invisible but real background to everything that we do or that happens in our lives.”

— Thomas Keating, [On Prayer](#)

“The false self is looking for fame, power, wealth, and prestige. The unconscious is very powerful until the divine light of the Holy Spirit penetrates to its depths and reveals its dynamics. Here is where the great teaching of the dark nights of St. John of the Cross corresponds to depth psychology, only the work of the Holy Spirit goes far deeper. Instead of trying to free us from what interferes with our ordinary human life, the Spirit calls us to transformation of our inmost being, and indeed of all our faculties, into the divine way of being and acting.”

— Thomas Keating, [The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation](#)

“The false self is deeply entrenched. You can change your name and address, religion, country, and clothes. But as long as you don't ask it to change, the false self simply adjusts to the new environment. For example, instead of drinking your friends under the table as a significant sign of self-worth and esteem, if you enter a monastery, as I did, fasting the other monks under the table could become your new path to glory.”

— Thomas Keating, [The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation](#)

“Contemplative prayer ...listens not with a view to hearing something, but with a view to becoming aware of the obstacles to one's friendship with God.”

— Thomas Keating, [The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation](#)

“The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons, with Himself included in that community as its prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant.”

— Dallas Willard

“Prayer is often considered a weakness, a support system, which is used when we can no longer help ourselves. But this is only true when the God of our prayers is created in our own image and adapted to our own needs and concerns. When, however, prayer makes us reach out to God, not on our own but on his terms, then prayer pulls us away from self-preoccupations, encourages us to leave familiar ground, and challenges us to enter into a new world which cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of our mind or heart.”



— Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*  
Finney's Three Classes of Professing Christians

Pastor, writer, and theologian Reverend Charles G. Finney, who was a key evangelist in the Second Great Awakening, wrote this in the late 1800s:

"Many, understanding the "Confession of Faith" as summarizing the doctrines of the Bible, very much neglect the Bible and rest in a belief of the articles of faith. Others, more cautious and more in earnest, search the Scriptures to see what they say about Christ, but stop short and rest in the formation of correct theological opinions; while others, and they are the only saved class, love the Scriptures intensely because they testify of Jesus. They search and devour the Scriptures because they tell them who Jesus is and what they may trust Him for. They do not stop short and rest in this testimony; but by an act of loving trust [they] go directly to Him, to His person, thus joining their souls to Him in a union that receives from Him, by a direct divine communication, the things for which they are led to trust Him. This is certainly Christian experience. This is receiving from Christ the eternal life which God has given us in Him. This is saving faith... The error to which I call attention does not consist in laying too much stress in teaching and believing the facts and doctrines of the Gospel: but consists in stopping short of trusting the personal Christ for what those facts and doctrines teach us to trust Him, and satisfying ourselves with believing the testimony about Him, instead of committing our souls to Him by an act of loving trust." From Charles G. Finney, "The Psychology of Faith," *The Independent of New York* (April 30, 1874). [here](#)

We must lay before Him what is in us. not what ought to be in us. - C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, Ch 4, p 22+

Prayer is either a sheer illusion or a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person. Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God its bread and wine. In it God shows Himself to us. That He answers prayers is a corollary - not necessarily the most important one - from that revelation. What He does is learned from what He is. - C.S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, "The Efficacy of Prayer", p 8

Quotes on "Hearing God" by Dallas Willard (from [here](#)) - Dallas Willard wrote a very helpful and practical book on *Hearing God*. (Originally titled, *In Search of Guidance*).

"Today it is simply assumed that scientific knowledge excludes the presence of God from the material universe... This is called 'naturalism.'" (p. 72)

"In our 'existence as usual' we are like Jacob, wearily asleep on a rock in a desert ravine. He went to sleep in his sorrow, alienation and loneliness, seeing only the physical landscape. In his dream — or was he only then truly awake? — he beheld God's interaction with the place he was in. Awakening, he cried out, 'Surely the Lord is in this place — and I did not know it!... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen 28:16-17)." (p. 79)

"The still small voice — or the interior or inner voice, as it is also called — is the preferred and most valuable form of individualized communication for God's purposes. God usually address individually those who walk with him in a mature, personal relationship using this inner voice, proclaiming and showing forth the reality of the kingdom of God as they go." (p. 89)

“The very phrase ‘still small voice’ might seem to suggest that what lies at the heart of a relationship with God is something weak and marginal. But that is far from the truth. One who hears God’s voice is operating from the very foundation and framework of all reality, not from the fringe.” (p. 117)

“The Bible is a finite, written record of the saving truth spoken by the infinite, living God, and it reliably fixes the boundaries of everything he will ever say to humankind. It fixes those boundaries *in principle*, though it does not provide the detailed communications that God may have with individual believers today.” (p. 143)

“After the ‘additional’ life has been planted in us, our natural powers are not left to run their own way under or alongside the new life; they are to be channeled through and subordinated to that life from above.” (p. 151)

“God will not play little games of hide-and-seek with us... In our relationship with him there is no mysterious catch to receiving his word for us, no riddle to solve, no incantation to get just right.” (p. 203)

“There are reasons other than [God’s] displeasure why a specific word may not be forthcoming to us in a particular case. One of the major other reasons is that in general, *it is God’s will that we ourselves should have a great part in determining our path through life*. This does not mean that he is not with us. Far from it. God both *develops* and, for our good, *tests* our character by leaving us to decide. He calls us to responsible citizenship in his kingdom by saying — in effect or in reality — as often as possible, ‘*My will for you in this case is that you decide on your own.*’” (p. 203-204)

“What we want, what we think, what we decide to do when the word of God does not come or when we have so immersed ourselves in him that his voice within us is not held in distinction from our own thoughts and perceptions — *these show us who we are*: either we are God’s mature children, friends and coworkers, or we are something less.” (p. 204)