***The Power of a Whisper***

***Hearing God. Having the guts to Respond.***

**Worship Series – Week 3**

***Practice, Practice, Practice*(This service covers Chapters 2, 5 and 8 of the book which also follows Bible Study material)**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**SEach worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Announcements and Offering**

***Whisper: ‘I want to talk to you…’***

**Call to Worship:**

If you were to study the major religions of the world, you would discover that most of them rely on an impersonal dynamic with their deity. Biblical Christianity is a far cry from those systems. From Genesis to Revelation, the constant refrain of Scripture declares that our faith is relational—God listens when we speak through prayer, and we are to listen when he speaks through his whispers.

If there is a pattern in Scripture regarding whispers, it is that we serve a communicating God—a God of words. He created with a word, he healed with a word, he encouraged with a word, he rebuked with a word, he guided with a word, he prophesied with a word, he assured with a word, he loved with a word, he served with a word and he comforted with a word. Throughout all of history, God has communicated, and he still is at it today. The issue isn’t whether or not God is speaking; it’s whether we will have ears to hear what he says.

(*The Power of a Whisper*, pages 44, 50)

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| **SB#361 – Fill thou my life, O Lord my God** | TB-127 – Ellacombe | HTD1-T9 (3 vs. – band ending) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#56 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den Herren | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.) |
| **HC#171 – Stand Up and Bless the Lord** | HC-171 | HCD16-T11 |
| **HC#93 – Holy, Holy, Holy** | HC-93 | HCD8-T13 |
| **SB#25 – God’s love to me is wonderful** | TB-130 – God’s love is wonderful | HTD8-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King** | HC-209 | HCD19-T19 |
| **HC#221 – Servants of God**  | HC-221 | HCD21-T11 |
| **HC#231 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah**  | HC-231 | HCD22-T11 |
| **HC#250 – Hear the call of the kingdom**  | HC-250 | HCD23-T20 |
| **HC#261 – How firm a foundation** | HC-261 | HCD25-T11 |

***Whisper: ‘Look at the evidence…’***

**Responsive Reading**

**Leader:** You don’t get very far in the pages of Scripture before seeing evidence of God’s whispering ways. ‘In the beginning’ God communicated within the holy Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—and when he decided to establish the physical world, it was a whisper that got the job done.

**All:** *“Let there be light,” and there was light.* (Genesis 1:3)

**Leader:** Soon thereafter, the people he created became the recipients of his whispers.

**All:** Adam and Eve *“heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”* (Genesis 3:8)

**Leader:** The Old Testament is filled with God’s voice. He spoke to Noah about the coming flood, his need to build the ark and save his family. Abram heard God’s words of promise and trusted. Moses heard the voice of God from a burning bush. It was God who told Moses what to say to Pharaoh. The nation of Israel heard the voice of God when Moses delivered the Ten Commandments. There was *intimacy* between God and Moses:

**All:** *The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.* (Exodus 33:11)

**Leader:** Young Samuel—whose mother was in tune with God’s whispers—certainly heard a word from the Lord. God also whispered specific directions to shepherd-turned-king David. The prophet Isaiah testified to the presence of God’s still, small voice and responded to God’s whisper with now-famous words.

**All:**  *I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then said I, “Here am I; send me.”* (Isaiah 6:8)

**Leader:** Sweeping into the New Testament, God spoke through an angel to the elderly priest Zechariah and to highly-favored Mary. An angel spoke to a jittery Joseph in a dream. Then angels announced God’s message to the shepherds:

**All:** *Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.* (Luke 2:10-11)

**Leader:** We even hear God’s intimate message to his beloved Son: *As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:16-17)

**All:** During a storm that caused his ship to go down, the apostle Paul heard encouraging words from the Lord, which he shared with passengers and crew:

*“*‘*Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.”* And it did. (Acts 27:23-25)

**Leader:** God spoke to his church through the advocacy of the Holy Spirit. And still today he is speaking, as evidenced by John 14:26:

**All:** *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

**Leader:** It is by these whispers, John 15:5 says, that we are led toward a productive and fruitful life. By the still, small voice of God, our lives are flooded with personal assurance, correction, insight, guidance from above. By our heavenly Father’s wisdom, we are directed, aided, changed and eventually grown up.

*(The Power of a Whisper*, pages 44-50)

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| **SB#765 – I often say my prayers;** | TB-159 – Trentham | HTD8-T17 (4 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **HC#172 – Here I Am, Lord** | HC-172 | HCD16-T12 |
| **HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above** | HC-164 | HCD15-T14 |
| **HC#117 – Draw Me Close** | HC-117 | HCD10-T17 |
| **HC#49 – Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord** | HC-49 | HCD3-T19 |
| **SB#777 – ‘Mid all the traffic of the ways** | TB-91 – Lloyd | HTD2-T1 (3 vs.) |

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| **Drama: Word of God, Speak** |

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| **SB#756 – He walks with God who speaks to God in prayer** | TB-519 – Ellers | HTD9-T2 (3 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#586 – I am thine, O Lord** | TB-603 – Draw me nearer | HTD7-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#707 – I need thee every hour** | TB-680 – I need thee | No CD |
| **SB#765 – I often say my prayers** | TB-159 – Trentham | HTD8-T17 (4 vs.) |
| **HC#35 – In the Secret of Thy Presence** | HC-35 | HCD2B-T15 |
| **HC#47 – As the Deer** | HC-47 | HCD3-T17 |
| **HC#49 – Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord** | HC-49 | HCD3-T19 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19-T15 |
| **HC#208 – Faithful God** | HC-208 | HCD19-T18 |
| **HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah**  | HC-213 | HCD20-T13 |
| **HC#215 – Holy Spirit**  | HC-215 | HCD20-T15 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You**  | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **HC#228 – Still**  | HC-228 | HCD21-T18 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I need you**  | HC-236 | HCD22-T16 |
| **HC#242 – In your presence**  | HC-242 | HCD23-T12 |
| **HC#247 – Still, my soul, be still**  | HC-247 | HCD23-T17 |
| **HC#249 – Near to the heart**  | HC-249 | HCD23-T19 |
| **HC#265 – Come just as you are** | HC265 | HCD25-T15  |
| **HC#279 – Draw me nearer** | HC279 | HCD26-T19 |

***The Congregation Prays***

**(This prayer time could be opened up to the congregation to pray either silently or publicly; a time of intercessory prayer in their seats or at the altar)**

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|  **The Lord’s Prayer** |
| **SB#781 – Our Father, who in Heaven art** | TB-70 – Fewster | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Message – It’s Not a Reason, It’s an Excuse**

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| **SB#707 – I need thee every hour** | TB-680 – I need thee | No CD |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **HC#89 – Knowing You** | HC-89 | HCD7-T19 |
| **HC#87 – Passion** | HC-87 | HCD7-T17 |
| **HC#110 – He is Here** | HC-110 | HCD9-T20 |
| **HC#122 – Bow the Knee** | HC-122 | HCD11-T12 |
| **HC#133 – Breathe on Me** | HC-133 | HCD12-T13 |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#173 – In This Quiet Moment** | HC-173 | HCD16-T13 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19-T15 |
| **HC#208 – Faithful God** | HC-208 | HCD19-T18 |
| **HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah**  | HC-213 | HCD20-T13 |
| **HC#215 – Holy Spirit**  | HC-215 | HCD20-T15 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You**  | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **HC#228 – Still**  | HC-228 | HCD21-T18 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I need you**  | HC-236 | HCD22-T16 |
| **HC#242 – In your presence**  | HC-242 | HCD23-T12 |
| **HC#247 – Still, my soul, be still**  | HC-247 | HCD23-T17 |
| **HC#249 – Near to the heart**  | HC-249 | HCD23-T19 |
| **HC#265 – Come just as you are** | HC265 | HCD25-T15  |
| **HC#279 – Draw me nearer** | HC279 | HCD26-T19 |

**Benediction: (congregation in unison)**

“Oh, give me Samuel’s ear, the open ear, O Lord,

Alive and quick to hear each whisper of Thy Word;

Like him to answer at Thy call,

And to obey Thee first of all.”

*-- By James D. Burns, 1857*

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| **SB#359 – Eternal God, our song we raise** | TB-439 – Eternal God | HTD12-T5 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **HC#112 – The Potter’s Hand** | HC-112  | HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#109 – Total Praise** | HC-109 | HCD9-T19 |
| **HC#202 – O Church, arise** | HC-202 | HCD19-T12 |

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| **Week #3** |
| **DRAMA****Word of God, Speak****By Martyn Scott Thomas**© Copyright 2012 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. |
| **Topic:** | God’s call |
| **Scripture:** | Psalm 25:4-5 |
| **Synopsis:** | A young person listens for God’s voice. |
| **Characters:** | AdamJennyChrisKateHeidi |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Two chairs, a table, a Bible, a remote control, a stethoscope, and a cell phone. |
| **Setting:** | Table with two chairs. Remote control should be on the pulpit or table. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*The Bible is sitting on the table, center stage. Adam is seated, looking at the Bible. Jenny, Chris, and Kate enter and observe him.*]

**Jenny:** [*curiously*] Adam, what are you doing?

**Adam:** [*a bit startled*] Oh, I’m listening for God.

**Chris:** By staring at the Bible?

**Adam:** Well, yeah. See, I prayed to God looking for his guidance, but so far, no answer.

**Kate:** So you’re sitting here looking at your Bible?

**Adam:** [*correcting*] No, I’m listening for God’s voice. Someone told me that if you are waiting to hear from God, it’s always good to check out what the Bible has to say. So . . .

**Kate:** [*puzzled*] So you’re sitting hear *listening* to your Bible?

**Jenny:** And what’s it saying?

**Adam:** Not much, so far. But this does seem a little odd to me.

**Chris:** Maybe you need to turn up the volume. [*picks up Bible looking for a volume switch*]

**Kate:** [*picks up remote control off of Pulpit or table*] Here, try this. [*pushes volume buttons on remote*] Nothing.

**Adam:** Maybe it’s on ‘Mute.’

**Kate:** [*pushes ‘Mute’ button*] Still nothing.

**Adam:** I just don’t understand.

**Jenny:** [*pulls stethoscope from back pocket*] Maybe this will work. [*places stethoscope on the Bible and listens intently*]

**Adam:** Anything?

**Jenny:** Nothing. I think it may be dead.

**Chris:** It’s not dead. The Bible is God’s living Word.

**Jenny:** It may be living, but I can’t hear anything.

**Kate:** Hey wait. I have a Bible app on my phone. [*pulls out phone, opens app and holds it up for all to hear*]

**Adam:** I still don’t hear anything. Is it possible God’s not even talking?

**Jenny:** Maybe you forgot to ask.

**Chris:** Yeah, are you sure you prayed and didn’t just think it to yourself?

**Adam:** I’m sure I prayed. I just don’t know why God wouldn’t answer.

**Heidi:** [*enters, walks to table, opens Bible and reads*] “Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

[*All the others look at Heidi.*]

**Heidi:** I really needed to hear that. [*exits*]

**Adam:** You mean . . .

**Jenny:** All we had to do was . . .

**Chris:** It kind of makes sense now . . .

**Kate:** [*sitting and flipping through the Bible*] I wonder what else it has to say.

[*Blackout*]

**The Power of a Whisper Worship Series**

**Week 3 Sermon - It’s Not a Reason, It’s An Excuse**

**(Major Morag Yoder)**

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| **Focus:** | To train and tune their ears to hear God’s voice by making Bible reading a daily activity and by seeking out godly wisdom from divinely directed friends and mentors.  |
| **Scripture:** | Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 11:14 |

**Introduction:**

Have any of you ever played with a Magic 8-ball? It’s a 1950’s style fortune-telling toy that looks like a normal billiard ball. You ask a “yes or no” question, shake the ball and then magically an answer appears on a little triangular-shaped screen. The game is still available today. Sometimes the ball gives a definitive answer, for example, “it’s certain,” “without a doubt” or “don’t count on it.” Other answers are less revealing like, “reply hazy – try again” or “better not tell you now.” This mystical oracle claims to make everyday decisions easier.

Do you ever wish you had a heavenly 8-ball? God has provided us with a lifetime of whispers, but still there are days when we fail to recognize his voice or discern his answers to our questions. God is always speaking! We give all kinds of reasons for not hearing – but these are just excuses. It’s up to us to be prepared, open and in tune with his voice.

**God’s Written Whispers**

Today I want to focus on just two practical ways we can regularly hear from heaven. Neither way has anything to do with magic, chance or wishful thinking! According to Bill Hybels in his book, *The Power of a Whisper*, the number one “most predictable way to hear from heaven is to read and apply God’s Word.”

I’ll admit his quote isn’t ground breaking news in Christian circles, but just because we’ve heard it before doesn’t mean we put it into practice! God has written many of his whispers down for our use. Most of us have ready access to the Bible – the best instruction book – the perfect tool – the ultimate guidebook - and yet how many of us spend hours, weeks, even lifetimes trying to figure out how to connect with God without ever reading our Bibles on a regular, daily basis?

Lots of us stumble through life. There’s not a person here who can make it from one day to the next without facing the usual problems – common dilemmas like: relationship trouble, communication difficulties, struggles with prioritizing and money management issues. Sadly there’s no need for us to walk in darkness when it comes to many basic life issues. But it is up to us to “turn the light on and leave it on.”

How many of you learned and memorized scripture as a child? What’s the first scripture verse or passage you memorized? John 3:16, the 10 commandments, The Lord’s Prayer, the 23rd Psalm? In Jesus’ day children were taught to memorize Psalm 119 – open your Bibles and take a look…

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm – 176 verses – that’s a lot to memorize! Of all the scripture available, why do you think this portion was chosen?

Look at Psalm 119:105with me:

*“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*

This verse is the whole of Psalm 119 in a nutshell. The entire Psalm teaches about the significance of God’s Word. We learn what the Word of God is, what scripture does for and to us, how to walk in the light of God’s Word, the benefits of knowing what the Bible says and the fruit that comes when we walk in truth. Those ancient parents were pretty smart! They recognized God’s Word is foundational and wanted their children to know where to discover answers to life’s questions. If you want to hear from God, it’s pretty simple: Read your Bible!

If you want illumination – spend time studying and memorizing helpful verses. Learn about how God’s people throughout history responded to life’s circumstances, discover as much as you possibly can about who God is and what he wants for his children. Why not spend time this week in Psalm 119? We’ll discover God’s Word is like a bright flashlight revealing potential dangers on the path ahead, it’s a huge search-and-rescue beam guiding us back to safety when we find ourselves drifting off the path, and it also functions as a permanent, reassuring nightlight providing us with security even through the darkest times.

Many of our teens are looking ahead to college – perhaps you’re anxiously awaiting university entrance letters even now! In college I studied…

[Insert your own illustration] For four years it felt like my head was stuck in a book. But I also spent a number of hours working in the dental clinic on real-live patients. The clinic was the “rubber hits the road” test. Professors stopped by regularly to check on our progress and see how well we were treating our patients. And guess what – I couldn’t have my book open on my work stand for easy reference. Those hours of preparation – reading, studying, memorizing – meant I wasn’t caught off guard by the things I encountered in the clinic. Things I learned were brought back to my memory so I could put them into practice.

The Bible gives us full access to what God wants us to know about himself, his character and the life he’s calling us to live, but it’s up to us to make use of what’s available.

Colossians 3:16says,

*“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.”*

In other words, we’re to allow God’s Word to make its home within us.

[Illustration from personal life – married for 25 years – we’re “at home” with each other.]

Satan is real. He wants to trip us up, make us question and tempt us to follow him, but, we have the power to keep him from getting a foothold. When we allow God to daily speak into our lives through his Word, we’re more likely to discern his voice over Satan’s surprises. We’ll know how to respond to Satan’s tricks because God’s truth has already been planted within us. This is exactly what Jesus did in Matthew 4 when Satan got in his face. Like a reflex – a knee-jerk reaction, a hiccup or sneeze – it’s possible to have God’s indwelt Word automatically come to our heart and mind in times of trial and temptation so we can victoriously respond according to God’s truth.

**God Speaking Through Others**

[Personal illustration] I come from a large family, so I’m used to hearing the thoughts and opinions of others. I didn’t always appreciate my sisters when they gave advice concerning a boy or what I was wearing, but now I know the insightful words of trusted family members and dear friends who saved me from painful heartbreak and great embarrassment.

Look at Proverbs 11:14. *The Message* paraphrase clearly says it this way:

*Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances.*

Last Sunday’s sermon identified the admonition Elijah needed to hear at a crisis point in his life. Expecting God to speak through others is a vitally important way we hear from heaven.

* Question one: Do you have anyone in your life that you trust to speak God’s truth into your heart?
* Question two: Are you someone who is willing to warn other people about potential pitfalls in their lives? This is a tricky one – I’m not talking about simple advice-giving or the offering of your personal opinion.

I’m not even talking about interactions between trusted best friends. Proverbs 11 speaks of the wise, God-given, God-directed counsel and support that only God-honoring, God-followers can offer! Christians need to have accountability partners and mentors in their lives – people who know God’s Word and follow God’s direction, even when it means speaking unwanted, unrequested truth to another person.

The truth is God can use any spiritually mature and obedient person to speak into our lives for a specific purpose – even a Holy Spirit-led stranger on an airplane or a spiritually sensitive clerk in a grocery store. But he most often chooses to speak into our hearts through one or two trusted friends, associates or family members with whom we’ve cultivated openness and transparency. It sounds so basic and easy, but just as immersing ourselves in God’s Word takes discipline and determination, allowing God to speak through others or speak through you to someone else requires grace and discernment beyond what we are capable without the Holy Spirit’s power.

The most obvious example from scripture is the story of David and Nathan. **2 Samuel 11** tells us King David got himself into a huge mess when he let his eye wander to the beautiful wife of another man. David spied on Bathsheba while she was bathing and he was filled with lust. Because he was the King, he got exactly what he wanted.

And then, as if adultery wasn’t bad enough, things really spiraled out of control! Bathsheba ends up pregnant and, in an effort to cover up his mess, David arranges for her husband to be murdered on the battlefield, so he can take Bathsheba as his wife. The sad truth is – others in the palace knew exactly what David did and was doing all along – yet not one of them spoke up! So God planted an old friend, Nathan, in David’s path – a man willing to risk his friendship and his life – in order to confront, speak God’s truth and lead David to repentance.

Like Nathan, are you willing to speak a bold word for the Lord? Like David, are you humble enough to hear a strong word from God’s spokesperson? We need others – even when it comes to our Christian walk. The time will come when we need help applying God’s Word to our lives.

I’m not always grateful when someone steps in with what might feel like an unwanted critique or observation. But when I look back over my life, I know I’ve benefitted greatly from divine whispers delivered by real live people! I now understand how hard it was for them to confront and what their willingness says about their own relationship with God.

When God’s message is delivered through the mouth of someone else it can feel harsh, even judgmental. None of us like having faults pointed out – especially by another flawed human being. But we can miss so much of what God has to say to us when we refuse to cultivate a heart of understanding and trust. Instead of being defensive, it’s possible to choose humility. Instead of blaming or deflecting, we can listen, reflect, take responsibility and repent in order to achieve the righteousness we crave.

**Conclusion:**

If we honestly want to live the kind of divinely directed life that only God can provide, then we need to train and tune our ears to hear the whispers coming through the Bible and through others. It’s easy to pretend we want to hear from God, but the phrase “no guts – no glory” comes to mind!

*The Message* paraphrase of Proverbs 2:1-5 provides a fantastic mind-picture of what it means to pursue God’s voice: [Projected on screen]

*Good friend,* ***take to heart*** *what I’m telling you;*

***collect*** *my counsels and* ***guard them*** *with your life.*

***Tune your ears*** *to the world of Wisdom;*

***set your heart*** *on a life of Understanding.*

*That’s right—if you make Insight* ***your priority****,*

*and* ***won’t take no for an answer****,*

***Searching*** *for it* ***like a prospector*** *panning for gold,*

***like an adventurer*** *on a treasure hunt,*

*Believe me, you’ll have come upon the Knowledge of God.*

Hearing from God is a lifetime adventure! Like a gold-rush prospector staking his claim, will you commit your time and energy to pan for the riches that can only be found in scripture? Are you ready to accept instruction, guidance and insight from the people God puts alongside you in order to find the ultimate treasure God has in store for you?

God has always spoken into his world – to ordinary people like you and me. I don’t believe he plans to stop. I’m sure he’s speaking even now. If we’re not hearing him, the problem lies with us – not with him.

These closing moments are offered so we can examine our own thoughts, attitudes and obedience.

* Is there someone here who has the guts to publically stake their claim – to make a fresh commitment to seek God’s voice through daily Bible reading?
* Maybe someone needs to pray for courage to speak God’s truth to a friend, colleague or loved one?
* Or perhaps you need to humble yourself and ask forgiveness for fighting against or for not listening to godly-counsel?

God is speaking. Will you commit to do whatever you need to do in order to hear?