



# ST TIMOTHY'S CHURCH

# Hearing God Workbook

LEARNING TO LISTEN TO GOD

[www.st-timothys-storrs.org](http://www.st-timothys-storrs.org)

# Contents

- 1* INTRODUCTION: HEARING GOD
- 2* HEARING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE
- 3* HEARING GOD THROUGH HIS STILL  
SMALL VOICE
- 4* HEARING GOD THROUGH TRUSTED FRIENDS
- 5* CONCLUSION:  
NEXT STEPS FOR HEARING GOD

# 01 Introduction: Hearing God

Hearing God is a major theme of the Bible, with the Hebrew verb for “hear” or “listen” appearing more than 1100 times across the Old Testament and the Greek verb occurring over 400 times across the New Testament. Repeatedly, God speaks to His people--to Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Mary, Peter, and Paul--to guide them, encourage them, or correct them. One of the greatest struggles God’s people wrestle with in the Bible is hearing--and obeying--God.



At St. Timothy's, we believe that God still speaks to His people today just as actively and patiently as He spoke to His people in the Bible. As followers of God, we can have a conversational relationship with Him, where we ask questions, seek guidance, and receive reassurance from Him and He shares wisdom, correction, and insight with us.

Because He is a loving father, God wants to speak to His children; sometimes we just need to learn how to listen.

This workbook is designed to help you learn to listen to God as He speaks to you through Scripture, through His still small voice, and through trusted friends and mentors. There are many other ways God might speak to you (for example, through nature, through circumstances, through dreams, etc) and as you learn to hear God and gain confidence that you are hearing Him accurately, we trust and pray that the ways He speaks to you will grow and expand.

In every section, you will find a brief teaching rooted in scripture as well as prayer and reflection exercises to help you put into practice what you are learning.

**“PEOPLE ARE MEANT TO LIVE IN  
AN ONGOING CONVERSATION  
WITH GOD, SPEAKING AND  
BEING SPOKEN TO”**

**–DALLAS WILLARD**

# Questions for Reflection

## DEFINING YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

How conversational is your current relationship with God?

Do you talk to Him in prayer or casually throughout your day?

Does He respond? How does He respond?

Do you believe He can or will respond?

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## GROWING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

How would you like your relationship with God to grow or change?

Is there something specific you would like to hear from Him about?

Is there something specific you do not want to hear from Him about?

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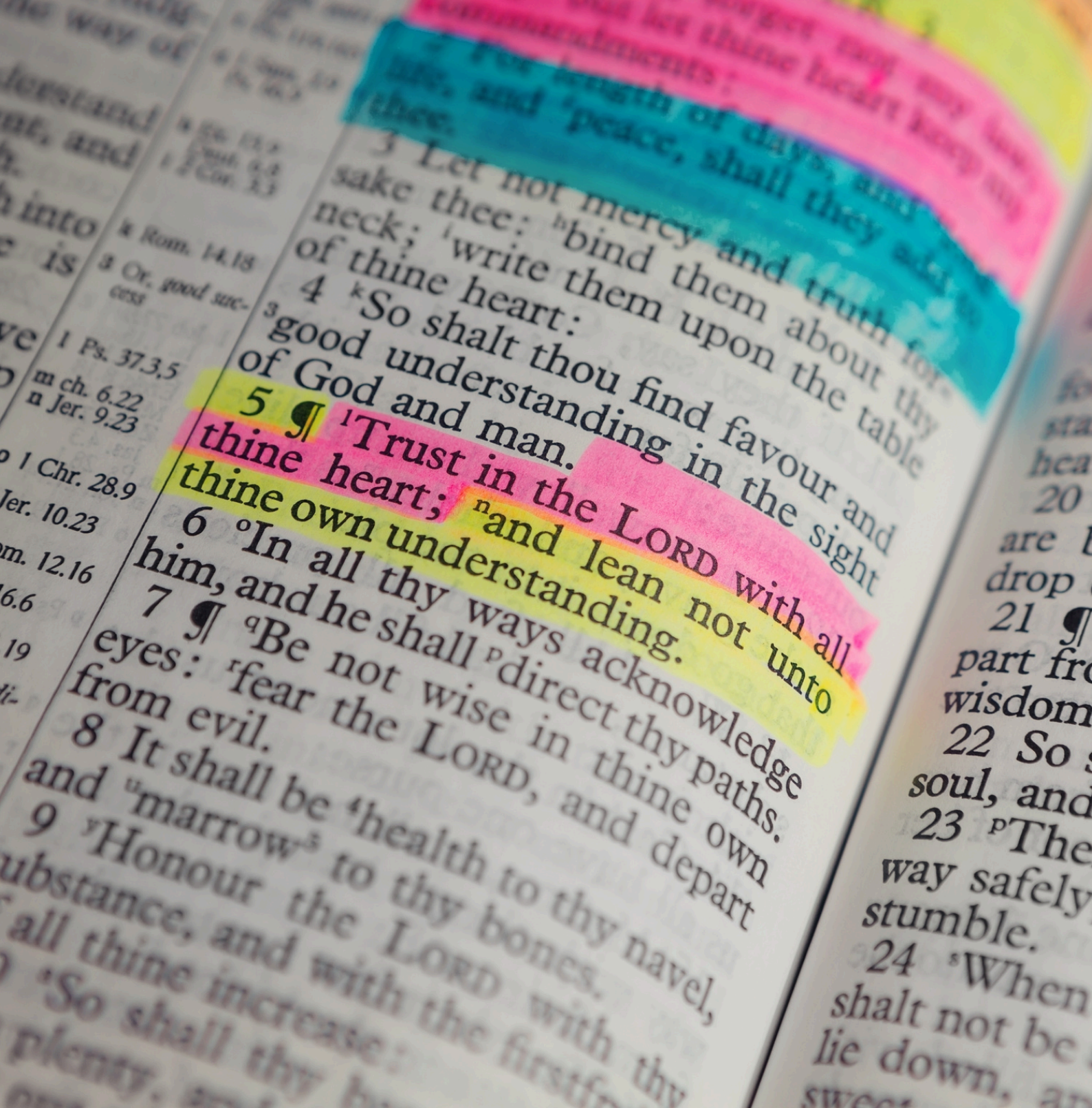
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Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.

-Psalm 119:05

# 02 HEARING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

## God Speaks through Scripture

The author of the book of Hebrews writes, “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). This means the Bible is not just an ancient book that teaches us about what God has done in the past; through God’s Holy Spirit, the Bible also speaks to us today about our hearts, our choices, our current circumstances, and our future plans.

When we read the Bible, we learn about the character of God, the history of God’s people, our redemption through Jesus Christ, and the foundations of the Christian church. But we don’t just read the Bible for knowledge about God; we read it to experience God Himself. As we read, He guides us, comforts us, corrects us, encourages us, and transforms us through His words and the power of His Holy Spirit. As the famous theologian Martin Luther once wrote, “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”

That’s why reading the Bible is not just a one-and-done activity. Even if you have read through the whole Bible several times and know all the historical and theological background, it is a good idea to keep reading the Bible regularly. Not to learn more information about the Bible but to allow God to speak anew and afresh through even familiar words. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelist Charles Spurgeon said, “Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.”

## How does God speak through Scripture?

Have you ever been reading your Bible and suddenly found several words that leap off the page, resonating deeply with you and seeming to speak to a current question or struggle you are facing?

*That is God speaking through Scripture.*

Have you ever been feeling worried, anxious, or discouraged and as you read your Bible you felt a sense of peace, comfort, or reassurance fill you?

*That is God speaking through Scripture.*

Have you ever opened your Bible at random and stumbled upon a verse that seems to directly address a challenge or circumstance you are struggling with?

*That is God speaking through Scripture.*

Have you ever been walking along thinking about a decision you need to make or a situation you need to navigate and then a passage of Scripture popped into your head?

*That is God speaking through Scripture.*

God's words in the Bible are universal, speaking to all people at all times, but through the Holy Spirit God's universal words to everyone can become specific, personal, and timely words to you.

That's why we read the Bible regularly and expectantly; making ourselves available to hear from God through Scripture whenever and however He wants to speak.

# Prayer Exercise

## HEARING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Read over Psalm 16 slowly, paying attention to every phrase and image. Notice if any words in particular catch your attention

### Psalm 16

<sup>1</sup> *Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.*

<sup>2</sup> *I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."*

<sup>3</sup> *I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*

<sup>4</sup> *Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.*

<sup>5</sup> *Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.*

<sup>6</sup> *The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

<sup>7</sup> *I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.*

<sup>8</sup> *I keep my eyes always on the Lord.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

<sup>9</sup> *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,*

<sup>10</sup> *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*

<sup>11</sup> *You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

**Write down any words or phrases that seemed to stand out to you  
as you read them.**

**Why do you think they stood out to you?  
What might God be trying to say to you?**

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**Spend a few moments in prayer asking God why these words or  
phrases stood out to you.**

**Write down anything you hear, sense, or feel.**

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**\*\*Tip: If reading the Bible doesn't work well for you, trying listening to  
the Bible. There are lots of great free audio Bible apps (like  
Biblegateway) or subscriptions services (like Dwell).**



**<sup>11</sup> The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”**

**Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.**

**-1 Kings 19:11-13**



# HEARING GOD THROUGH HIS STILL SMALL VOICE

## **God Speaks through His Still Small Voice**

Throughout the Bible, God speaks to His people in a variety of ways: sometimes in a voice from Heaven as he did with Paul (Acts 9:3-6); sometimes through an angel as He did with Mary (Luke 1:26-38); sometimes through a dream as He did with Peter (Acts 10:9-16); and sometimes through a still small voice as He did with Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13).

Today, we can still hear God's voice in dramatic, miraculous ways, but often we experience His voice as quiet words inside our heart or a divinely-inspired thought in our mind, similar to our own internal monologue yet also recognizably different. Theologian E. Stanley Jones writes, "the voice of the subconscious argues with you and tries to convince you. The inner voice of God does not argue. It does not try to convince you. It just speaks and is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it."

In John's Gospel, Jesus describes himself as a shepherd who speaks to His sheep, saying, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). We recognize God's voice because it speaks to our hearts and minds with authority and insight, communicating things we could not or would not have thought on our own. God's voice also speaks with care and compassion, never instilling shame even when He is offering correction or conviction. Additionally, God's voice always aligns with His character and teachings as revealed through Scripture.

## How can I trust God's still small voice?

One of the hardest parts of hearing God's still small voice in our heart and mind is trusting that we are hearing Him correctly and not just imagining it or making it up. But the more we learn to trust that we can hear God, the easier it becomes to actually hear Him.

If you think you are hearing God's still small voice but you are worried about whether or not you can trust what you are hearing, these are a few questions to ask yourself:

### ***Does what you're hearing align with Scripture?***

God will never say something that contradicts His character or violates His teachings in Scripture. If what you are hearing contradicts the teachings of the Bible, what you're hearing is not God's still small voice.

### ***Does what you're hearing give you a sense of peace and assurance?***

Words from God are generally followed by a sense of peace and/or a deep knowing that God is in control regardless of circumstances or appearances. If what you are hearing causes you to feel shame, anxiety, or despair, what you're hearing is not God's still small voice.

### ***What do trusted friends and mentors discern about what you're hearing?***

Sharing words from God with trusted friends and mentors can help you discern between what you want to hear from God and what God is really saying to you. They can pray with you for more clarity or help alert you to some red flags.

Overall, we believe in the **55% Principle**. If you are 55% sure that the words and thoughts in your heart and mind are coming from God, then trust them and pursue them. Keep praying into them and asking God for more clarity, more confirmation, and more open doors. Invite others to pray with you and trust that if you are not hearing God correctly, in the process of discerning His words and pursuing Him, He will correct and redirect you.

# Prayer Exercises

## HEARING GOD'S STILL SMALL VOICE

Find a peaceful spot where you can sit quietly for several minutes.

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and mind.

Ask God to tell you something He loves about you.

Write down everything you hear.

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## IMAGINING YOURSELF WITH GOD

Find a peaceful spot where you can sit quietly for several minutes.

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and mind.

Close your eyes and ask God to show you one of His favorite  
places to be with you.

Write down everything you see.

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**Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,  
and the pleasantness of a friend  
springs from their heartfelt advice.**

**-Proverbs 27:9**

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# HEARING GOD THROUGH TRUSTED FRIENDS

## God Speaks through Trusted Friends

Throughout the Bible, people turn to trusted friends for support, encouragement, and words of divine wisdom. After hearing from the angel that she will be the mother of Jesus, Mary goes directly to her cousin Elizabeth for confirmation and support. Elizabeth not only reassures Mary but also blesses her faithfulness to God, saying “Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” (Luke 1:45)

When we are wrestling with doubt, uncertainty, or disappointment about God’s plans for us, it can be helpful to talk and pray with trusted friends and mentors. Whereas we might be having trouble hearing clearly from God because our own desires or fears are drowning out God’s voice, those who love God and love us can sometimes hear more clearly on our behalf. As Bible teacher Lisa Harper explains, “when I ache, it’s hard for my mind to be sound enough to apply His promise to my own wound. I need people to carry corners of my mat and take me to a roof and lower me to Jesus.”

The writer of the book of Proverbs repeatedly encourages people to choose wise friends who can help them discern God’s plans and purposes, saying, “The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray” (12:26), “the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death” (13:14), and “walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm” (13:20).

## **How can friends and mentors help me hear God?**

Do you have friends or mentors who have a strong faith in God and a conversational relationship with Him? They read their Bibles, pray regularly, attend Bible studies or church? If they can hear God for themselves they can help you hear Him as well.

If you think you are hearing from God, share what you believe God is telling you with your friends and mentors. Ask them if it aligns with Scripture. Ask them if it aligns with the character of God. God might speak to them differently, but they can help you discern if what you're hearing aligns with the wide variety of ways God speaks to His people.

If you are frustrated because you are not hearing from God, share your frustration with your friends and mentors. Ask them to pray with you. Ask them if they hear anything from God on your behalf. Ask them to share what they hear, even if it doesn't make sense to them. If what they share resonates deeply with you and gives you a sense of peace, comfort, or reassurance, God has spoken through your friends and mentors to you.

## **What if I don't have friends and mentors to help me hear God?**

Pray for them! Ask God to help you find friends who can be spiritual companions or mentors and can support you as you grow in your faith.

And put yourself in places where friends and mentors who love God would be. Find a church. Join a Bible study. Get a spiritual director. Meet with a pastor. Start reaching out to people who have the kind of relationship with God you would like to have and ask them to help you take your next steps.

# *Prayer Exercises*

## HEARING GOD THROUGH TRUSTED FRIENDS

List the names of the friends or mentors you could ask to pray with you to help you hear God more clearly.

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If you can't think of anyone, ask God to give you some names of friends or mentors that you could build a deeper relationship with so you could pray with them in the future.

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## Conclusion: Next Steps for Hearing God

As you continue to develop a conversational relationship with God, where you both share your needs and listen to His responses, an important next step is making that conversational dynamic a consistent part of your faith life. One way to do so is to surround yourself with other Christians who believe that God speaks to His people today just as actively and clearly as He spoke in the Bible and develop your listening abilities together.



How can you build conversations with God into your daily routine and find other Christians who are committed to pursuing a conversational relationship with God? Here are a few suggestions:

### **Join a church:**

Find a church that will support you as you grow in your relationship with God and will help you hear His voice more clearly. The goal of church is not to make you dependent on the pastors and leaders to hear from God, but rather to help to hear from God for yourself.

At St. Timothy's, we intentionally include opportunities throughout the service to help you hear from God. We read Bible passages aloud so you can practice hearing God through Scripture; we do prayer exercises during the sermon so you can practice hearing God through His still, small voice, and we offer blessings after communion so you can hear God through trusted friends.

### **Join a Bible Study:**

Find a Bible study that helps you to better understand God's teachings and His character, so you can discern if what you think you are hearing from God lines up with what the Bible says about God. Bible studies will also help you read your Bible more regularly and consistently, giving you more opportunities to hear God through Scripture and talk with more people about what you're hearing.

### **Find a Spiritual Director**

Find a Spiritual Director who will help you examine and deepen your relationship with God. Spiritual directors are trained in the practice of "holy listening," so that they can listen to you and listen to God and help you make sense of God's presence or silence in your daily life. They can also help you discern when and how God is speaking to you.

### **Use a Bible or Prayer App:**

Bible apps like Biblegateway or Dwell (<https://dwellapp.io>) can help you engage with your Bible on a more consistent daily basis, either by sending you daily verses or allowing you to listen to your Bible throughout the day.

Prayer apps like Pray As You Go (<https://prayasyougo.org>) or Lectio-365 (<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>) offer daily prayer practices that guide you through listening prayer exercises and can help create a daily rhythm of prayer and listening.

### **Read Helpful Books**

Here are some books to check out as you continue growing and deepening your conversational relationship with God:

Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*

Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*

Mark Batterson, *Whisper: How to Hear the Voice of God*

Havilah Cunnington, *Created to Hear God*

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