

7-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

VIDEO
ACCESS
INCLUDED

He Speaks to Me

PREPARING TO HEAR FROM GOD

PRISCILLA SHIRER

He Speaks to Me

PREPARING TO HEAR FROM GOD

PRISCILLA SHIRER

Lifeway Press® Brentwood, Tennessee

Published by Lifeway Press® • ©2025 Priscilla Shirer

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Lifeway Press®; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100; Brentwood, TN 37027-7707.

ISBN 979-8-3845-1228-8

Item 005849992

Dewey decimal classification: 248.843

Subject heading: SPIRITUAL LIFE \ WOMEN—RELIGIOUS LIFE \ GOD—WILL

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved.

To order additional copies of this resource, write to Lifeway Resources Customer Service; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100; Brentwood, TN 37027-7707; fax 615.251.5933; phone 800.458.2772; order online at www.lifeway.com; or email orderentry@lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America.

Lifeway Women Bible Studies

Lifeway Resources,

200 Powell Place, Suite 100

Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	4
ABOUT THE STUDY.....	5
FOREWORD.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	8
SESSION ONE: A Simple Relationship.....	10
SESSION TWO: A Single-Minded Worship.....	38
SESSION THREE: A Set-Apart Holiness.....	66
SESSION FOUR: A Still Attentiveness.....	92
SESSION FIVE: A Sold-Out Hunger.....	118
SESSION SIX: A Servant Spirit.....	146
SESSION SEVEN: Conclusion (Video Only)	
ENDNOTES.....	172
VIDEO REDEMPTION CARD.....	177

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PRISCILLA SHIRER'S voice rings with raw power and clarity throughout the nation and the world. Whether through her speaking ministry, her bestselling books and Bible studies, or on a movie screen—most recently in *The Forge*—her



primary ambition is to lift up Jesus and equip His children to live victoriously. Her writings include series on biblical characters like *Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted*; *Elijah: Faith and Fire*; and *Gideon: My Weakness, His Strength*; as well as topical studies like *The Armor of God*. She has also authored a four-part fiction adventure series called *The Prince Warriors*, as well as award-winning, bestselling titles like *Fervent* (ECPA Christian Book of the Year), *The Resolution for Women*, and *Discerning the Voice of God*.

She and her husband of 25 years, Jerry, lead Going Beyond Ministries near Dallas, Texas, where they spend most of their time trying to satisfy the appetites of their three rapidly growing young adult sons.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Two decades have come and gone since Priscilla Shirer wrote her first Bible study, *He Speaks to Me*. This study, which teaches us how to position ourselves to hear the voice of God, is the precursor for Priscilla's bestselling Bible study, *Discerning the Voice of God*. Many things have changed in her life and in our world in those twenty years. (The babies she talks about in this study are now young men, for one thing!) But through all those shifts, God's Word remains unchanged and consistent. His desire to speak to us is as relevant today as it ever was.

As you begin your study, keep several things in mind:

- **The material in this book is divided into five days of individual study and one small-group session each week.** The small-group sessions provide an excellent opportunity to share what the Lord is teaching you, as well as learn from what the Lord is teaching other women in your group. A free Group Leader Discussion Guide is available for download at lifeway.com/hespeakstome.
- **Each day of individual study** will take about 30 minutes. The personal learning activities are designed to help you apply what you are learning. Please don't skip over these activities. The activities also will prepare you for your small-group session where you will be asked to share some of your responses.

Consider the following suggestions to make your study more meaningful:

- **Trust the Holy Spirit to be your teacher.** Ask Him for guidance as you seek to better prepare yourself to hear from the Lord.
- **Keep a spiritual journal of God's activity in your life, as well as your response to Him throughout the study.** When God speaks, it is important to record it. Your memory will not always recall these "special moments," but your journal will!
- **Live out your growing relationship with and knowledge of God.** Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and share freely with others what the Lord is teaching you.

May God bless you as you seek to listen and respond to His voice.



You'll find detailed information for how to **ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS** that accompany this study in the back of your Bible study book.

FOREWORD

As I stared at the title to this Bible study, I felt the emotion well in my throat. At the risk of sounding dramatic (but honestly, when haven't I?), I can't think of a spiritual reality that moves and astonishes me more than God's willingness to speak to mortals and give us ears to hear. I never get over feeling amazed any time I get confirmation from God that I really did hear him on a matter. To me, the whole process is miraculous.

The first recorded words out of the mouth of God erupted a universe out of absolute nothingness. His words soften the hardest hearts, offer hope to the most despairing seasons and speak comfort over the most anxious minds. They cheer us, teach us, warn us, equip us, send us out and lead us. They teach us how to pray. How to love. How to live. You and I want God to reveal Himself to us. To speak to us through His words. We want them to grant us insight. To shape our discernment. To help us know how to follow Jesus. Where to follow Jesus. When to stay. When to go. When to speak. When to stay silent.

Communication is the essence of all relationships and, at least among humans, is ever a lesson in process. Like most married couples, my husband, Keith, and I have very different personalities and ways of expressing ourselves. After 46 years, we're still learning how to speak one another's language and not misread one another. I remember days when my daughters would try to tell me something from one end of the house while I was in the other. So much lay between us—walls, phones, screens—that I could faintly hear their voices but couldn't understand what they were saying. "Come closer so I can hear you!"

The whole canon of Scripture, complete and infallible from first to last, is an eternally engraved invitation to hear. From Genesis to Revelation, the *Logos* is saying in essence, "Come closer so you can hear Me." Oh, that He'd open our ears to hear, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "as those who are taught" (Is. 50:4 ESV)! Oh, that He'd increase our understanding!

An omniscient God is incapable of misreading us, but I have at times proven woefully capable of misreading Him. You too? Then you've picked up the right Bible study.

I remember like yesterday the first time I met Priscilla Shirer. I knew I was going to be impressed with her because I'd heard such wonderful things from mutual friends. Still, I was taken aback. Not only was she beautiful, articulate, and smart. She was warm and likeable, captivating and, well, pardon my superficiality, she was hilarious. The thing is, I don't mind a little hilarity alongside a heap of holiness. I might easily have been jealous of Priscilla, but her way was so disarming I couldn't be anything but drawn to her.

Twenty years have come and gone since the first time we met. Ten thousand conversations, countless shared prayers, a jillion texts, buckets of tears—and no few of them from laughter. We've been beside one another through some of our brightest and darkest moments. We're blood to each other, and I do not make such a claim flippantly. I need not reach for an ounce of hyperbole to tell you Priscilla Shirer is one of the dearest people in all the world to me. That's the simple truth of it.

But that would be of little use to you if I could not also tell you she is one of the best Bible teachers I've ever encountered, male or female, in this generation or the last, and that she makes learning an adventure—a joy. If you don't already know for a fact the Spirit of the Lord is upon her, I smile with my whole face thinking how you're about to find out.

In the all-glorious and worthy name of Jesus,

Beth Moore

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago, the Lord gently grabbed my hand and whispered, *“Come, follow Me.”* I’d already known Him for quite some time at that point. Having grown up around sound biblical teaching and a healthy church culture, I knew what it was to enjoy a friendship with Jesus through His Word and the Holy Spirit. But I also recognized that there was a slight disconnect between what I’d read about Jesus in the Scriptures and the testimony of others whose spiritual lives I’d admired, and the experience I was currently having. My soul was agitated in a holy, sacred way. There was an uneasiness that beckoned me to go deeper with the Lord and to expect a more full and robust relationship with Him in which I could hear His voice, recognize the conviction of His Spirit, and expect Him to lead and guide me in a personal way.

Until that point, I’d unknowingly become satisfied with “hand-me-down” revelation. I was complacent, satisfied with hearing God’s Word when it was taught to me by someone else who had faithfully studied the Scriptures themselves. I hadn’t recognized how this had become a crutch for me, keeping me from expecting and experiencing one of the most spectacular privileges that each of us has as a child of God—hearing His voice.

As sons and daughters of a loving heavenly Father, we shouldn’t be entirely satisfied with second-hand revelation about God. While we can be grateful for the insight we glean from the teachers who help us to rightfully discern His Word, we cannot allow their voices to replace His. The Father desires to speak to each of us personally through His Word and His Holy Spirit, who is given to each of us without prejudice. He wants us to hear His voice, understand, and obey. We don’t have to sit on the sidelines having a mediocre Christian existence while we admire others having a fervent and fiery friendship with the Lord.

He can and will speak to all of us.

One of the rights and privileges we have as followers is that our Lord speaks to us one-on-one. He meets us where we are despite who we are and reveals His will for our lives. So, today, hear the voice of the Lord whisper, *“Come, follow Me.”* Be encouraged to dig deeper into the presence of God, listen for His voice, and experience the depths of His Spirit.

As I journeyed forward with God, I noticed something interesting in many biblical examples. Before God spoke He often waited until whomever was listening had shown interest in receiving His word. For example, the resurrected Jesus gently called Mary's name only after she came to the tomb desperately seeking the body of her Savior (John 20). He spoke to a woman with a medical problem only after she forced her way through a crowd and touched the hem of His cloak (Luke 8). David got clear direction from God regarding several major decisions only after he "inquired of the LORD" (1 Sam. 23:4). A 12-year-old boy named Samuel heard the voice of God calling him but only after he positioned himself directly outside the holy of holies (1 Sam. 3).

Could our inability to hear God have less to do with His desire to speak and more to do with our lack of preparedness to hear? The Lord speaks clearly but those most likely to hear are those who have correctly positioned themselves.

On many occasions the Lord has gently reminded me that it is my sin that causes the separation between me and God (Isa. 59:2). I am the one standing in the way of receiving His fresh, personal, and revealing Word. While we are waiting on God to do His part, He could be waiting on us to do ours!

This study focuses on our spiritual posture and preparedness to hear God. We will look at a familiar story from 1 Samuel 3 where we find a young man who grew up surrounded by religious activity. I can relate to that. Yet the difference between Samuel and me is that he heard God's voice. For much of my Christian life, I didn't! So I began a journey to discover the characteristics God saw in Samuel that made Him desire to speak and made Samuel capable of hearing. Those six characteristics will unfold over the next six weeks.

I believe God is going to reveal Himself and His plan for you in new ways. Make a commitment to be obedient to whatever He says. If you do, I promise you will not be disappointed in the glorious results!

I'm praying for you as we study God's Word and listen for His voice together.

Your sister,

Priscilla Shirer

A Simple Relationship

SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED HAVE COME FROM CHILDREN. The 10-year-old poverty stricken Haitian girl who smiled at me during a mission trip taught me we can be content in the midst of horrible circumstances. My curious nephew who touches everything in my house reminds me that childlike curiosity stimulates continued growth. And the love I feel for my sons has been the Lord's tool to show me how much He loved me to give up His Son for my sin.

Children teach us the deep things of God. Christ Himself saw an invaluable tool in children because He used them to teach His followers.

The very first characteristic we learn about Samuel was that he was just a child when he heard God speak. In a nation of adults, God was looking for the simplicity of a child. According to Jewish tradition, it was at 12 years old that Samuel first heard God speak.

SESSION ONE

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.

—1 SAMUEL 3:1 (NASB 1995)

Samuel was a _____.

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him.

—1 SAMUEL 3:7 (NASB 1995)

“Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

—LUKE 18:16 (NASB 1995)

1. Jesus welcomes _____.
2. Jesus makes a _____ to children.

The manifestation of the power, presence, and voice of God is available to you now!



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.

DAY ONE

A SIMPLE OBEDIENCE

After Jackson's quiet time yesterday, books and toys were scattered everywhere. I asked him to clean up his play area. Excited to move on with the rest of his day, he bounded to his feet and quickly put everything in its proper place.

When he finished I smiled, opened my arms to him, and said, "Come here, sweetie." But Jackson didn't want to come to me. In fact, my instruction seemed to repel him. He ran from me!

I marveled that he had easily made the effort to clean up his play area, but he fought against the simple obedience required to come to me. Then I thought, *How like our relationship to God.* We often run from God's request for our attention. We struggle against God's desire that we simply spend time with Him. Why is it sometimes difficult for us to follow the simple instructions the Lord gives us?

DAILY BREAD

He called a
child to Him.

MATTHEW 18:2 (NIV)

THE BASICS OF OBEDIENCE

The disciples lived with Jesus. They saw Jesus heal and heard Him preach. They watched Him feed five thousand people with only five barley loaves and two fish. They even saw Him walk on water. Yet when Jesus wanted to teach them about obedience, He didn't dazzle them with miracles. He pointed to the basics of childhood.

In Matthew 18, Jesus used a child's willingness to obey to illustrate the beauty of simple obedience. For three years Jesus had been teaching and preaching. Thousands had heard His messages and seen His miracles. So why did the great teacher and miracle worker use a little one to show adults what true obedience looks like? Jesus called and the child came.

What does Matthew 11:20 tell us about how some adults responded to Jesus's teaching and miracles?

Which of the following best describes how you normally respond to Christ's Word?

- rebel
- question
- immediately obey
- argue with God
- run away
- other _____

Children have several traits that create the openness and willingness the Lord wants adults to recapture. They are naturally curious, using their curiosity to learn. They are excited by learning something new and delight in discovering new truths. That childish excitement is magical. It points to pure faith and total trust. My sister, the Lord wants us to regain these traits from childhood. I want a child's willing response to Jesus to impact my own relationship with Him.

What steps of simple obedience is the Lord requiring of you? (I've included examples from my list in the margin.)

1. serve my family graciously, willingly, and as a priority
2. regularly spend time with God
3. control my eating habits
4. honor my spouse's authority

Let's commit to obeying the Lord when we hear His voice. We must repent for the times we have ignored, fought against, or criticized His instructions.

THE SACRIFICE OF OBEDIENCE

Unfortunately, balking against the Lord's instructions often seems easier than following them, because obedience requires sacrifice. While our personal sacrifices may differ, they will always be required of us.

Look back at the list I shared with you of simple ways the Lord has asked me to obey Him. To fulfill those, I must make some sacrifices.

- To serve my family, I must often forfeit my own desires.
- To spend time with Him regularly, I must say "no" to other activities.
- To control my eating, I must not overindulge.
- To honor my husband's authority, I must release the desire to be in control.

Sacrifices often feel like I am giving up something valuable. I have to remind myself that joy and freedom always lie in obedience. Each of the sacrifices in my list ultimately results in my good. Each of the issues I surrender really contains poison that, if kept, will kill the wonderful future God has for me. In a paraphrase of Romans 6:1, we read: "You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits" (Rom. 6:1, *The Message*).

What sacrifices are you currently making in obedience to the Lord?

Look closely at the following passages. What sacrifices did these individuals make by walking obediently with God?

Peter and the apostles (Acts 5:17-29,40)

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:14-19)

Abraham (Genesis 22:1-3)

Joseph (Genesis 39:10-20)

Hosea (Hosea 1:2-3; 3:1-3)

THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience will not always be easy, but it will always be worth it. Obedience to God always brings reward.

Describe how the characters in the previous activity were rewarded.

Peter (Acts 5:40-42)

Daniel and his friends (Dan. 3:27)

Abraham (Gen. 22:16-18)

TAKE ACTION

By following the Lord in obedience, we are preparing or positioning ourselves to hear His voice. By sacrificing our own desires for His, we are aligning ourselves with His will and opening the door to receive His blessings. Remember the example of the child in Matthew 18? The disciples had a more intimate relationship with Jesus than the child did, yet Jesus chose the child to illustrate simple obedience. This shows us that intimacy with God doesn't always translate to practical obedience.

In what areas do you feel your relationship with God is lacking in practical obedience?

Write a prayer asking God to help you become more obedient to Him in these areas.

A SIMPLE BEGINNING

DAILY BREAD

“Truly I tell you,” he said, “unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 18:3

You’ve chosen this Bible study because you want to prepare yourself to hear God’s voice and receive wisdom from Him. Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 respond to that need with the same basic message: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom [knowledge, 1:7].” In fact, the phrase “The fear of the LORD” is so important to the quest for spiritual wisdom that Solomon repeated it eleven times in Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” In Hebrew, “the fear” is *Yir’ ah*, meaning “to reverence or respect.” “Beginning” translates to *re’ shiyth* which means “the essence.” And “knowledge,” *da’ath* in Hebrew, means “perception, discernment, spiritual understanding.”¹

Based on these definitions, rewrite the phrase, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” in your own words in the margin.

Spiritual perception and discernment come from reverencing and honoring God. I paraphrased the verse: “Respect for the Lord is the essence of spiritual understanding.” To hear God’s voice, we absolutely must be willing to recognize and appropriately respond to Him. Showing God respect opens our hearts and our spiritual ears to clearly hear from Him.

Now let’s look at the variations in usage applied to Proverbs 9:10. Here the word *beginning* is taken from the Hebrew word *ta’chilliah* which means “in the sense of opening; a commencement.” *Wisdom* in this passage comes from the Hebrew term *chokmah* which means “skillful, wisdom, shrewdness, prudence.”²

Using these definitions, rewrite the phrase “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” in your own words in the margin.

In our quest to hear God's voice, we cannot gain spiritual insight or wisdom if we begin at the wrong place. Our desire to hear from Him must begin with reverence. Respecting God is not only the essence of wisdom, it is also the prerequisite for it.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Notice the progression: Proverbs 1:7 promises spiritual understanding as a result of respecting God while Proverbs 9:10 goes a step further by saying that we will also acquire wisdom. Spiritual wisdom combines knowledge with skill and applies it to practical situations. Fearing God, for instance, not only opens the door to spiritual insight (knowledge); it goes a step further and allows us to usefully and skillfully apply that insight so it practically transforms our lives. After all, what good is knowledge if we don't know how to apply it?

- What good is a brain surgeon who made straight As in medical school but has never applied his knowledge in surgery?
- Who cares about the high academic scores of an airline captain who has never actually flown a commercial plane?
- What's the importance of the many framed degrees on the wall in your OB/GYN's office if your child is the first she's ever delivered?

I don't know about you, but tested skill matters much more to me than knowledge.

Fearing God does not mean that we should feel terror. It points to reverence and respect. *The Holman Bible Dictionary* refers to this as *religious fear* and defines it as "the human response to the presence of God."³ This type of fear combines reverence for God's majesty and respect of His power. It is a "reverential regard and awe that comes out of recognition and submission to the divine." Our ability to obtain wisdom from God begins and grows with our ability and willingness to fear Him.

Write your own paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 12:13 in the margin.

I love *The Message* translation of this verse: "The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what He tells you." A healthy fear of God precedes obedience to God.

PRACTICAL RESPECT

When you and I respect someone, our actions automatically reflect it. As a child, when I was disobedient, I remember my parents saying, "You don't respect me the way you should because if you did you would obey me." When we see God and respect Him for Who He is, an attitude of submission and obedience should stem from our desire to honor Him. The way we relate to the Lord demonstrates the respect we have for Him.

Honoring God is key to hearing from God.

What does your current level of practical obedience reveal about your respect for God?

- I don't respect Him.
- I give conditional respect.
- I give total respect.

Often we wait for God to speak to us, but have we done our part in preparing to hear from Him? Are we reverencing, respecting, and obeying Him? Without the proper preparation, we cannot gain the knowledge and wisdom He provides.

Romans 1:21-22 explains what happens when people who have only a head knowledge of God refuse to honor Him. Fill in the blanks, using the CSB translation.

"They became futile in their _____ ,
and their foolish heart was _____ " (v. 21).

"Professing to be _____ , they became
_____ " (v. 22).

Intellectual knowledge can help us know about God, but only a personal relationship with Him will lead us to a saving knowledge. That intimate, personal relationship leads us to respect, honor, and reverence God. This is where true wisdom begins.

TAKE ACTION

List some specific areas in which you desire to more closely obey the Lord.

Honoring God is key to hearing from God. Our ability to hear His voice begins when we reverence Him through simple obedience. Knowing God is not enough; we must fear and obey Him.

Let's ask the Lord to forgive us for any rebellion against His instructions. Let's commit to earnestly reverencing Him through our actions.

Close today's lesson by picking one thing from the list you made above that you can begin to work on today. Write that item below and list the steps you can take today to walk in obedience in that area.

A SIMPLE HUMILITY

DAILY BREAD

“Whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 18:4

When I was a year old, my parents began a 10-member church that has now ballooned to include over 10,000 members. As the preacher’s kid, I became the center of a lot of people’s attention. Church members lovingly treated me as their little girl, and I grew used to everyone catering to and taking care of me. Over time, this dynamic cultivated within me an over-inflated view of importance that I didn’t recognize until I was much older.

I began consciously striving to consider others, decenter myself and serve inconspicuously. Proactively nurturing and practicing humility is an important goal that I know I’m not alone in having to prioritize. Consider the conflict that arose among the disciples.

What had the disciples been arguing about according to Matthew 18:1?

In what areas of your life do you face similar conflict?

- marriage
- work
- school
- church
- family
- neighborhood
- other _____

On the heels of this argument Jesus tells the disciples to humble themselves like a child.

WHAT IS HUMILITY?

The Bible Exposition Commentary says that true humility means knowing, accepting, and being yourself—your best self—for God’s glory.⁴ It means avoiding two extremes: thinking less of yourself than

you ought to (as did Moses when God called him; see Ex. 3:11), or thinking more of yourself than you ought to (see Rom. 12:3). A truly humble person does not deny the gifts God has given her, nor brag about them as if they are by her own doing.

Humility is the ability to think of others, putting their needs before your own. My Aunt Elizabeth is one of the most humble people I know. Serving faithfully and quietly in our church for over 25 years, she is constantly more concerned with the feelings of others than with her own. In fact, she always works with a smile and a positive attitude. Though she rarely receives applause or public recognition for the wonderful job she does with the children at our church, her car is often the first in the parking lot and the last to leave after service on Sunday mornings. Her humility and dedication are such an inspiration to me.

List three individuals you know who demonstrate humility. Briefly describe how humility is evidenced by their actions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

WHAT IS HUMILITY NOT?

Pride—the antithesis of humility—is the compost heap on which myriad other problems and sins grow. Pride causes us to think we can do more than we can and convinces us we deserve special treatment, recognition, or honor. Pride causes us to think less of others and too much of ourselves.

Read Matthew 18:1-2 again.

Comparing the disciples' approach to Jesus versus the child's approach shows a practical truth about humility. Pride leads us to force our way into a situation while humility waits.

According to 1 Peter 5:5 (in the margin), what is God's response to pride?

In the same way, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 PETER 5:5

THE RESULT OF PRIDE

In Luke 9:46-48, we gain another insight into the situation presented in Matthew 18. Verse 46 reveals that the discussion over greatness caused an argument among this band of brothers. The disciples were actually arguing over which of them was the greatest. What created the argument? Pride. Relational problems with friends or family often indicate that pride is on the rise. We need to ask to what degree our pride gets in the way of reconciliation.

Do you currently have any strained relationships?

- Yes
- No

If yes, ask the Lord to check the condition of your heart. Ask Him to reveal to you the part pride plays in your conflict.

Over time, as you implement these changes, come back to this portion of the lesson and list the changes you are seeing in your relationships.

Another indicator pride was present appears in what happened just before the disciples argued over which of them would be greatest in the kingdom.

What revelation did Jesus give to the disciples in Luke 9:44-45?

How did they respond to His message (vv. 45-46)?

The disciples overlooked news of Christ's impending death because they were too concerned with themselves to concentrate on His words. Pride is a distraction. It causes us to bypass important and pertinent issues because we are consumed with ourselves. Often Jesus wants to reveal important information to us, but our prideful hearts get in the way of our ability to hear the message. Humility, on the other hand, clears the pathway for us to hear God.

According to Luke 1:52, what is the difference between how God responds to pride and how He responds to humility?

GOD'S RESPONSE TO HUMILITY

Moses was called the most humble man on the face of the earth (see Num. 12:3). He was a leader of integrity who fulfilled the duties of his office despite opposition from members of his own family. He submitted to the authority of God.

How was God's relationship with Moses different than with any other prophet (see Num. 12:5-8)?

Because of Moses' humility the Lord spoke clearly and personally to him in a way that He did not speak to others.

Read the verses below and list one thing each verse teaches about humility.

Psalm 138:6 _____

Isaiah 57:15 _____

Isaiah 66:2 _____

James 4:6 _____

James 4:10 _____

Jesus is the best example we have of true humility (see Phil. 2:5-7). He is the visible manifestation of the Father's character. Psalm 113:5-6 (see margin) reveals that the enthroned God of the universe "humbles Himself." He humbles Himself to behold all His creatures, though He is infinitely above them.

Who is like the Lord our God—the one enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

PSALM 113:5-6

TAKE ACTION

What, according to the following verses, should prompt humility in us?

Isaiah 6:5

Luke 5:8

How can you begin to implement the principle Jesus taught in Luke 14:7-11?

Humility should be the natural outpouring of hearts grateful to the Lord. When we consider all the King has done for us, given us, and forgiven us, our hearts should be overjoyed. We should humbly submit to Him like children gratefully submitting to a loving parent.

DAY FOUR

A SIMPLE TRUST

My 17-month-old son trusts me. He often demonstrates that trust by jumping from the top of the stairs into my arms. Of course, it scares me to death—especially when I am not paying full attention and he jumps anyway!

As we become adults, trusting can become more difficult. Life experiences lead to a lack of trust. We become more self-sufficient. Yet, Jesus desires that we approach Him with total trust and believe in Him with the simplicity of a child. It takes more than humility to believe in God and respond to Him. It takes trust.

What happens between childhood and adulthood that causes children and adults to respond differently to God?

How has your faith in the Lord changed since you first entered into a relationship with Him?

COMPLETE CONFIDENCE

In Matthew 18:6, Christ uses the Greek word *pisteuo* to refer to the child's belief. It means "to think to be true, to place complete confidence in." I tried to make a list of things or people I can place complete confidence in, but it was pretty short. Only One has earned my complete confidence.

Look up Hebrews 11:6 and write it in your own words.

DAILY BREAD

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.”

MATTHEW 18:6

What does the last line of this verse promise those who diligently seek God?

How does your life confirm that God rewards those who trust Him?

THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNBELIEF

A scene in Numbers 20 demonstrates Moses' lack of faith in God's instructions.

Read Numbers 20:8-12. What did God specifically instruct Moses to do (v. 8)?

How did Moses disobey (v. 11)?

What consequences did he have to face as a result (v. 12)?

Notice God's reprimand comes not for simply disobeying but rather for not believing God. Failure to do exactly what God asks, regardless of how strange or incomplete His instructions seem, shows lack of faith in God Himself. It shows we don't trust that He is God and knows what's best. By not doing what He tells us, we are saying that we don't think God is wise enough or capable enough to handle our situations.

Recall a time when you received instructions from God that seemed strange, and you didn't want to follow. What happened as a result of your action or inaction?

There are times in my marriage when I want to say something specific to my husband, but the Lord clearly instructs me not to speak at all. And I admit that sometimes when His instructions seem strange, I rebel against them. Every time, I wish I hadn't. My words only escalate arguments and cause discord in my relationship with my husband. I may "win" an argument with my own actions but at a great cost. God's way is always better, but sometimes I fail to trust Him.

"And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

MATTHEW 21:22

In Numbers 20, Moses did not follow God's instructions. But what miracle happened when he struck the rock (v. 11)?

What does this reveal about God's grace in times of our disobedience?

The people received the water they needed, but Moses and Aaron still suffered the consequences of unbelief. Moses prayed that he and the others would see the land God promised, but his request was not fulfilled because he failed to trust God.

Rewrite Matthew 21:22 (in the margin) in your own words.

Could the cause of our unanswered prayers be our lack of childlike *pisteuo*?

Let's stop and pray, asking the Lord to reveal areas where we operate outside the realm of faith. Ask Him to show you when you are not obeying His instructions, thinking instead that your way is better

than His. Let's thank Him for His continued grace, and admit the areas where we lack full trust in His instructions.

The following verses show the importance of faith in our relationship to the Lord. Write key words beside each to remind you of their meanings.

Isaiah 7:9

John 3:18

John 8:24

Hebrews 3:12

A SIMPLE DEPENDENCE

DAILY BREAD

I have calmed
and quieted
my soul like a
weaned child
with its mother;
my soul is like a
weaned child.

PSALM 131:2

This week we have explored the basics of placing ourselves in a position to hear from God. We've looked at the importance of being obedient, of fearing the Lord and obtaining wisdom, of remaining humble, and of trusting God's plans above our own. Today we'll look at how our dependence on God may affect how He speaks to us.

Small babies depend completely on their parents. Without an adult's assistance and love, they cannot survive. God does not intend for us to remain babies, but He does intend for us to be that dependent on Him. Our society deplores dependency and praises self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, we often rely on ourselves for those things we should lean on Him to provide.

For what achievements, experiences, or blessings have you been tempted to take credit?

In today's Bible verse, Psalm 131:2, David describes dependence on God. He pens these words while considering the high honor of assuming the throne of Israel. This powerful man who will soon be king doesn't credit himself for the blessings in his life (see 1 Sam. 16:1-12; 17:45-50). Instead, he forms a deeper dependence on God, trusting in Him as a child trusts a loving parent.

David begins his conversation with God not by focusing on his own accomplishments and greatness but by confessing his inadequacy (see Ps. 131:1). The imagery of a child was already on David's mind, but Jesus had to bring a child to the attention of the disciples in Matthew 18.

The Bible does not tell us the words the disciples used in their argument over personal greatness, but the phrases from David's prayer likely differed from those used by the disciples.

Put yourself in the place of the arguing disciples in Matthew 18:1. Write three statements that contrast David's words from Psalm 131:1. Plan to share your statements with your group. I've given you my example.

DAVID	DISCIPLES
My heart is not proud	I sure want to be recognized
My eyes are not haughty	
I do not involve myself in great matters	
I do not involve myself in things too difficult for me	

With which list do your thoughts and conversation most closely align?

- David's
- The disciples'

David's words demonstrate his inadequacy and complete dependence on the Lord. The disciples thought they were not only adequate but superior.

Rate your dependence quotient in the following areas: 5 represents the highest level of dependency on God and 1 represents the lowest.

Circle your responses.

Finances	1	2	3	4	5
Family	1	2	3	4	5
Health	1	2	3	4	5
Future Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Career	1	2	3	4	5

In the list on the previous page, **circle** the category in which you've made the greatest progress in trusting God in the past year.

Pause to thank God for the areas where you've grown. Ask His assistance in depending on Him in more difficult areas.

As a speaker and Bible teacher, I talk to thousands of women every year. I am so grateful for this exciting and interesting journey. I've learned, however, that I have to be careful not to rely on my communication skills or familiarity with the message. When I rely on familiarity rather than relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, the message lacks power and anointing. On the other hand, when I depend on the Lord and confess my inadequacy, He touches hearts in ways I never could.

Reread Psalm 131:2 (on page 32) and check the things David declares he has done.

- calmed his soul**
- made an offering**
- proclaimed God's name**
- quieted his soul**

David mentions the steps his soul has undergone in reaching dependence on God: calming and quieting. These steps in turn led his soul to rest. Let's look at each of these to discover what we must do to become dependent on God.

THE CALMED SOUL

First, David says, "I have calmed . . . my soul." Calming is an action of which David has to take control. He compares the effort of calming his soul with the activity of weaning a baby from its mother's milk.

Weaning Jackson after a year of nursing was a difficult decision. The day came, however, when it was time for him to drink milk from a cup. I hated to turn him down every time he wanted to nurse. Two full days went by before he would drink anything. When he finally did, he forgot about nursing and began to gulp milk like a champion.

Now he is only happy with real whole milk. But weaning took discipline! Almost more than I could manage.

Calming your soul into a state of dependence on God also requires discipline. Our natural tendency is to trust our own ambitions, gifts, talents, abilities, and earthly wisdom to make decisions.

We naturally rely heavily on ourselves to secure our destiny. Just as I had to discipline myself to offer Jackson the cup, so too must you direct yourself to the nourishment of the Lord when your soul cries out for its old dependencies. If you remain faithful to Him, sooner or later you will find nothing else will satisfy.

On what people, places, or ambitions do you tend to depend more for satisfaction than on the Lord?

THE QUIETED SOUL

Weaning requires a season of discomfort. During the two days it took to wean Jackson, he was a mess. He was uneasy, insecure, and cried continuously. Since he could not have what he feverishly desired, he thought his world was coming undone. I found that my job was not only to train him to drink but also to quiet him. He needed to be consoled. I rocked him, kept him preoccupied, and did my best to make sure he understood that all would be well. And every time he desired to nurse, I offered him a warm cup of milk.

When we begin to wean ourselves of dependence on other things, we may feel uneasy, fretful, and uncomfortable. But without the crutch of dependence on ourselves or others, it becomes easier to turn to God for comfort and spiritual nourishment.

When the psalmist's soul was in a state of unrest during the "weaning" process, he wrote: "Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God." (Ps. 42:5).

What does the psalmist say is the solution to calming one's soul (Ps. 42:6)?

We depend on what we know. When we have a trust relationship with someone, we gladly depend on him or her. Likewise, when we place our trust in God, we naturally depend on Him. The more you trust your concerns to the Lord and see Him working in your life, the more willing you will be to depend on Him in the future.

The psalmist quieted his soul by remembering what God had done. What has God done in your life that can build trust when you struggle to depend on Him?

List situations in which you currently need to depend on the Lord. Allow Him an opportunity to win your trust.

THE RESTED SOUL

His soul calmed and quieted, David points out the final step of the process—rest.

Seven months since Jackson last nursed, he no longer desires milk from me. In fact, he doesn't even think about it. If he wants milk, he knows it comes from the refrigerator. He rests in his new situation. So too, our souls will re-orient themselves to a new way of feeding as we accept God alone for refreshment.

If we seek fulfillment in the things of the world after a season of depending on God, we will discover that it doesn't satisfy us the way it used to. When we are thirsty, we need so much more than the world can offer. But Hallelujah, God never disappoints!

