

HEARING FROM GOD

Being close to God means communicating with him, which is almost always a two-way street. In our ongoing friendship with God, we tell him what is on our hearts in prayer and learn to perceive what he is saying to us. It's this second part of our conversation with God that many find to be so difficult or even unapproachable. How can you be sure God is speaking to you? The answer is that we learn by experience. The key is to focus more on building our personal relationship with our Creator and less on individual actions and decisions.



WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 13 July

Connect:

- Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.
- This term, we are starting to move into the 'how' of hearing God's voice.
- It's important to acknowledge that 'hearing from God' can be difficult because we all come with different histories and experiences.

Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation and open hearts to God's voice.

Summary:

God still speaks today—not only through Scripture and wise counsel but also through more mysterious means: dreams, pictures, and visions. These experiences can often be symbolic, subtle, and deeply personal. The Bible is full of stories where God communicates in these ways.

God often speaks in ways that engage the imagination, especially when our rational minds are distracted or at rest. Regardless of whether hearing God through these ways is familiar to you or not, let's encourage one another to be open, attentive, and discerning as we learn to recognise God's voice in these ways.

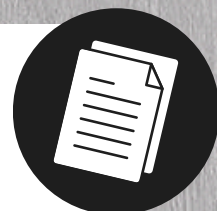
Read & re-read the passages:

Read these Scriptures, slowly. You may like to read them more than once and from different versions:

- Joel 2:28
- Acts 10:9-16
- Matthew 1:20

MORE RESOURCES: PODCASTS

- 'Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' – John Mark Comer
- 'How to Pray' + 'How to Hear God' – Pete Greig
- 'Beholding' – Strahan Coleman





Questions:

1. Where in Scripture do we see God using dreams, visions, or pictures to speak? What strikes you about those stories?
2. Have you or someone you know ever experienced God speaking through a dream, picture, or vision? What happened, and how was it discerned?
3. Pete Greig states that, "God speaks through what we see as well as what we hear." Why might God choose to speak through images rather than words?
4. How can we discern whether a dream or picture is from God, our own mind, or something else?
5. What role does stillness and prayer play in receiving and interpreting these kinds of messages?
6. Pay attention to what catches your attention. What recent image, dream, or thought has lingered in your mind? Might God be speaking through it?
7. How can we grow in listening to God in these symbolic ways without becoming overly mystical or overly sceptical?

Discerning God's voice, remember the ABC's:

- A.** Is it **Affirming**, encouraging, does it build up, does it speak of God's love, value and desire for you?
- B.** Is it **Biblical** – not just is it in the Bible, but does it fit in the grand narrative, the bigger story of the Bible?
- C.** Is it **Christlike** – does it lead you and point you to Jesus, to be with Him, become like Him and live in the way of Jesus? Does it sound like something Jesus would say?
In **Community** – do others agree with you in the ABC, do they sense that it is what God is saying, leading you into?

Practice (optional, 5-10 minutes)

Spend a few minutes in silent prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak. Encourage group members to write down or draw/sketch anything they sense—an image, a word, a feeling. (No pressure to share unless they want to.)

Reflect and pray:

Reaffirm that God delights in speaking with His people in personal and creative ways. Ask for greater sensitivity and discernment in recognising His voice—especially through dreams and visions. Pray for peace, protection, and wisdom.

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WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 27 July & 10 August

Connect:

- Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.
- This term, we are starting to move into the 'how' of hearing God's voice.
- It's important to acknowledge that 'hearing from God' can be difficult because we all come with different histories and experiences.

Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Ask someone to open in prayer, asking God to speak clearly through Scripture, discussion, and quiet reflection.

Summary:

Have you ever felt a nudge to pray something specific for someone, or felt like God gave you a word or picture for them? Pete Greig says that hearing God is not just for our personal benefit, but often for the encouragement, comfort, and strengthening of others. In his experience leading 24-7 Prayer, Pete writes that God's voice often comes in subtle ways—a thought, a scripture, a sense, or an image—meant to bless those around us.

"We hear God best not when we're trying to be impressive but when we're trying to be loving." – Pete Greig

Read & re-read the passages:

Read these Scriptures, slowly. You may like to read them more than once and from different versions:

- 1 Corinthians 14:3
- John 10:27
- Acts 13:2

MORE RESOURCES: PODCASTS

- 'Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' – John Mark Comer
- 'How to Pray' + 'How to Hear God' – Pete Greig
- 'Beholding' – Strahan Coleman





Reflect:

Hearing God for others is not about being dramatic or mysterious—it's about **learning to listen in love**. We need to be careful not to confuse hearing God's voice with giving advice or trying to control others. True spiritual listening is **humble, accountable, and grounded in Scripture and love**.

When we pray for others, we can ask: *"Lord, is there anything You want me to know or share for this person?"* Then listen—and only speak what builds them up (remember the ABC's of discernment).

We also need to **test what we sense**, holding it lightly, and offering it gently.

Discerning God's voice, remember the ABC's:

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 - B.** Is it **Biblical** – not just is it in the Bible, but does it fit in the grand narrative, the bigger story of the Bible?
 - C.** Is it **Christlike** – does it lead you and point you to Jesus, to be with Him, become like Him and live in the way of Jesus? Does it sound like something Jesus would say?
- In **Community** – do others agree with you in the ABC, do they sense that it is what God is saying, leading you into?

Questions:

1. Have you ever sensed God speaking to you for someone else? What happened, and how did they respond?
2. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, what are the purposes of sharing a word from God?
3. What helps you personally discern if what you're hearing is from God, your own thoughts, or something else?
4. Pete Greig encourages offering what we hear with "open hands." Why is it important to hold words for others with humility?
5. Have you ever been encouraged by someone who heard from God on your behalf? How did that shape your faith?
6. What risks or fears do you feel about listening to God for others? How can this group help you grow in this area?
7. Spend a few moments in silence: ask God if He wants to encourage someone in the group. Is there a verse, word, or picture that comes to mind? (Encourage gentle sharing after this if people feel comfortable.)

Practice (optional to try each day this week)

- Ask God each day: "Who do You want to encourage through me today?"
- Write down anything you sense in prayer for others (Scriptures, words, pictures).
- Practice sharing gently with a friend or group member. Use phrases like: "I think God might be saying..." "This may not be for you, but I felt led to share..." "Does this encourage or resonate with you?"

Closing thought:

We're not trying to impress others with "a word from the Lord." We're simply learning to love like Jesus—by listening to both God and people. The best way to hear God for others is to ask: "What does love look like in this moment?"

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WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 24 August

Connect:

- Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.
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- It's important to acknowledge that 'hearing from God' can be difficult because we all come with different histories and experiences.

Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then begin the study with a short prayer asking God to open hearts and minds, and to help everyone understand the power of lament in drawing near to God in times of suffering.

Summary:

Today we're looking at hearing God in the midst of pain, adversity and suffering. To pray in the midst of these times is to pray a prayer of lament – approximately a third of the Psalms are prayers of lament. Lament is not about doubting God, but about being honest with Him and eventually finding a way back to hope. Lament is a way to process our emotions and grow in our trust in God's goodness, even when we don't understand our circumstances. Lament is not a lack of faith—it is an act of faith. It expresses trust in a God who hears, even when we don't understand what He is doing.

Read & re-read the passages:

Read these Scriptures, slowly. You may like to read them more than once and from different versions:

- Psalm 13
- Lamentations 3:19-24
- Job 3
- Matthew 27:46

These examples show that lament is a Biblical and healthy part of spiritual life.

See over for the structure of a Biblical Lament (especially in Psalms)...

Structure of a Biblical Lament (especially in Psalms):

Many laments follow this pattern:

- Address to God (crying out to Him)
- Complaint (honestly expressing pain or confusion)
- Request (asking God to act or intervene)
- Expression of trust (reaffirming faith in God's character)

Questions:

1. When have you felt the need to lament—personally, or on behalf of others or the world?
2. Why do you think God included so many laments in Scripture?
3. What do you think is the difference between lamenting and complaining?
4. Have you ever felt pressure to hide your grief or struggles in your relationship with God? Why?
5. How does lament strengthen our faith rather than weaken it?
6. Read Psalm 13 together. What stands out to you about David's process of lament?
7. What might it look like for you to practice lament in your own prayer life?

Discerning God's voice, remember the ABC's:

A. Is it **Affirming**, encouraging, does it build up, does it speak of God's love, value and desire for you?

B. Is it **Biblical** – not just is it in the Bible, but does it fit in the grand narrative, the bigger story of the Bible?

C. Is it **Christlike** – does it lead you and point you to Jesus, to be with Him, become like

Him and live in the way of Jesus? Does it sound like something Jesus would say? In **Community** – do others agree with you in the ABC, do they sense that it is what

God is saying, leading you into?

Be encouraged:

Lament gives us permission to bring our whole selves before God—not just our joy but also our sorrow. God does not ask us to suppress our pain; instead, He invites us to bring it to Him. In lament, we grieve with hope, knowing that God hears and that redemption is coming.

Reflect and pray:

End the study by praying for those who are grieving or going through difficult times, asking God for His comfort and peace. Pray that God will help everyone in the group to embrace the full range of emotions in their relationship with Him, and that they would find hope in His presence during times of sorrow.

MORE RESOURCES: PODCASTS

- 'Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' – John Mark Comer
- 'How to Pray' + 'How to Hear God' – Pete Greig
- 'Beholding' – Strahan Coleman



LAMENT EXERCISES

This is not to be thought of as homework. These exercises are simply to help facilitate space in your life for you to meet with God in your lament. If at any point, you need to pause or take more time on one question or exercise than you do on another, feel free to do so. The goal is not completion the goal is worship.

- Lament is worship
- Lament is praise



"Lament is not despair. It is not whining. It is not a cry into a void. Lament is a cry directed to God. It is the cry of those who see the truth of the world's deep wounds and the cost of seeking peace. It is the prayer of those who are deeply disturbed by the way things are..." -Reconciling All Things, p. 78

"It seems to me that we do not need to be taught how to lament since we have so many models in Scripture. What we need is simply the assurance that it's okay to lament. We all carry deep within ourselves a pressurised reservoir of tears. It takes only the right key at the right time to unlock them. In God's perfect time, these tears can be released to form a healing flood. That's the beauty and the mystery of the prayer of lament." - Michael Card

"If you are in mourning, you have the opportunity to worship in the most powerful way possible: lamentation. This worship isn't done in order to have God remove the pain. It simply recognises that God stands in the moment with us. Lamentation elevates God in the presence of our enemies. It brings out a side of God that other forms of worship simply cannot touch." - Graham Cooke

(1) Writing your own Psalm of lament:

1. Taking the basic shape of a lament psalm as your pattern, write your own lament psalm.
 - Address to God (crying out to Him)
 - Complaint (honestly expressing pain or confusion)
 - Request (asking God to act or intervene)
 - Expression of Trust (reaffirming faith in God's character)
2. Choose whether you wish to write an individual lament or a communal lament. Perhaps you have something in your life you need to lament, or perhaps you don't. Communal lament is for the pain and suffering we see in our world around us, it means lamenting on another's behalf. Perhaps you want to lament human trafficking, natural disasters, wars, famine, sin etc.
3. Keep your phrases/lines succinct, no long sentences, no wordy phrasings.
4. Be specific and concrete in your statements, rather than abstract.
5. Choose imagery or metaphors that will help you see what you're praying.
6. Title your psalm.
7. Share it with a friend (if you feel comfortable). Please bring it with you to small group, if you feel comfortable.

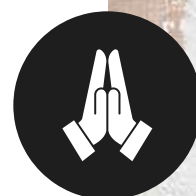
For those wanting more structure, guidance, examples, the list on the following page may help you churn some ideas for writing your own lament. What ending(s), death(s) or loss(es) do you need to grieve?

Examples of endings, deaths and losses:

- Death of a loved one
- Death of a pet
- Death of a dream
- Death of a season of life
- Role as a parent (empty nest)
- Caring actively for children
- Employment (job/role/career)
- Relationship status
- School grade - in a different class
- Death of a relationship
- Romantic
- Friendship
- Death of a plan
- Loss of familiarity
- Failure
- Financial reversals
- Loss of innocence
- Loss of identity
- Not attaining the love or approval of a significant person
- Not being the person one wishes he or she were (loss of ideal self)
- Not getting what we want/need
- Not being able to relate to your parents the way you want or wish you could
- Loss of health due to illness
- Loss of a home due to a move or a disaster
- Loss of safety & sense of security

What emotions do you feel regarding each situation you need to grieve?
Name them:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Restless | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doubtful | <input type="checkbox"/> Manipulated | <input type="checkbox"/> Darkness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Angry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerless | <input type="checkbox"/> Tempted | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broken | <input type="checkbox"/> Sorrow | <input type="checkbox"/> Tired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traumatized | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Against | <input type="checkbox"/> Shocked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Defiled | <input type="checkbox"/> Disgust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithless | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearful | <input type="checkbox"/> Distrust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discontent | <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |



(2) Tears of Lament

The invitation is to sit in quiet meditation and prayer. The following Bible verses talk about how God views our tears.

Fill a bowl with water and place it in front of you. This is a symbolic "bowl of tears." It's to symbolise the special way in which Scripture tells us that God bottles our tears. Read the following verses as you hold the bowl.

- Psalm 56:8
- Isaiah 25:8
- Luke 6:21
- Revelation 7:17
- Revelation 21:4
- Psalm 116:7-9
- John 11:35
- Psalm 6:6-10
- Lamentations 2:11
- Luke 23:26-27

(3) Lament of what you cannot control

The invitation is to sit in quiet meditation and prayer. The key here is to allow your judgments to rest.

Find a pen and a piece of paper.

Put whatever comes to you onto the paper and let the paper "hold" it. Make it easy on yourself!

Draw 2 circles:

Draw one larger circle and put a smaller circle on the inside. On the outside circle, put in lines, shapes, images, and representations of what you could not control today. On the inside circle, put in what you could or did control. Pray through these items as you draw, giving them prayerfully to Jesus.

Finish by reading and praying through these Scriptures:

- Isaiah 41:10
- Psalm 46:1
- Philippians 4:6-7
- Luke 12:22-26



(4) Lighting a candle

The invitation is to sit in quiet meditation and prayer. Use a lit candle to light a smaller candle for someone as you pray for them. Or light a candle for a part of the world/a situation in our world and pray for it.

The lit candle is a symbol of God's light in the world. When we light the smaller candle, we say a prayer and invite God's love to shine in the person's life or situation. We leave the candle burning for a time as we sit quietly. Let it burn as a testament to our prayer for another person.

May the candles serve as a reminder to all who look upon that you have prayed for those who are in need, and the Lord has heard your prayer, and His light is shining.

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Being close to God means communicating with him, which is almost always a two-way street. In our ongoing friendship with God, we tell him what is on our hearts in prayer and learn to perceive what he is saying to us. It's this second part of our conversation with God that many find to be so difficult or even unapproachable. How can you be sure God is speaking to you? The answer is that we learn by experience. The key is to focus more on building our personal relationship with our Creator and less on individual actions and decisions.



WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 7 September

Connect:

- Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.
- This term, we are starting to move into the 'how' of hearing God's voice.
- It's important to acknowledge that 'hearing from God' can be difficult because we all come with different histories and experiences.

Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then pray: *"Father, we come before You today with open hearts, seeking Your presence. We ask that You help us to be still and patient, learning to hear You not only in words, but also in silence. Teach us how to behold You, even when the noise of the world and the silence of our hearts seem overwhelming. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

Summary:

Sometimes, it feels like God is silent. We pray, seek, and wait, but there's no direct response. Our modern world is filled with noise, distractions, and constant demands. It's easy to become anxious, questioning if God is listening, or if we've done something wrong to cause this silence. Yet, in these moments of quiet, there is a profound invitation to behold God without words—simply to be present with Him, encountering God in stillness and silence, where He is present even when we can't hear Him clearly.

God's silence does not mean He is absent. It is often in these moments of silence that we are invited to lean into His presence and embrace a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him, beyond the transactional nature of prayer or seeking answers. Silence is a space for us to truly be with God, just as He is, without needing to fill the space with our own agendas or expectations.

In his book 'Beholding', Strahan Coleman writes about "being present" with God—entering His presence not to seek something but to simply "be" with Him. This is the essence of true communion: when we behold Him for who He is, not for what He can do. This is a call to move beyond asking and receiving, to a place of worship and adoration that is quiet, reflective, and wordless. This silent place might feel uncomfortable at first, but it is rich with His presence.



Read & re-read the passages:

Read these Scriptures, slowly. You may like to read them more than once and from different versions:

- Psalm 46:10

This verse speaks directly to the reality of waiting in God's presence without rushing to hear a word, an instruction, or an answer. It encourages us to be present and still, even in silence.

- 1 Kings 19:11-12

In this passage, we learn that God doesn't always speak in the grand, dramatic ways we might expect. Sometimes He speaks in a quiet, gentle whisper—often requiring us to quiet our own hearts to hear.

Questions:

1. When was the last time you felt distant or silent from God? What emotions or thoughts surfaced during that time? Reflect on the experience of waiting or feeling unheard. Did you feel frustrated, or were you able to sit in the silence?
2. In your daily life, how often do you allow space for stillness? Are you able to be present in the moment, or do you constantly rush to fill the silence with activity or thoughts?
3. How do you interpret God's silence? Do you view it as abandonment or as an invitation to deeper communion? Reflect on how you respond to moments when God seems silent. Do you see them as an opportunity for growth or a challenge to overcome?
4. In 1 Kings 19:11-12, God wasn't in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the gentle whisper. Have you ever experienced God speaking to you in a subtle, quiet way? Share any moments where you felt God's presence but didn't hear a direct word, or it came in an unexpected form.
5. Strahan Coleman writes about beholding God without words. What might this look like in your relationship with God? Imagine sitting in God's presence without needing to say anything, simply being with Him. How does this change your approach to your spiritual life?
6. What does it mean to "be still and know that I am God" in a culture that prizes productivity and noise? How can you cultivate a deeper stillness in your life, trusting that God's presence is enough even when you don't have all the answers?
7. How might you practice being present with God today, even when it feels like you aren't hearing from Him? Reflect on a practical step you can take to engage with God's presence without the expectation of hearing something specific.

Reflect and pray:

Father, thank You for being with us even in the silent spaces. Help us to learn to sit in Your presence without the need for words. Teach us to behold You, to find peace in the quiet, and to trust that You are near, even when we cannot hear You clearly. May we grow in intimacy with You through stillness, and may Your presence become our true source of comfort. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Practice being present with God in silence:

1. Set Aside Time and Space

- Find a quiet space where you can sit undisturbed for 5–10 minutes each day. This could be early in the morning, during lunch, or before bed—whenever you can dedicate some time to be still before God.
- Sit comfortably but attentively. You don't need to be in any particular posture; the goal is simply to be present.



2. Close Your Eyes and Breathe

- Begin by closing your eyes and taking a few deep, slow breaths. Inhale deeply, hold for a moment, and exhale slowly. As you do, allow any tension or distractions to melt away.
- Let each breath remind you that you are in God's presence, not seeking anything from Him, but simply acknowledging that He is with you.

3. Let Go of Words

- Let go of the urge to speak or think about your requests, worries, or thoughts. If a prayer comes to mind, gently set it aside, trusting that God knows what's on your heart.
- The aim is to sit with God without asking, talking, or explaining. Instead, just be in His presence.

4. Behold God Without Words

- Visualise the love and beauty of God. You might picture a peaceful scene, such as a quiet meadow or the warmth of the sun, knowing that these are expressions of God's goodness.
- Focus on the stillness around you. Imagine that you are just with God, without any expectations or requests. Be attentive to how He feels near to you, even without words.
- If your mind starts to wander, gently return to focusing on God's presence. Don't force your thoughts; simply let them come and go, returning your attention to the silence.

5. Listen with Your Heart

- You may not hear any specific words but tune in to the inner peace and calm that settles over you. This is God's quiet whisper.
- Ask God, "What are You showing me in this moment?" not expecting a direct answer, but allowing space to be filled with His peace, wisdom, or love.

6. Close with a Simple Acknowledgment

- When your time comes to a close, take a moment to thank God for His presence. You don't need to have "heard" anything in particular—simply being with Him is enough.
- Close your practice with a simple prayer:
- "Thank You, God, for being with me. I trust that You are near, even when I cannot hear You clearly. Help me to carry this quiet presence with me throughout my day. Amen."



Reflection during the week:

At the end of each week, reflect on how this practice felt. Did it feel hard or easy? Did you notice any moments where God's presence felt particularly close, or was there any peace in the silence? Write down your thoughts or feelings, even if you didn't experience anything dramatic.

MORE RESOURCES: PODCASTS

- 'Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' - John Mark Comer
- 'How to Pray' + 'How to Hear God' - Pete Greig
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WHEN YOU MEET:

No corresponding sermon for this discussion

Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind.

Wrapping up the Hearing From God series:

For this final session, the goal is to reflect on the whole series, trying to recognise patterns of God's voice in your life, and discern next steps in your walk with Jesus.

Here are some reflective questions centred around awareness, gratitude, discernment, and invitation (invite each person to reflect on one question from each section):

Awareness and Growth:

1. Over the course of this series, how has your understanding of God's voice changed?
2. Which way of hearing God (e.g., Scripture, prayer, dreams, hearing God for others, adversity, etc.) resonated most with you, and why?
3. Was there a moment during the series when you sensed God speaking clearly to you? What was that like?
4. What obstacles have you become more aware of that might block you from hearing God clearly?
5. How has your trust in God's timing or silence grown through this journey?

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**Gratitude and Challenge:**

1. What has been the most surprising or unexpected thing you've learned about God or yourself?
2. In what ways has God used others in the group to speak to you during this series?
3. What spiritual practices have helped you become more attentive to God's voice?
4. Is there an area of your life where you still feel unsure of what God is saying? How are you sitting with that tension?
5. What emotions (hope, fear, joy, doubt) have come up as you've tried to listen to God more closely?

Invitation and Response:

6. Where do you sense God inviting you to lean in more deeply—whether in listening, obeying, waiting, or surrendering?
7. If you knew God was speaking to you clearly right now, what do you think He might be saying?
8. What's one step you can take this week to create more space to hear God's voice?
9. Who in your life might need encouragement to hear from God—and how might you help them listen?
10. How can you keep cultivating a lifestyle of hearing God beyond this series?

Pray:

Spend some time thanking God and praying for each other.