



COURSE 1 • 7 WEEKS

Hearing His Voice

*Sharpening how we recognise and steward
what God says, for ourselves and others*

"Speak, Lord. Your servant hears."

— 1 SAMUEL 3:10

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Why this course exists

Every believer has been invited into a conversation with God that runs for a lifetime. Through Scripture, through the Spirit, through one another, God speaks — to instruct, to encourage, to comfort, to commission. And the practice of recognising that voice with clarity, testing it carefully, and stewarding it faithfully is one of the great quiet disciplines of a maturing life.

This course is about sharpening that practice.

Not awakening something that is not already there. Not introducing a subject Scripture has not already introduced. Training, maturing, equipping — a group of believers who already hear, who already honour what God has said, and who want to go deeper in the craft of it.

Paul's instruction to Corinth still holds for us: *follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy* (1 Corinthians 14:1). Eagerly desire. Not because we lack the gift, but because growing in it is the ongoing work of the body.

What the group walks through

Over seven weeks, a small group practices together around the fundamentals of hearing and stewarding God's voice:

- 1 The Voice That Still Speaks** — Sharpening our listening.
- 2 What God Says About You** — Settling identity as the foundation of hearing.
- 3 Recognising and Testing** — The biblical tests for what we hear.
- 4 Remembering Well** — Recording and returning to what God has said.
- 5 Love as the Frame** — 1 Corinthians 13 and the posture of every gift.
- 6 Speaking It Well** — Prophesying for upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation.
- 7 Carrying It Forward** — Building rhythms of remembering in our households and communities.

Each week combines pre-reading, Scripture, discussion, short teaching, and practice. By the end, every participant will have heard, tested, recorded, loved through, and spoken an encouraging word.

Who this is for

Small groups. Home groups. Discipleship pairs. Youth groups (16+). Church staff teams. Mentor-mentee partnerships. Any table of believers who want to go deeper together in the way God speaks and the way we steward what He says.

This course assumes you already know God speaks. It assumes you already want to honour what He says. It simply offers seven weeks of practice for sharpening the craft.

If you or anyone in your group is not yet sure God still speaks today (perhaps from a Reformed, Baptist, or conservative-evangelical background where the cessation of the gifts has been taught), the upstream course *Does God Still Speak?* is built for that. It honours the cessationist tradition, walks Scripture carefully, and ends with three honourable destinations rather than a forced decision. Many groups will benefit from running it before this one.

How the course is structured

Participant reading (15 minutes before each session): everyone reads the week's material.

Group session (90 minutes): welcome, pre-read discussion, Scripture anchor, short teaching, practice, close.

Between sessions: one daily 5-minute practice that reinforces the week's theme.

The facilitator edition contains everything in the participant guide plus teaching notes, discussion prompts, scripts for prophetic practice, and prayer prompts for each session.

A word about love

This course teaches people to prophesy. It also teaches them to do it in love — because Paul tells us plainly that without love, every gift becomes noise. The entire posture of this course sits between 1 Corinthians 12 (the gifts) and 1 Corinthians 14 (prophecy for the building up of the church). The chapter in between is not incidental. It is the whole point.

How to use this guide

Pastors and facilitators: download the full facilitator edition. Read it through before week one. Every week has a session plan and practice notes.

Small group leaders: share the weekly link with participants as pre-read. Gather weekly. Practice in the room.

Participants: read the week's material, come to the session, practice.

The goal is simple. A group of believers growing together in hearing God clearly, testing wisely, recording faithfully, loving deeply, and speaking helpfully.

● WEEK 1 OF 7



SESSION 1

The Voice That Still Speaks

Hearing God is a lifelong practice. This week, we sharpen our listening.

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 3:1-10

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

10 minutes of listening silence, then share what came

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through at least once. Bring one honest reflection to the group.

The voice that still speaks

The Bible opens with a voice. *Let there be light*. It does not open with a feeling, or a principle, or a plan. It opens with a voice — a voice that still speaks light into dark places.

That voice has spoken through every generation since. Through the prophets. Through His Son. Through His Spirit in His people today. Every believer, in every season, is invited into the same ongoing conversation.

This week is about sharpening that conversation. Not starting it — we are all already in it. Growing in clarity. Learning, as a lifelong discipline, to recognise God's voice more quickly, respond to it more faithfully, and carry what He says more carefully.

The craft of listening is always maturing. Elijah the prophet needed the *low whisper*. Samuel the boy needed Eli the priest to recognise what he could not yet name. Even the apostles kept growing in it. We are all in that same lineage — learning the shape of His voice over the length of a life.

What Scripture says about ongoing hearing

Jesus said, *my sheep hear my voice* (John 10:27). Present tense. Ongoing. A living description of the normal life of those who belong to Him.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, *follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy* (1 Corinthians 14:1). The imperative stands for every generation — eagerly desire, grow in it, practice it.

And the writer of Hebrews, speaking of the supremacy of Christ, said, *long ago, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets — but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son* (Hebrews 1:1-2). The point is not that the speaking has stopped. The point is that it has reached its fullest, truest form in Christ, and continues through His Spirit today.

God is not quieter now. He is closer.

Three places we can sharpen

In any discipline of the Christian life — prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, generosity — there are always places to grow. Listening is no different. Here are three places a small group can sharpen together:

1. Expectancy. Over time, a listening believer learns that God speaks more often than they first realised. Thoughts that seemed like coincidence were, on closer reflection, God. Scriptures that came alive were God. Phrases another believer spoke that stayed with us were God. Paying attention changes what we notice.

2. Discernment. Every honest listener learns that impressions come from several places — from us, from the Spirit, from the enemy, from our tradition, from our tiredness. Telling them apart is a craft, and Scripture gives us tools. We will spend week three on these.

3. Stillness. God rarely shouts over a crowded room. Elijah found Him not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the *low whisper* (1 Kings 19:12). Growing in hearing usually includes growing in stillness — in regular, unhurried time where a voice can be received.

These three — expectancy, discernment, stillness — are the quiet work of a maturing life of hearing.

The Samuel moment

1 Samuel 3 is a beautiful little story, and worth sitting with.

Samuel, still a boy, is sleeping in the temple. God calls his name. Samuel thinks it's his mentor Eli. This happens three times before Eli, who knows this pattern from his own lifetime with God, finally tells the boy: "*Go, lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'*"

Two things are worth noticing.

First, the text opens with: *the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.* It was a quieter season in Israel. And in the middle of it, God calls a boy. Quieter seasons are never God's silence. They are often the places He begins new things.

Second, Eli is the one who teaches Samuel how to respond. Eli himself was not perfect. But his long history with God gave him the ear to recognise what was happening in the next generation and to point the way. The Lord uses those who have been listening for years to help form those who are still learning.

Samuel's answer becomes the posture of every listener: *Speak, Lord, your servant hears.*

Not *fix me*. Not *prove yourself*. Not *impress me*. Just *speak — I am listening*.

What hearing God looks like in practice

Hearing God is not reserved for a spiritual elite. It is not a performance. It is not usually dramatic. It is the ordinary, lifelong experience of a believer turning their attention toward the One who has been speaking to them from the beginning.

Sometimes His voice comes as a thought that is kinder and cleaner than our own. Sometimes as a line of Scripture that suddenly lights up. Sometimes as a picture, a knowing, or a conviction. Sometimes through another believer speaking what they have heard on our behalf.

God speaks in the ways He has always spoken — through Scripture, through His people, through circumstances, and through the inner witness of the Spirit.

What changes over time is not whether He speaks. It is how clearly we hear, how quickly we recognise, and how faithfully we respond.

What this week is for

This course does not aim to convince anyone that God still speaks. Scripture has already done that, and we are all here because we believe it. This course aims to give a small group seven weeks to practice — to listen together, test together, record together, speak together.

Tonight we begin simply. We will sit in silence and listen. We will share what came. And we will start the work of sharpening an ear that God has been training in each of us for years.

Before you come to the session

Bring one honest reflection on each of these:

Name a moment recently when you sensed God saying something to you. What was it, and what did you do with it?

Which of the three places — expectancy, discernment, stillness — is the one you most want to grow in?

Is there a season when your listening has been clearer? What was different about it?

Bring one of those answers to the group.

● WEEK 2 OF 7



SESSION 2

What God Says About You

You cannot hear clearly if your identity is shaky

SCRIPTURE

Judges 6:11-16

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Ask God what He says about you. Write it down. Record it aloud.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through once. Bring one word or phrase that names who you feel you are on your worst day — we will work with it in the session.

The strange way God names people

When God starts a story, He almost always renames the main character.

Abram becomes Abraham. Jacob becomes Israel. Simon becomes Peter. Saul becomes Paul. And Gideon — a terrified young man threshing wheat in a winepress to hide from the enemy — gets called something so out of proportion to his circumstance that it reads like a joke:

"The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valour."

Mighty. Man. Of valour. To a boy hiding from Midianites in a hole.

Gideon's response is the response of almost everyone who has ever heard a word from God about themselves. He protests. He lists his disqualifications. *My clan is the weakest. I am the least in my father's house.* And the angel just keeps going. God is not naming who Gideon feels he is. God is naming who Gideon will become when he steps into what God has already decided about him.

This is how God speaks to His people. Not with flattery. Not with lies. With *prophecy about identity*.

Why this matters for hearing God

Here is the uncomfortable truth: you cannot hear clearly if your sense of self is shaky.

If you don't know whether God actually likes you, you will filter everything you hear through that one unsettled question. If you suspect He is mostly disappointed in you, every impression will sound like disappointment. If you don't know if you are His, you will spend your prayer time auditioning for a place you already have.

Samuel could say *"speak, Lord, your servant hears"* because he knew he was God's. Settled identity was the floor the hearing happened on.

This is why week two of this course is identity. It is not a detour. It is the foundation everything else stands on.

What God actually says

When you listen for God's voice about yourself, you will not usually hear an abstract theological statement. You will hear something like a name.

Scripture is full of these names:

Beloved. (Matthew 3:17, said over Jesus before He had done any public ministry. Belovedness precedes performance.)

Chosen. (Ephesians 1:4 — before the foundation of the world.)

Adopted. (Ephesians 1:5 — you are not a servant trying to earn a place. You were brought into the family.)

Friend. (John 15:15 — no longer slaves. Friends.)

Priest. (1 Peter 2:9 — with direct access, with authority to speak.)

Mine. (Isaiah 43:1 — *I have called you by name. You are Mine.*)

Every one of these is something God says about you. Not one of them is conditional on yesterday's performance.

But what about who I actually am?

Here is where people push back. *"But I really am a coward. I really am angry. I really am unforgiving. I really am scared."*

Yes. And.

Gideon really was hiding in a winepress. That was accurate. God was not confused about it. He called him *mighty man of valour* anyway.

What God says about you is not a denial of who you are on your worst day. It is a declaration of who you are *in Him* — and who you will become when you start acting in agreement with what He says, rather than in agreement with what your fear, your family, or your accuser says.

Identity from God is not pretending. It is prophecy about your truest self.

The lies this silences

Most of us carry one or two quiet sentences that run underneath our lives.

I am not wanted. I am too much. I am not enough. I will always be alone. I am a disappointment. I was a mistake. I am only valuable when I perform. I am fundamentally broken.

These are not the voice of God. Ever. No matter how religious they sound, no matter how long you have believed them, no matter how much evidence you can assemble for them.

The Accuser has a job, and his job is to accuse. Revelation 12:10 names him *the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them day and night*. If your inner monologue mostly sounds like an accusation, you may be listening to the wrong voice.

Hearing God about your identity is often a process of *replacing sentences*. One true one for one false one, until the floor of your soul is built on what He says.

Practising this week

The practice for this week is simple and will feel a little exposing:

- 1 Ask God.** Find ten quiet minutes. Ask Him, "*What do You say about me?*" Not in general. About you.
- 2 Write it down.** Whatever comes — a word, a phrase, a Scripture, a picture — write it down.
- 3 Test it.** Does what you heard line up with Scripture? Would a loving Father say this? Does it reflect grace rather than performance? If yes, keep going.
- 4 Record it aloud.** Say it out loud. Record it on your phone. There is something about hearing a thing in your own voice, speaking God's words over yourself, that changes how they settle.

Do this at least three times this week. Same question. Collect the answers.

Before you come to the session

Come with two things:

One word or phrase that names who you feel you are on your worst day (we will not force you to share it publicly — bring it for yourself).

One line that you think God might say about you. Even if you're unsure. Even if it feels presumptuous.

Identity is the floor the rest of this course stands on. Let's lay it down together.



SESSION 3

Recognising vs Imagining

How to test what you think you heard

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Bring a word you have received recently. Test it with the group using the four tests.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Bring one word or impression you have received in the last few weeks — from your own listening times, from another believer, or from something that came up in last week's practice. We will test it together.

The most common question

Once people start listening, the question arrives quickly: *how do I know if that was God, or if it was me?*

This is a good question. It is asked in Scripture, and it has a sensible answer.

The Bible never asks believers to hear without testing. It assumes both. *Test everything; hold fast what is good* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God* (1 John 4:1). *The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets* (1 Corinthians 14:32).

The expectation is not that every believer becomes infallible. It is that every believer learns to test.

Three possible sources

When you have a thought or impression, there are really only three places it can be coming from.

1. You. Your own feelings, convictions, anxieties, desires, ambitions. This is normal and not always wrong. Sometimes *you* know something true about yourself or someone else. Sometimes *you* are rehearsing a fear. Your own voice is not the enemy — but it is not automatically God either.

2. The enemy or an unclean influence. Scripture is clear that there are voices in the spiritual realm that are not God's. The Accuser accuses. A lying spirit lies. These voices almost always sound either *condemning* or *inflating* — tearing you down or puffing you up. They rarely sound like a Father.

3. God. A voice that is kinder, cleaner, and truer than anything you would have come up with on your own. A voice that consistently lines up with the character of Jesus and the testimony of Scripture.

The four tests

Over centuries, the church has consolidated the testing of impressions into a small number of practical questions. They are not complicated.

Test one — Scripture

Does what you heard agree with the Bible? Not one verse yanked out of context. The whole of Scripture.

God does not contradict Himself. If you think He told you to leave your spouse, that is not Him. If you think He told you to hate your enemy, that is not Him. If you think He told you that you are worthless, that is not Him. If you think He told you that your sin disqualifies you forever, that is not Him.

The Bible is the plumb line. Any word from God will be straight against it.

Test two — Character

Does what you heard sound like Jesus?

Jesus is the clearest revelation of who God is. *If you have seen me, you have seen the Father* (John 14:9). So when an impression arrives, ask: does this sound like the Jesus of the gospels?

Jesus is kind without being weak. He is honest without being cruel. He is direct without being condemning. He tells hard truths in gentle ways and gentle truths with weight. If a word feels harsh, sneering, shaming, or panicked, that is not His voice. If it feels loving *and* truthful — that is a good sign.

Test three — Fruit

Will this word, acted on, produce fruit that looks like the Holy Spirit's?

Paul lists that fruit in Galatians 5:22-23 — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Words from God, even hard ones, tend to produce fruit. They lead to courage, to repentance, to hope, to action, to peace. They don't lead to fear, anxiety, pride, division, or paralysis.

If acting on this impression would produce life in you or someone else, that is a strong signal it is from God.

Test four — Community

Is there any witness from other believers?

This is the test we most often skip, and the one we most need. *The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets* (1 Corinthians 14:32). God does not expect you to navigate alone.

When you receive something significant, bring it to one or two trusted believers. Not for their approval. For their discernment. Sometimes they will confirm what you are sensing. Sometimes they will gently add something you missed. Sometimes they will flag that this might not be God at all.

Pride says, *I don't need anyone else to test this*. Humility says, *I would rather be slowed down by the body than be wrong alone*.

What testing is not

Testing is not doubt. Testing is not a lack of faith. Testing is not you being too scared to act.

Testing is the work of a mature believer who has learned that hearing God is not the same as never being wrong. It is a practice, not a performance.

And — crucially — testing happens *before* you speak the word, not after. If you think God gave you a word for someone else, test it privately before you say it publicly. It is far easier to hold a word back than to un-say it.

Some honest notes

A few things worth naming before the session.

Not every impression needs to be tested at a council meeting. If God says to you while you're on the bus, *"text your sister today,"* you can just text her. Testing scales to consequence. The bigger the claim, the more testing it needs.

Some words take years to clarify. You may hear something at twenty-two that does not come fully true until you're forty. That does not mean it wasn't God. It means it was a long word. Course two is built around this.

You will sometimes get it wrong. Every honest prophetic person has. The shame-spiral that follows is almost always worse than the actual error. Apologise if necessary, learn, keep going. God is not scared of a growing learner. He is more interested in a growing learner than in a cautious one who never listens again.

The practice for this week

Bring one word you have received recently. It could be:

Something you heard in your own listening time.

Something another believer spoke over you.

An impression that keeps coming back.

Something from last week's identity exercise.

In the session, we will run it through the four tests together. This is not to humiliate anyone. It is to practice, as a group, what mature hearing actually looks like.

Before you come to the session

Write down the word or impression you will bring. One sentence if possible.

Try running it through the four tests on your own first. Which one feels hardest to apply?



WEEK 4 OF 7

SESSION 4

Why We Forget, and How to Remember

Recording what God says is a spiritual discipline, not a filing habit

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 4:1-7

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Record a prophecy properly — voice, date, context, Scripture.
Stack your first stone.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with one prophecy, promise, or significant word from God that you have received at some point in your life — even years ago. It can be a Scripture that came alive. It can be something another believer spoke. It can be a conviction you've carried. Bring it written down on a piece of paper.

The lost discipline

There is a strange phrase in Deuteronomy 6:12. Moses is addressing the generation about to cross into the promised land — the children of slaves who are now about to inherit fields, houses, cities, vineyards. He says:

"Then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Not *"lest you become godless."* Not *"lest you turn to idols."* The first warning, before anything else, is *lest you forget.*

Forgetting is the first thing that goes wrong. Everything else comes after.

The Bible treats remembering as a spiritual discipline on the same level as prayer and fasting. Pagans make statues. Israel makes memorials. When something significant happens with God, He commands them to build a stone pile, name a place, write it down, or tell their children. Why? Because the human heart is a leaking container. And the enemy's first strategy against any word God speaks is to wait long enough that you forget He said it.

Why prophetic words fade

You have probably been given something by God that you can no longer remember.

That is not a failure of faith. It is a failure of capture.

Most words from God arrive in a fragile state. A sentence at a prayer meeting. A whisper while driving home. A Scripture that suddenly burned. A line another believer spoke without knowing how much it meant. If you do not record it within twenty-four hours, you will usually lose most of it within a week.

And the longer it fades, the easier it is to explain it away. *"Maybe I imagined it."* *"Maybe it wasn't that specific."* *"I'm not even sure anymore what was said."* The word that was clear on Tuesday is

blurry by Friday and gone by the following month.

This is why Habakkuk 2:2 is short and urgent:

"Write the vision. Make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."

Write it. Plainly. So it can be *run with*.

What Joshua did with the Jordan

After Israel crosses the Jordan on dry ground — a Red Sea moment for a new generation — God tells Joshua to do something specific. Not worship. Not teach. Not celebrate.

"Take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and carry them over with you." (Joshua 4:3)

Twelve stones. One per tribe. Stacked as a memorial.

And then this, in verses 6 and 7:

"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord... So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial for ever."

The stones were not for their generation. The stones were for the *next* generation. For their children who had not been there. Memorials look backwards and forwards at the same time. They anchor the past for the sake of the future.

This is what recording prophecy does. It stacks stones for your future self — and for your children, literal or spiritual.

What to record

When you receive something from God — a word, a Scripture, a conviction, a prophecy another believer speaks over you — capture at least these things:

The word itself. As close to verbatim as possible. If someone is prophesying over you, record it on your phone. Ask permission. Most people will say yes.

The date. You will need it later when you're wondering *how long ago*.

Where you were and what was happening. Context matters. *"At the retreat, during the prayer time after Sunday."*

Who spoke it, if it wasn't you. Names matter. Say them with honour.

Any Scripture that came with it. Words from God are often stitched with Scripture. Record the verse references.

What stood out. Was there one phrase that pierced? Was there an image? Write it down while it's still warm.

Do this within twenty-four hours. Ideally within one hour. While it is still the voice in your ear, not the memory of a voice.

Where to keep it

A notebook works. An app works. A voice memo works. A shared document works. What matters is that it is *in one place*, that you can *find it again*, and that you can *come back to it in hard seasons*.

You will not come back to it if you have to dig through five notebooks, three journals, two apps and a Dropbox folder. Pick one place. Put everything there.

Doxa was built for this — to capture the word with the voice, the date, the Scripture, and the context, and to hand it back to you years later in the exact season you need to hear it again. It is one of several good options. What matters is that *you pick one*.

The discipline of returning

Recording is only half the discipline. The other half is returning.

Dust off the journals. Open them on a hard day. Read the words God has spoken to you over the years. Not to nostalgize. To re-enter. To remember what He said. To hand the past to the present, and through the present to the future.

This is what Paul tells Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 1:18 — *by the prophecies previously made about you*. Timothy is told to wage warfare *with* his old words. You cannot wage warfare with a word you cannot remember.

This week's practice

Three things.

- 1 Record one word properly.** Take the word you brought to the session. Record it — voice note, notebook, app, whatever you use. Include the date, context, Scripture, and what stood out. Do it in the way you plan to keep doing it.
 - 2 Decide your place.** Where will you keep words from God from now on? Commit to one place. Tell someone in the group. Accountability helps.
 - 3 Read one word back.** At least once this week, open your record and re-read one word God has spoken to you. Let it settle again.
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Before you come to the session

Come with one word or prophecy written down — anything significant He has spoken.

Come with your phone or notebook. We will practice capturing properly in the room.

HEARING HIS VOICE

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● WEEK 5 OF 7



SESSION 5

Love as the Test

The chapter between the gifts and the prophecy is the whole point

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 12:31 - 14:1

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Identify one time prophecy was used without love — on you or by you. Bring it to the group.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this slowly. Bring one honest story — a time you saw or received or gave a word that was technically true but harmful. We will work with these stories in the session. You do not have to share the details publicly if you would rather not.

Read this chapter in its real place

You have almost certainly heard 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding. *Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast.* It is beautiful. And it has been so often ripped out of context that most people do not know what chapter it is actually arguing with.

Here is the arrangement Paul wrote it in:

Chapter 12: A teaching on spiritual gifts. Tongues, prophecy, healing, faith, wisdom, miracles, discernment. All good. All from God.

Chapter 13: *Love.* The chapter without which everything in chapter 12 is noise.

Chapter 14: A detailed teaching on prophecy. How it should work in the church. Who should speak. How to test it. How to build up the body.

Now look at how chapter 12 ends and chapter 13 begins. There is no chapter break in Paul's letter. He wrote this as one continuous thought:

"But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (1

Corinthians 12:31 – 13:1)

Paul has just finished telling them to *eagerly desire* spiritual gifts. Then he immediately warns them: if you chase these gifts without love, you will become *noise*.

Then look at how chapter 13 ends and chapter 14 begins:

"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." (1

Corinthians 14:1)

The whole of 1 Corinthians 13 is bracketed by instructions about prophecy and spiritual gifts. It is not a wedding poem. It is the frame inside which every gift — including prophecy — has to be used, or it becomes dangerous.

If you remove chapter 13, chapter 14 will hurt people.

What gifts without love become

Paul is blunt. Gifts without love are not neutral. They do not become a slightly lower-quality version of the gift. They become *something else entirely*.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong. If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love — I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Three times Paul stacks the claim: tongues, prophecy, sacrifice. All things the Corinthians would have considered the marks of a serious believer. And without love, they produce:

Noise.

Nothing.

No gain.

Gifts without love are not small and harmless. They are loud and empty.

What this has to do with you

Most of us have, at some point, either given or received prophecy without love.

We have heard a word that was technically true — and it hurt, because it was not spoken in love.

We have spoken a word that was right — but our motive was to feel spiritual, or to correct someone, or to prove we still had the gift, or to be seen as the one who heard from God.

We have stood in a meeting where someone was given a *word of knowledge* that humiliated them publicly. Or where a prophetic ministry was used to control. Or where someone left crushed by something that was delivered accurately but carelessly.

Paul saw all of this at Corinth. He did not solve it by banning prophecy. He solved it by writing chapter 13.

What love actually looks like

The fifteen verbs of 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 are not sentiment. They are diagnostic. Run them across any word you are about to speak, and ask:

Is it patient? Is this person ready to hear it? Am I willing to say it more than once, over years, if they are not?

Is it kind? Is there warmth in the way I will deliver this?

Is it free of envy? Am I speaking into this person's life because I love them, or because I resent them?

Is it free of boasting? Is this about them hearing God, or about me being seen to have heard?

Is it free of pride? Am I above them as I speak, or alongside them?

Is it honouring? Will this leave them with dignity?

Is it self-seeking? What do I gain from saying this? If I gain nothing, that is a good sign.

Is it free of irritation? Am I speaking out of frustration?

Does it keep no record of wrongs? Am I dredging up their past, or speaking God's word over their future?

Does it rejoice with the truth — not in evil? Is this about building them up, or exposing them?

Does it bear, believe, hope, endure? Can I stay with this person long after I speak this?

If the word passes these tests, it is carried by love. If it does not, Paul says plainly: do not speak it. It will be noise.

The hard version of this

Love is not niceness. Paul is not telling the Corinthians to only ever say pleasant things.

Prophecy can be correcting. Prophecy can be confrontational. The prophets of the Old Testament were often delivering hard, exposing, difficult truths to kings and nations. Nathan confronted David. Jeremiah wept. Isaiah stripped off his clothes and walked naked for three years as a sign against Egypt.

None of it was nice. All of it was love.

The test is not whether the word is comfortable. The test is whether it is delivered with a heart that is *for* the person and *for* the kingdom — not against them.

A hard word spoken in love can set someone free. A soft word spoken without love can still wound.

Why this matters for the rest of the course

Next week is *Speaking It Well*. We are going to practice prophesying to one another.

Before we do that, we have to settle this week. Because if we walk into week six without love as the floor, we will turn the room into Corinth on its bad days. People speaking words they have not tested, motivated by what looks spiritual rather than what is loving, producing noise.

Love is not one test among four. Love is the context inside which all four tests happen.

The practice for this week

Two things.

- 1 Think honestly about one time prophecy was used without love — on you or by you.**
Write it down. What did it do? What was missing? What would have changed if love had been the frame?
- 2 Identify one person in your life you could speak an encouraging word to this week.**
Before you speak, pray the fifteen verbs over your own heart. Then speak it.

Before you come to the session

Bring one honest story of prophecy without love. You will not be forced to share specifics.

Come ready to practice being *for* people before you are *about* prophesying to them.

● WEEK 6 OF 7



SESSION 6

Speaking It Well

Prophesying in love for the building up of the body

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 24-33

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Give at least one encouraging prophetic word in the group, received in love.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come ready to give and receive a word. Do not overthink it — the whole course has been building toward this evening.

Prophecy is for three things

Paul gives us the brief for prophecy in the church in one sentence. It is worth memorising.

"The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation." (1 Corinthians 14:3)

Three purposes. That is the whole scope.

Upbuilding. Making someone stronger than they were. Giving them Scripture, truth, vision for who God says they are.

Encouragement. Putting courage back in someone. Breathing into a flame that is fading. Reminding them they are not alone.

Consolation. Comforting a grief. Speaking peace into a hard place. Meeting someone in their sorrow with a word from God.

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation. That is the brief. You will not go wrong if you stay inside it.

What prophecy is *not* for, according to Paul:

Predicting when someone is going to die.

Telling someone who to marry.

Exposing someone's sin in public.

Impressing people.

Telling the future for the sake of spectacle.

Controlling other people.

If a word you are about to speak is not inside *upbuilding, encouragement, consolation*, pause. Test it again. It may still be from God. But the threshold for speaking it is much higher.

A simple posture for speaking

When you have received something you believe God wants you to speak to someone, try this posture.

1. Speak tentatively. You are not an Old Testament prophet with *"thus saith the Lord"* authority. You are a New Testament believer participating in the gift. Say: *"I think God might be saying,"* or *"This could be from God; take it to Him,"* or *"I sense He is showing me —"*. Tentative does not mean uncertain. It means humble.

2. Speak briefly. Most prophetic words should be under a minute. If you find yourself five minutes in, you are probably preaching, counselling, or projecting.

3. Speak from Scripture where you can. The best prophetic words are stitched with Scripture. Quote the verse. It gives the word weight that your own voice cannot carry.

4. Speak to the person. Not to the room. Not to the leader. Not to impress. Turn, look at them, speak to them.

5. Speak, then stop. When the word is given, stop. Resist the urge to elaborate. Give the person space to receive.

6. Hand it over. After you have spoken, say something like *"Take that to God. Test it. Keep what comes alive."* This reminds them — and you — that discernment belongs to them.

Receiving a word

Receiving is its own practice. Most people are so nervous about whether what they are about to hear is right that they forget to actually listen.

When someone is about to speak a word over you:

Settle. Slow your breathing. You are not being x-rayed. You are being blessed.

Listen fully. Do not start rehearsing a response. Let it land.

Receive with your body. Many people close their eyes, or bow their heads, or hold out their hands. A small posture of receiving helps.

Thank the person. Whatever you received, thank them for risking.

Test later, not immediately. Do not reject a word in the moment. You cannot hear clearly while your defences are up. Take it home. Write it down. Sit with it for a few days. Run it through the four tests from week three. Keep what survives.

What to do with a word that does not land

Sometimes a word will be spoken over you that you cannot receive. It does not fit who you are. It does not line up with Scripture. It feels off.

That is fine. It happens. The one who spoke is not infallible. You are not required to believe every word spoken over you.

The most gracious response is: *"Thank you. I'm going to take that to God and test it."* That is all. You do not need to correct the person in the room. You do not need to make a scene. You take it home, you test it, and you set aside what was not Him.

But — and this matters — do not reject a word simply because it is uncomfortable. Some of the best words God has ever given you will feel uncomfortable, because they are calling you into something larger than your current life. Discomfort is not disqualification. Distortion is.

Common mistakes, gently named

If you have been around prophetic practice for a while, you will have seen these. Name them privately in yourself before the session.

The word that is really advice. You know what you think the person should do. You are now presenting it as *"God is saying."* Stop.

The word that is really envy. You resent this person. The word sounds like a correction. It is probably your resentment.

The word that is really self-promotion. You liked being the one who heard. You want to be the one who heard again. Stop.

The word that is really a sermon. You want to teach. Teaching is a different gift. Teach when you are teaching; prophesy when you are prophesying. Do not collapse the two.

The word that is really too vague to help. *"I sense God loves you"* is lovely but not really prophetic. Be as specific as you have been given. No more, no less.

What this session will look like

Tonight is a practice session. You will be paired up and given time to listen for God on behalf of each other. Then you will speak what you have received. Then receive what is spoken to you. Then swap partners and do it again.

The ground rules are simple, and they come straight from Paul:

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation. Nothing else.

Spoken in love. (1 Corinthians 13 is the floor.)

Tested before spoken. (Four tests from week three.)

Brief. Scriptural where possible. Handed back to the person to test.

This is New Testament prophecy. Simple, loving, tested, shared.

Before you come to the session

Come having prayed 1 Corinthians 13 over your own heart this week.

Come expecting to hear something for someone else in the room, even a short sentence.

Come expecting to receive a word from someone else. Bring a pen — you will want to write down what is spoken over you.



● WEEK 7 OF 7

SESSION 7

Carrying the Fire Forward

Building a culture of remembering in your church, small group, and home

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Commit to one ongoing practice. Pair with one person in the group for accountability.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this. Come ready to commit to one practice you will carry forward into the rest of your life — not something ambitious that you will abandon in four weeks, but something small and sustainable.

Where this course has brought you

Look back over seven weeks.

Week one you sat in silence and asked if God would speak. Week two you let Him name you. Week three you learned to test what you hear. Week four you captured a word properly for the first time. Week five you let love become the floor. Week six you spoke a word into someone's life and received one into yours.

You have moved from *I don't know if God speaks to me* to *I have heard, tested, recorded, and given a word from God*.

That is not a small arc.

But here is the honest part: almost every small group that has ever done a course on prophecy, or hearing God, or spiritual gifts, has fallen back into silence within a few months of finishing. Not because the course failed. Because nothing was built to *carry the fire forward*.

This week is about making sure this does not end when we stop meeting.

What a culture of remembering looks like

When Moses is preparing Israel to enter the promised land, he gives them a passage they will still be reciting thousands of years later — the *Shema*:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

This is a culture, not an event. A rhythm of remembering that runs through the ordinary hours of a life. When you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, when you rise. In the house. On the

road. On the body. On the doorposts.

A culture of remembering is the normal environment of a family that belongs to God. Not a conference once a year. A rhythm that the children absorb simply by being present.

What this looks like for you

You cannot build a whole culture overnight. But you can build small rhythms that compound.

In your own life:

A place where words from God are kept. One place. Doxa, a notebook, a document. Commit.

A weekly rhythm of return. Once a week, open what is kept and re-read something. Ten minutes.

A daily listening time. Even five minutes. Ask a question. Write what comes.

An annual review. Every January, read back over the words from the previous year. Mark what has come true. Mark what you are still waiting on.

In your small group or church:

Encouragement at the table. Every time you gather, leave room for someone to offer a word of encouragement to someone else. Even two minutes.

Testimony moments. Ask regularly: "Where has God been faithful lately?" Not "What is a struggle?" Both questions matter. The second is asked constantly. The first, rarely.

Stones stacked. When something significant happens — a healing, a breakthrough, a fulfilment of a long word — name it out loud in the room. Put it in the group record. Make it visible for the ones coming after.

Prophetic practice continues. Do not stop practicing just because the course is over. Keep pairing up. Keep speaking short encouraging words to each other in the rhythm of normal life.

In your home:

Around the table. Once a week, ask your family the same question. "Where have you seen God this week?" Start when the children are young. Do it for the rest of your life.

When things are hard. Read back the words God has spoken over your family in past seasons. Remind each other. This is what Deuteronomy 6 actually looks like.

Teach your children to listen. Children hear God. Do not patronise them. Ask them what they sense. Write down what they say. Their simple words are often more piercing than yours.

What to guard against

A few things kill a culture of remembering before it begins.

Perfectionism. You do not need to do this beautifully. You need to do this repeatedly. A messy, consistent practice beats a polished, abandoned one every time.

The big launch. Do not announce to your church that you are *starting a new prophetic culture*. Just start doing it. Slowly. Quietly. It will spread by gravity.

Spiritual performance. The second any of this becomes a show — who heard the best word, who has the most prophecies recorded, who sounds most spiritual — it is dead. Keep it small, private, and in love.

One-off energy. If you only come back to this when you feel like it, it will fade. Build it into the ordinary rhythms — the sitting, walking, lying down, rising of Deuteronomy 6 — not the extraordinary ones.

What the end of this course actually is

The end of this course is a beginning.

You have been given, over seven weeks, the foundational tools of a normal Christian life in the Spirit. You know how to hear. You know how to test. You know how to record. You know how to speak in love. You know what a culture of remembering looks like.

What comes next is decades of practicing these in the ordinary hours of your life. Quietly. With love. For the building up of your family, your small group, your church, and eventually the children and spiritual grandchildren who come after you.

The stones are not for your generation. They are for the ones who will come to this table after you are gone, and ask: *what do these stones mean?*

The practice for the rest of your life

One practice, chosen tonight. Small enough to sustain. Specific enough to actually do.

Some options:

Five minutes of listening silence every morning before checking my phone.

Weekly review of my Doxa record on Sunday afternoon.

One encouraging word to one person every week — texted, spoken, or prayed over them.

A weekly family table question: where has God been faithful this week?

A monthly phone call with a trusted friend to test what I have been hearing.

Joining a weekly prayer group that makes space for listening.

Pick one. Tell the group. Commit to six months.

Before you come to the last session

Come with one practice chosen and ready to commit to out loud.

Come with the name of one person in the group you will pair with for the first six months – one check-in every two weeks, asking each other "*what have you heard? what have you spoken?*"

Bring your record. Bring your notes. Bring everything you have built over seven weeks. We will close with thanksgiving.

*"Speak, Lord. Your servant
hears."*

1 SAMUEL 3:10

