CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Direct Communication From Heaven

The Fourth Level of Hearing from God, and How to Tell His Voice from Your Own

God still speaks to His people directly, usually as a thought rather than an audible voice. Evaluate the word, set boundaries and stay in the Scripture until you know how the Holy Spirit talks, and over time the little insights add up.

PREACHED BY
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SERIES
We're Rooted in the Bible, Week 6 of 6

MAIN TEXT
1 Kings 19:11-13

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01

Sermon Transcript

Amen. We've been in a six-week series called Rooted in the Bible, and over the last six weeks, we have covered a pretty large gamut. We started with talking about the value of the Bible, but the series has morphed, and it did not morph unintentionally. I was not caught off guard by this. This was the plan, but we've morphed into how to hear from the Lord, how to get a word from God. Last week, we talked about operating in a flow of revelation, but we've been talking about how to hear from heaven, and the reason for that is, several years ago, God gave me just a great grace on my ministry.

I don't really understand why outside of just I was available, but I created a Bible-reading plan that ended up going relatively viral around the world. I've helped probably somewhere in the ballpark of, if I had to guesstimate because we stopped tracking once we crossed 100,000, I'd say probably 150,000 people or so to engage in the Scripture on a regular basis. But one thing that I learned early on in that process is that people were reading the Bible, and that was the end of it. That was the end goal. They were reading the Bible to read the Bible, and it is great to do it as worship.

It's great to do it as a discipline, but I'm telling you, when you serve the God of the living who actively speaks to His people, it's better to read the Word and expect to hear from heaven. And so that's what we've been talking about these last several weeks, and we've talked about three levels of hearing from the Lord to this point. The first level being getting a word from God in the preaching, in the preaching. And I'm going to come back to that in just a moment to talk about that particular moment in the stages with you a little additionally. The second level of hearing from the Lord is when the Holy Spirit brings to your remembrance the things that are written in the Scripture.

This is exactly what Jesus said would be the mode of communication from the Holy Spirit to His people. That the Holy Spirit would bring to your remembrance, John chapter 14, verse 26, all the things that He has said.

> **JOHN 14:26** ESV
>
> 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Well, what has He said? He has said everything in this book. John chapter 1, verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

> **JOHN 1:1** ESV
>
> 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John chapter 1, verse 14, "And the Word was made manifest and dwelt among us." If Jesus has said it, it's right here.

> **JOHN 1:14** ESV
>
> 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Amen? And so that's the second level. Last week we talked about operating in a flow of revelation, how there's a point in your journey where there is a complete paradigm shift and you begin to see things that you never saw before, and it becomes a framework for your theology, but also it becomes a way that the Holy Spirit can begin communicating with you using the second level, but with a shorthand, where the Holy Spirit can say less, but communicate more.

If you've missed one week, I would encourage you to go back and watch every single message, because today we're going to talk about the fourth level of hearing from the Lord. And the fourth level of hearing from the Lord is when God communicates with you directly, direct communication from heaven. Now, the first level of hearing from the Lord, this is when you're hearing from God because you're sitting in services and you're sitting under good, Holy Ghost, anointed, apricot-sweater-wearing preaching. I had to think about how to throw myself in there for a minute.

I'm going to tell you what, that was one of the best worship leaders I have ever followed, ever. I was about to come up here and just have a fit, amen. I actually turned around to someone, I told y'all I'm not feeling well, and I said, it's funny watching myself knowing I can't do that right now. But the first level of hearing from the Lord is when you sit in the environment of preaching and God begins to stir you. Now, to some degree, you're tampering with that second level because you're getting enough Scripture that the Holy Spirit can communicate with you, albeit with a small catalog of Scriptures, because we can only preach so many Scriptures in a service, amen.

But a lot of what you're hearing from the Lord at that level is it's not a hearing, it's a sensing. You sense something, a missionary steps in a service and you sense, I need to partner with that missionary. Or we talk about joining the team and maybe you see some kids running around in the foyer and you sense, I need to join the children's ministry of the church and start working with the kids. Or maybe there's a vision offering coming up in two weeks and you sense, I need to partner with the vision of the church, amen. I thought that'd be a bigger amen.

You could have got away with it without giving. You could have just said, yes. Everybody thought, you got to give $100,000 next week, amen. And so it's a sensing level. It's I'm sensing it, but I don't have clear direction, but I have a sense of it. Maybe you get around a certain situation or a certain relationship and maybe you don't feel great about it or you feel good about it and you've attached those senses to the senses you've had in churches. Here's the problem though, there's no qualifier for it. So when you operate at this sensing level, it can be confusing to know whether or not you're hearing from the Lord or if you're just feeling something because your senses with the Holy Spirit and your feelings run a parallel path.

They're very similar. Well, at the highest level of hearing from the Lord, direct communication from Him, when God speaks to you, it is rare and extraordinary that it would be an audible voice. It is usually what's been called traditionally an inner witness. It comes to you in a thought. It comes to you in a thought. And so when the Lord speaks to you directly, it runs a parallel path with your thoughts. So today, what I'm going to talk about is as you're on your journey with the Lord, when you get to this place, I'm going to help you know how to know the difference between what you're thinking and what God is saying.

Now, you can apply some of the principles I'm going to give you today to the sensing level. But again, the highest level of hearing from the Lord is much easier to discern than just sensing because sometimes you just be emotional. I'll just tell you right now, if somebody cuts you off in the Publix parking lot and you sense the Holy Ghost tell you to run that shopping cart into their rear end, that might just be your feelings. Amen. Okay, so turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 19. 1 Kings chapter 19. This is where we're going to start today.

> **1 KINGS 19:11-13** ESV
>
> 11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and
> strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And
> after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the
> Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his
> face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and
> said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings chapter 19. Looking at verse 11, if you have your copy of God's Word, good on you. If you don't, we have it on the screen. And if you know it all by memory, come pray for me after service. Amen. 1 Kings chapter 19, verse 11. "And He said, go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." Now, I should just toss in here at this moment in the text, we're looking at a man called Elijah. He was a great prophet. At this moment in his life, he has been threatened by a lady named Jezebel and he thinks this lady is going to kill him. And so he is gone and he is hid.

But now the word of the Lord has showed up in his life. Verse 11. "And He said, go out and stand on the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And behold, there came a voice to him and said, what are you doing here, Elijah?" So in this account of what happened with Elijah, he hears the voice of the Lord, drawing him out. And there are four things that happen. There's a wind, there's a fire, there's an earthquake, and then there's a small whisper. Now, the text says directly that the Lord was not in the wind, the fire and the earthquake. However, I'm going to tamper with this a little bit in the context of what we're reading. I would submit to you that the Lord actually was in all of this, that the Lord was involved with all because the Lord passes by and each one of these things happen.

Are you with me? So each one of these things occur as the Lord's presence is manifest in Elijah's realm. But there are only one piece of the experience, there is only one piece of the experience, that the voice of the Lord was in, that the word of the Lord was in. And so what we have to do, like Elijah, is we have to learn, we have to mature and grow to a point that we are able to discern the voice of the Lord, the word of the Lord, amongst a plethora of incoming information. Your life is a lot of incoming information. You got bills and kids and spouse and house and cars and jobs and boss and you have all of this incoming information.

Then on top of that, you get into environments like ours where we might be having a little more fun than our Baptist brethren. Love y'all, amen. But you can get into this environment and there's a lot of incoming information. It's loud and shout and dance and sing and the pastor's hilarious and attractive and it's just a lot to take in. Amen? It can be a lot of it. So how through all of this incoming information can you discern the word of the Lord? Well, I'm going to share with you a handful of things that I believe are going to help you this morning. If you're ready, say amen.

Amen. All right, number one, number one, you have to be mindful of the word of the Lord and evaluate it. You have to evaluate it. There's several ways that you can evaluate the word of the Lord. I forget that we've got John on the camera back there and I can walk around now. Amen. John is going to train several people on how to run cameras in two weeks and that means I won't be able to go anywhere in the church and be hiding. I'll be able to preach from any square

footage. Amen. So you have to evaluate the word of the Lord that comes in. A couple of ways you can do this is one is you can evaluate the theology of a word from God.

If you feel like you hear from the Lord, you can evaluate. A good question is just, is this good theology? Is this bad theology? Here's a good diagnostic question. Would I know the difference? Would I know the difference if it's good theology or bad theology? But if you get a word from God and you sense in your prayer time that the Holy Spirit tells you that God the Father is a three-foot-tall rotund purple man who speaks in a high voice, I think that's bad theology. It's weird if nothing else. Amen. So you have to evaluate the theology. Another thing you can evaluate is the instruction.

The instruction. If the Lord gives you an instruction, evaluate, is this godly instruction? Is this good instruction? Is this wise instruction? Evaluate the instruction. I can promise you God's not going to tell you to do something immoral or unethical. All right. Another thing you can evaluate is the impact. If God tells you to do something like empty your bank account and send it to Convoy of Hope, I think that's great. I think that's awesome. But you've got to evaluate the impact. Because if I get that word from the Lord and I go and empty out my bank account and I send it to Convoy of Hope, there's just one problem with it.

I've effectively stolen Ashleigh Mayfield's money. I have to be mindful of the impact of that offering. I have to be mindful of the impact of that gift. And if nothing else, as soon as I feel like I have the word of the Lord, I've got to go talk to Ashleigh and run it past her. Amen. Y'all wake up. I'm serious. I'm about to come two rows deep. Amen. I'll get on Bo's shoulder and we'll walk around like a chicken fight in a swimming pool. Amen. So you got to evaluate the impact. What's the impact of this? You also need to evaluate the source. You need to evaluate the source.

One, this is a little off of this topic, but if you ever receive a prophetic word, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, anything of that nature from somebody, you need to evaluate that source, the external source. You need to evaluate it. Does that person have a track record of that stuff happening? Or does that person have a track record of going into services and saying a bunch of stuff without any consequence and blowing up and blowing out and not mattering? So you need to evaluate the source. Some of you, if you get that theology thing right, you'll be able to evaluate the source just from the pulpit ministry.

If somebody gives you a prophetic word, you'll be able to say, well, did that guy just preach nonsense for an hour? It's real easy. This is so helpful. It's almost like y'all are just taking it in. This is good preaching right here. I'm going to tell you, that's good preaching, brother. Amen. So you got to evaluate the external source. I also think it's important that you evaluate the internal source, because if you feel like you get a word from the Lord, let me just ask you a bold question here. Do you make good decisions? When you typically put your hands on something, does it work out?

Or is mess happening all around you? Funny thing is, people need to hear this the most, know it the least. Y'all know that's right. But you got to evaluate, what happens when stuff gets in my hands? When I walk into a room, do people scatter in the other direction? That might be a sign. People always say, if you don't know who your weird family member is, it's you. It's you, baby. Amen. So you've got to evaluate the word. Number two, you have to set boundaries. You have to set boundaries. I believe in boundaries with people, but you've also got to set some boundaries on how you're going to behave if you get a word from God.

There's some stuff that I'm very, very mindful of, even when I'm feeling like I'm hearing from the Lord. But there's some lines that I just won't cross. I just will not cross them. I just won't go past them. It doesn't matter. I have set some things, and the Lord is aware of these lines. In fact, the psalmist said, "The lines have fallen in pleasant places for me." So I have some lines I won't cross.

> **PSALM 16:6** ESV
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> 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

And it's important because at this level, the fourth level of hearing from the Lord, it is the level that gets abused the most often. People don't go around talking about, well, I just felt like I got something from the preaching, and I got to act on it.

Nobody abuses that. Nobody abuses the Holy Spirit bringing something to their remembrance. Nobody really abuses a flow of revelation. The word may get tossed around flippantly, which I'm guilty of as well, but the word may get tossed around. But nobody's walking around abusing having a paradigm shift. But you want to talk about God told me. Every time I hear it, I cringe. Every time I hear it, I cringe. Because we will attribute God wanting me to do something to things so flippantly, without any mind for who you are talking to. I didn't share this a few weeks ago when I talked about 27 minutes that'll change your life, how to pray and read the Bible every day.

But I do have a tendency when I pray to get down on my knees and put my face down in my chair. Now, I'm Pentecostal as everybody. I like to walk around and I like all that stuff. But in the mornings, I do this because I'm about to ask a lot of the Lord, and it might be good if I just remember who I'm talking to. So when you get out here and start saying, God told me, God told me to do this, God told me to do that, you might want to remember who you're talking about. In fact, that's probably what you ought to think about when you think about taking the Lord's name in vain.

> **EXODUS 20:7** ESV
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> 7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

More than people saying, oh my God, who cares? But y'all are out here saying, well, God told me to do this immoral thing. And you think it doesn't get abused? I thought I saw people do this in church ministry. Because in church ministry, I got the three people that kind of raised to the top of the crop in the church that I know that it's the person you're thinking of right now. I know, you know, just the people that are kind of just weird, right? And they're going to say this nonsense all the time. I thought, okay, the two to three people had me irritated for years on that stuff.

Then we got in marketplace ministry. Then we got out around business people. Then we got out in meetings where I'm hearing people talking about God told me. God told me to do something usually unethical, usually immoral. It's amazing that He's speaking to them between vape puffs with whiskey in their hand while they're going through a divorce. We've got a whole company that we are aware of because Ashleigh and I, y'all always want to know where the money comes from. The money comes from, we have a special tree. No, I'm just kidding. The money comes from marketing.

We're in marketing businesses. We do a lot of marketing. I'll sell you this shirt when we're done. Amen. We have a table full of these out there. No, I'm just kidding. But we're in a marketing business. We're aware of a company that part of their marketing strategy is to tell people to go lie to folks and then say, God told me. And if you ever see Ashleigh talking about silly gooses on the internet, that's who she's talking about. That's a silly goose move right there. You're going to lie and then say it was the Lord. Now I feel like preaching all of a sudden.

But this is the thing that gets abused the most. This is why I told you up front that the levels are sequential. The levels are, you don't jump from I got saved two weeks ago or I got my life right with God two weeks ago to God told me. No, you need to get under some good preaching. You need to get in the Word and you need to be part of the process that leads to hearing from the Lord. Somebody ought to just shout to get me to stop. Amen. Hallelujah. This is actually an ancient heresy, by the way. This is an ancient heresy. It's called Montanism. And it's important for us to know about this because if you were to look at the Montanists and try to find a group that looked a lot like them, it'd be 20th and 21st century Pentecostals and Charismatics.

We look a lot like this group that have been marked as ancient heretics from early in church history. They believed in the power of God. They believed in the gifts of the Spirit. They spoke in tongues. They prophesied. They laid hands on the sick and they recovered. And all that is good. And I like that. And I want to keep all of that stuff. But one thing that happened with them is they got off track and they said, officially, this was their teaching, that the Holy Spirit had more authority than the Bible. That the Holy Spirit had more authority than the Scripture.

Now, I told you a few weeks ago that the Holy Spirit is not policed by the Scripture. Our job is not to take the Scripture and police the Holy Ghost. That's not what we do. But at the same time, the Holy Ghost is not going to operate in contradiction to the Scripture. Because the Bible, what did we open up with in this series? 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, that says all Scripture is God-breathed or inspired, profitable for teaching, correction, reproof.

> **2 TIMOTHY 3:16** ESV
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> 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

But it's inspired. It's God-breathed. The Holy Spirit wrote this book. Not only do we believe in the inspiration of Scripture, but we hold to what's called the verbal plenary inspiration.

We don't believe just the big ideas, or the morals, or just the big concepts are inspired. We believe every word in the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit being fully God, He is not going to violate His Word because the Bible says that God is not a man that He should lie.

> **NUMBERS 23:19** ESV
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> 19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

So He's not going to say this and then say something different. So this will always be in concert with anything you hear from the Lord. Hallelujah. So some boundaries that I'm real careful of, just to be, hopefully this will be helpful. I got a little preachy there for a minute.

I'm sorry. I have a lot of medicine in me and we found over the years that when I'm medicated, I start to have a good time in the pulpit. This is when the raw stuff starts coming out. But over the years, some things that I've just said I'm going to be very mindful of, is I'm always going to be mindful of my emotional state and I'm going to be mindful of my stage of life. I'm going to be mindful of those things. So if I'm emotional, if I'm worked up and I start to hear from the Lord, I'm immediately going to draw that into question. Because I could be off kilter, because I'm feeling weird.

I got something going on. So I want to be mindful of that. Not to say that I will ignore it, but I'm not going to act on it immediately. I'm going to take it back to evaluation and I'm going to evaluate that word. Okay. So I'm mindful of my emotional state. Now we happen to be in the type of church that we think the more, you know, in a frenzy we get, the more anointing has showed up. But when you're hearing directly from heaven, which by the way, has consequences that are great. When that happens, you need to actually have some level of balance to you.

So you can tell what's going on. So you know what you're dealing with. I'm also mindful of my stage of life. If I'm going through something difficult, if the money's tight, or I've got something on me that's funky, or, you know, I'm dealing with a difficult person or a difficult situation. Well, I'm real careful when I feel like I get a word from the Lord, especially when it's instruction. I'll receive encouragement and inspiration from the Holy Ghost without any qualm. But if I feel like the Lord tells me to do something, immediately I'm going to go, hang on, I'm drawing a boundary.

Let me think through this. Let me evaluate this word from God. Because it could just be me getting cagey. Because when my house wouldn't sell, Laura, you probably feel this sometimes. When my house wouldn't sell a couple of years ago, we were just sitting on this thing for like eight months. We were living in North Alabama, but the house is sitting in Florida. And I'm in a townhouse, and I got a gorgeous home in Florida. And I went back to fix it from a hurricane, and it was like a vacation. I was like, all right, I'm in my nice house again, praise God.

But when I start getting cagey on that thing, I could wake up one day and feel like the Lord told me, well, just drop it down $300,000. That thing will sell like that. But then I'd wake up other days, and I'd say, no, I'm a man of faith. I'm going to raise it $300,000 and put God to the test. Hallelujah. But you can get cagey on that stuff when you're in a tight spot. I'm going to toss this in. I wasn't planning on saying this, but you also have to be mindful of your stage of life in terms of your age. The Bible says that when Nehemiah went back and started to rebuild the temple, that the elders in Israel who had seen the previous temple, they weeped out of sadness.

It disturbed them. And the young men shouted for joy, but the old men, they cried because it wasn't the old temple.

> **EZRA 3:12-13** ESV
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> 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept
> with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so
> that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the
> people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

And I need to encourage y'all. I used to not have grace for this. I used to be, everybody just needs to get on board. God's doing what He's doing. Because I used to be a music minister. And I came in and messed up y'all's churches just like anybody else does when they're 20 years old. And the music minister, I ripped out all them hymn books and threw them out and started singing the new songs. And people would complain, well, you just need to get with what God's doing.

Hallelujah. But then I got around this, you know, I'm kind of at this 40-year mark coming up on it. Now I don't like the songs we sing either. And I feel a little different about it. I get up every week and sing songs I really don't like that much. I'd like to get up here and just do a little Brownsville all Sunday morning. Amen. Those are my hymns. We've come to praise Him. [worship]. Because he's, y'all remember, he's under my feet. Hallelujah. So I like to go back to all that stuff now because I'm there, but I have to be mindful when I come into a church situation and I see something happening and I get a little on it.

That's not the word of the Lord. I just don't like that music. I just don't like what that preacher's doing. My God, you know, you give it enough time, things will turn around. I had a pastor who would not preach without a tie, period. And he was strong until about 10 years ago. He started wearing a polo and everything comes around eventually. So you got to be mindful of your stage of life as well. Can't be irritable. You can't think everything's evil that's new. That's the big thing right now. Everybody's on ChatGPT, you know. Oh, ChatGPT. Okay, well, yeah, I mean, they're going to keep coming up with stuff.

Wait till you get the ChatGPT hologram. That's going to be the new thing, you know. I mean, there's always going to be new stuff. You don't have to wig out about everything that comes around. And let me give you one more boundary that I like to draw. We all like to call on the Lord in times of trouble, which I believe in. The Bible says the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous will run in, and they are saved.

> **PROVERBS 18:10** ESV
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> 10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

So when things go haywire, I think God ought to be the first phone call you make. Unfortunately, prayer is usually the last thing that we do, but it ought to be the first.

So just call on the Lord. I believe in that. But when it comes to getting a word from the Lord, do not discount how clearly you can hear from God when things are going well. Do not enjoy your life and forsake the presence when things are calm. You need to draw close to the Lord because you can hear the Lord more clearly than when you have all the incoming information. This isn't in the Bible. This is just logic I'm applying to the Scripture here. But Elijah, we just talked about, he had four sources of incoming information that he had to discern. Logic tells me that if there were 10 streams of information coming in, it had been harder to discern.

If there had been 20 streams of information coming in, it had been harder to discern. Several years ago, I got COVID real bad. So as y'all can imagine, every time I cough, I think, oh, what is that? But I got COVID real bad. I had to be hospitalized. I was in there for about nine days. When I got out of the hospital, you know, I'd been doing all this ministry online and I got people. The thing about online ministry, and this happens in church where people a little dehumanize you when you're in these roles, but it ain't nothing like the internet. You know, I am not a person to the people on the internet.

I am an object of their entertainment, no less. And I come out of the hospital and I posted a video. I've been in the hospital. Sorry, I haven't been present and active. And I'll be back soon once I kind of, you know, I've posted this video. I got a nasal cannula in and everything. I looked rough. People start commenting, not one, not two, enough for me to be like, this is a thing. People start commenting and going, well, what did the Lord teach you in the hospital? Nothing. I'm not in here praying and reading the Bible. I don't think I had my Bible in the hospital.

I don't think I changed clothes for about six days and I'm kind of shocked nobody walked in and said, do you want to change your clothes? But I didn't have a word from God. I didn't get a word from God in the hospital. I had a word from God when I went into the hospital. I had a word in my spirit before I went in there. I knew that the Lord was going to get glory in this because I already had that word. I'm not trying to get it when things, I'm not cramming it the final hour. And if you'll get a word from the Lord, when things are going well, ah, bless God, I'm telling you, it'll serve you well when things turn around.

I'm preaching more than I was planning on. This was only 30 minutes when I did it the other night. Amen. So it's y'all's fault. Y'all are drawing it out of me. The last thing, number three, number three is you got to be mindful of your training. You got to be mindful of your training. You might not realize this, but because the levels are sequential, you've actually been being trained the entire time. You've been being trained the entire time when you started sitting under that preaching and you were sensing things from the Lord. And then you engaged in your Bible reading and started to build the Holy Spirit's library.

And you started to have Him bring things to your remembrance that were from the Scripture and communicate with you in that direct way. And then when you got a flow of revelation and got some framework on you and had a paradigm shift and started to really know the Lord in a special way as those things were, you were being trained for this moment to receive directly from the Lord. Because what we talked about when we began is that when the Lord speaks in this way, it is generally through your thoughts. A thought will come to you and you'll go, that's the Lord.

But how do you know? How do you know it's the Lord and it's not you? Well, remember 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 says that the Bible is inspired. The Holy Spirit wrote this book. He used the hands of men. He used the quills of men, the pens of men, the pencils of whatever they were using. I don't really know what they were using to write it, but He was using that. But this is the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit talking. Well, we've got a church that we like to go do ministry at out in San Antonio, Texas. Okay. We like going out there because the pastor and his wife are in terms of being a couple, they're our best couple friend.

She's Ashleigh's best friend. He's one of my best friends. And we love these people. They're in San Antonio, Texas. We used to work in San Antonio. So we have some relationships there. I was at a church there. It's a different church. So we'll go out and we'll visit with him and we'll do ministry in that church occasionally. Well, when I go to Texas, I have never been anywhere in the country. We've lived in Michigan. I've been all over. I've been in Arizona. I've been in Florida. Trying to think of other places that aren't the South I've been. Been in Oklahoma.

I've been all over the place. But nobody is fascinated with the way I talk like Texas. Now y'all don't hear it because I'm from here. I'm a Southerner. I know some of y'all think I sound like a Yankee. I heard that from somebody one day. You sound like a Yankee. And I said, you take it back. But when I go there, it's like the hillbilly prophet has done rolled up into town. Right? So they like this and they're fascinated by the way I talk. Well, I was there one time preaching and before the service, I met a lady from Center Point, Alabama. She was visiting her son and daughter-in-law at the church.

And I'm just fun. So I go down, I have this lady stand up and greet everybody so they can hear how she talks. We sound exactly alike. I've got a buddy who I was raised with in the church. I got a buddy who I came up around. We're still good friends today. As a matter of fact, I left his video on in my office preaching. I'm going to get a little bit of his anointing today. Amen. He's preaching in my office right now. He's from Birmingham. We came from the same church. Well, he calls a pastor friend of mine one day. He was trying to network with him, connect with him.

Calls a guy out in Texas, of all places, calls him, picks up the phone, says, can I talk to Pastor so-and-so? And the guy goes, Jason? He thought it was me on the phone because we sound exactly alike. What that is, is that's an Alabama dialect. That's the dialect that we speak. It's the same language said a different way. I pronounce words a certain way. I use certain turns of phrases. It's a dialect. This message will preach better if I go to Minnesota one day and preach it. Amen. They'll really hear it. It's a dialect. Well, because the Bible is inspired, the more you read it, the more you take it in.

Here's what's crazy that's happening. You're not just learning what the Bible says. You're not just reading what the Holy Spirit is. You're learning how He talks. You will find over time, the Holy Spirit has a way He talks. He has a certain dialect. He sounds like the Scripture. And I don't have time to go into this rabbit hole right now, but I'm going to tell you, I have found a grace on Scripture and the Holy Ghost where if you'll read any Bible version and get familiar with it, that's the dialect the Holy Spirit will speak in your life. Back in the day, we used to have ladies get up in the church, these older ladies.

They'd stand up in the church and they'd start to prophesy and, Lord, it sounded like Macbeth had done rolled up into the church and they're thee, thou, and thus, and unto, and they'd throw out all these good words. And I always thought, man, them ladies are putting it on. You know, you don't talk like that. I know these people. You're country as cornbread when we get out there in the foyer. But you roll up in here, you Shakespeare in the park? I don't think so. So, I always thought they were putting it on. Well, then several years later, we had a young girl in our church who started to prophesy in our services.

She'd stand up and she'd prophesy. And all she'd do is get up and say, God says. Well, hang on, there ain't no thus saith the Lord on that. She'd just say, God says. Years later, I realized that those older people weren't putting it on. I figured out what was happening. Those older people, they read a Bible, didn't they? The King James Bible. And when they get into the secret place with the Lord, they just get in thus and thee and thou to death. Amen. But that younger girl was reading the Bible that was real popular when I was a teenager. The NIV just said it in real plain English.

And I found that the Holy Spirit will speak the dialect of the Bible that you read. And so, when you get into the secret place and you're down on your face before the Lord and you're praying, I'm kind of just telling y'all what my experience is like, by the way. And you're just praying. You're having your moment with the Lord. And all of a sudden, a thought hits you from out of the blue. It's real easy to figure out who it came from by just asking this question. Does that sound like me or does that sound like the Holy Ghost? It's a very easy way to figure it out.

Does that sound like something I would say or does that sound like something the Holy Ghost would say? Hey, is this a thought that's been rolling around in my brain for a week or did this just come out of nowhere in the middle of prayer? It gets real easy to figure out if it's the Lord in those moments. I told you, I think, a few weeks ago when we were talking about spending 27 minutes with Jesus, there's an anointing, there's a grace on going to the same place every day. When you go to that place and you start to receive things in that place, you know who's talking to you in that place.

Amen. But I want to encourage you this morning because I believe God wants to speak to you. But I have made it abundantly clear as I have preached these messages. And I hope if you walk away with anything, you walk away with first, read your Bible and pray every day. Read your Bible and pray every day. That's the first thing I hope you take away. The second thing that I hope you take away is this, that this is a process. This is a process. We're Americans and we live in a microwave culture and we're Pentecostals and we attend a microwave church. We want it now, now, now.

Every person in this room is predisposed to impatience with things that take time. We don't want to wait for the healing to come. I want the healing now. I don't want to sit through six weeks of service. I want the anointing now. I don't want to wait for a revival. I want the present. I want it now. I want it now. And then you put that on top of us being Americans. We do not wait for anything. Have you ever thought about how irritated you get with people who drive the speed limit? You mad at this guy for doing what he's supposed to do. Don't you know better?

I know it's 40. We go 65 on this road, sir. So, we want it now. But this is a process. This is a long process. Proverbs 13:11 says this. It says, "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gains little by little will increase it." Little by little.

> **PROVERBS 13:11** ESV
>
> 11 Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.

That's how this journey works. That's how this works. It doesn't come overnight. It comes over time. And it takes time. You have to be in the process. I found out yesterday that right now the number one Christian artist on iTunes, the number one Christian artist on iTunes, number one person writing music about Jesus, sharing the gospel, helping people to worship in the local church, number one, isn't a real person.

It's AI. And on one hand, I look at that and I say, here's another example of somebody saying, let me just microwave the process. Let me just throw it into ChatGPT and see what pops up. I don't think they made it out of ChatGPT, but whatever they made, it's an AI artist. It's not a real person. On the other hand, it also reminds me, this is the number one. iTunes doesn't decide who the number one person is. The amount of listens determined. This thing, that's the only thing I know to call it, this thing is being listened to more than any other Christian artist by Christians all over the world right now.

And it reminds me how easily we will trade the authentic thing for something that just has the form of what we like. That's why the apostle warned that there will be those that have a form of godliness, but they'll deny the power thereof.

> **2 TIMOTHY 3:5** ESV
>
> 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Over time, little by little, that's how we get the real thing. You don't go home and read your Bible and get called to Africa. And if you do, call me first. My God. You don't want to trade the real thing. It takes time. It takes time. But what I've learned is that if you put the time in, insights will come little by little.

And I want to encourage you with this lastly. I started to think about how over the last 20 years or so, however, well no, it's been about 14, 15 years that I've been active in the Scripture. And I've read the Bible somewhere over 30 times. I wish I would have tracked it better because it'd sound better if I could say I've read it 34 and I'm in my 35th time, but I just started tracking a few years ago better. And I thought about how I've received insight from the Lord over the years. And that's normally what it is. It's just a little insight here or there.

And slowly you're building up these things that you've heard from the Lord. Maybe it's the Holy Spirit teaching you through bringing things to your remembrance, or maybe you're operating in a revelation or maybe you are getting direct communication from heaven. I have little index cards that stay with me because the Lord will tell me things and I'll write them down. And I have a little stack of index cards that's just growing of things the Lord has told me. I've forgotten most of them. I go back and look through it. In fact, if you want to know how faithful the Holy Spirit is, this is real off the topic, but I was reading my Bible one day and I got a word from the Lord.

I was like, whoa, more of a level two, the Holy Spirit just teaching me through the Scripture. But I'm looking at him like, oh my gosh. And I write this thing down and I move on. I can't stop thinking about it. It's that good. And I don't even remember what it was now. So it will happen again. But I think, let me go look at some other Bibles and see what notes I've written down about this passage of Scripture before. I go back to a Bible that I had read when I first started. This was my first nice Bible I ever got. Big wide margins in it. And I opened the Bible and in the margins, I have written word for word the exact same note.

I'd completely forgotten about it and the Holy Spirit gave it to me again. I thought it was cool. I guess y'all could just roll your eyes at it then. Amen. Again, little insights over time, little insights over time. I mathed this out one day to see what the value is of not getting a ton, but being faithful to the process. So if you read the Bible every day, pray every day and you start to receive from the Lord and you only get one insight from the Lord every month, one insight, just one. You know, that's 12 significant insights a year. Did you know that that is enough to write a book with?

I'm not saying you got to write a book, but 12 significant, if you can expand that thought, you could write a book every year. If you show up faithfully every day and let's say it grows and you start to get one insight a week from the Scripture, one insight a week from the Lord, just one, that's 52 significant insights a year. That's enough to do this. This is 52 insights a year right here, folks. That's what this is. 52 insights a year. If you got two a week, you'd get over a thousand insights from the Lord every decade. Imagine 20 years down the road and sitting your grandchildren down or maybe a Bible study that you've been leading and pulling out a stack of papers.

Folks, today I want to share with you 2,000 things the Lord has said to me over the last, at two a week, seven days a week, over three hours in the secret place. It adds up over time, little by little. Be encouraged. God wants to speak to you. He wants to do a great work in your life. This is going to be a church that gets on the journey, gets rooted in the Bible and seeks God in the secret place. If you receive that today, give the Lord a hand clap of praise. Hallelujah.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message closes a six-week series on being rooted in the Bible. The series began with the value of Scripture and then moved, on purpose, into how a believer hears from God. Recap the four levels clearly; this message depends on them:

- **Level one:** the preached word, where God stirs you as you sit under preaching.
- **Level two:** the Holy Spirit bringing Scripture to your remembrance (John 14:26).
- **Level three:** a flow of revelation, a paradigm shift that becomes a framework for your theology (last week).
- **Level four:** direct communication from heaven (this week).

The levels are sequential. Say it again here: no one jumps from "I got saved two weeks ago" to "God told me."

This level is the one most often abused, so the message is practical and pastoral. It gives three safeguards: evaluate the word, set boundaries and be mindful of your training. Keep the humor light and land on encouragement: God wants to speak to you.

Introduction

Why this series? Several years ago God gave a great grace on a Bible reading plan that spread widely and helped well over 100,000 people engage the Scripture regularly. One thing became clear early on: many people read the Bible as the end goal. Reading as worship and as a discipline is good, but **when you serve the living God who actively speaks to His people, it is better to read the Word and expect to hear from heaven.**

Recap the second level. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). What has He said? Everything in this book. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), and "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). If Jesus said it, it is here.

LEVEL ONE IS A SENSING

At level one, much of what we call hearing from God is really a **sensing**. A missionary speaks and you sense you should partner with them. You see kids in the foyer and sense you should serve in children's ministry. A vision offering is coming and you sense you should give.

The problem is that a sensing has no qualifier. Your sense of the Holy Spirit and your feelings run a parallel path, and it can be hard to tell them apart. If someone cuts you off in the Publix parking lot and you "sense" the Holy Spirit telling you to ram their car with your shopping cart, that might just be your feelings.

LEVEL FOUR IS USUALLY A THOUGHT

When God speaks to you directly, it is rare for it to be an audible voice. It is usually what has traditionally been called **an inner witness**. It comes to you as a thought, and it runs a parallel path with your own thoughts. Today's goal: to help you know the difference between what you are thinking and what God is saying.

Elijah and the Low Whisper

Set the scene: Elijah, the great prophet, has been threatened by Jezebel and is hiding in a cave. Now the word of the Lord comes to him.

> 1 KINGS 19:11-13 ESV
>
> 11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great
> and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the
> wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a
> fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it,
> he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a
> voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Four things happen: a wind, an earthquake, a fire and "the sound of a low whisper" (1 Kings 19:12). The text says the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. Yet all of it happened as "the LORD passed by" (1 Kings 19:11). His presence was manifest in all of it, but **only one part of the experience carried the word of the Lord.**

Like Elijah, **we have to mature to the point that we can discern the word of the Lord among a flood of incoming information.** Bills, kids, spouse, house, cars, job and boss are all incoming information. Add a lively, loud Pentecostal church service and there is even more to take in. How do you discern the word of the Lord through all of it?

1. Evaluate the Word

When you sense a word from the Lord, evaluate it in four ways.

- **Its theology.** Is this good theology or bad theology? A diagnostic question: would I know the difference? If you sense God the Father is a three-foot-tall purple man with a high voice, that is bad theology.
- **Its instruction.** Is this godly, good, wise instruction? God will not tell you to do something immoral or unethical.
- **Its impact.** Suppose you sense God telling you to empty your bank account and send it to Convoy of Hope. Wonderful ministry, but that money belongs to your household too. **Illustration:** "I would effectively have stolen Ashleigh's money." Before acting, talk it over with your spouse.
- **Its source, external.** When someone gives you a prophetic word, a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom, look at their track record. Do their words come to pass, or do they say a lot of things in services that never matter? If you know good theology, you can often judge the source from their preaching alone.

- **Its source, internal.** Ask yourself a bold question: Do I make good decisions? When I put my hands on something, does it work out, or is there mess all around me? The people who most need to hear this usually know it least.

2. Set Boundaries

Even when you feel you are hearing from the Lord, set some lines you will not cross. The psalmist said, "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6).

This is the level that gets abused most often. Nobody abuses "I got something from the preaching" or "the Holy Spirit brought a verse to mind." But "God told me" gets attached to all kinds of things, flippantly and often to justify something unethical or immoral.

Remember who you are talking about. **Illustration:** in morning prayer I often kneel with my face down in my chair, because I am about to ask a lot of the Lord, and it helps to remember who I am talking to. Saying "God told me" to cover what you wanted to do anyway may be closer to taking the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7) than a careless exclamation.

As preached, this abuse is common in the marketplace too: people claiming "God told me" while living far from Him, and even businesses that coach their salespeople to say "God told me" to close a sale. This is why the levels are sequential. You need to sit under good preaching, get in the Word, and be part of the process that leads to hearing from the Lord.

AN ANCIENT WARNING: MONTANISM

This is an ancient error. In the second century, the Montanists believed in the power of God, the gifts of the Spirit, prophecy and healing, and in many ways they looked like modern Pentecostals and charismatics. All of that is good, and we want to keep it. But they went off track: they treated their new prophecies as carrying authority above the teaching of the apostles. The church rejected them.

The Holy Spirit is not policed by the Scripture, but He will never contradict the Scripture. The series began here: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). We hold to **verbal plenary inspiration:** not only the big ideas, but every word is inspired by the Holy Spirit. God "is not man, that he should lie" (Numbers 23:19). He will not say one thing in His Word and something different to you. What you hear from the Lord will always be in concert with the Bible.

BOUNDARIES TO KEEP

Be mindful of your emotional state. If I am worked up and start to hear from the Lord, I immediately question it. I won't ignore it, but I won't act on it immediately. I take it back to evaluation. We tend to think the more frenzied we get, the more anointing has shown up. But hearing directly from heaven carries great consequences, and it calls for balance.

Be mindful of your stage of life. When money is tight, or you are dealing with a difficult person or situation, be careful, especially with instruction. Receive encouragement and inspiration from the Holy Spirit freely. When it is instruction, draw a boundary and evaluate.

Illustration: the house that wouldn't sell. We had a house in Florida that sat on the market for about eight months while we lived in North Alabama. When you get cagey in a tight spot, one day you "hear" the Lord say to drop the price $300,000, and the next day you "hear" Him say to raise it $300,000 and put God to the test.

Be mindful of your age. When the foundation of the second temple was laid, "many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy" (Ezra 3:12).

Illustration: the hymnals and the polo. As a twenty-year-old music minister, I pulled out the hymnals and told complainers to get with what God was doing. Now, nearing forty, I'd love a little Brownsville worship every Sunday. And I knew a pastor who would never preach without a tie, until he started wearing polos. Things come around. When you see something new and get irritated, that may not be the word of the Lord. You may just not like the music. Not everything new is evil.

Get your word from God when things are calm. Call on the Lord in trouble; "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Prayer should be the first call, not the last. But do not underestimate how clearly you can hear from God when things are going well. Elijah had four streams of information to discern; if there had been ten or twenty, it would have been harder. Don't enjoy the calm and neglect His presence.

Illustration: nine days with COVID. After about nine days in the hospital with COVID, I posted a video, and people kept asking, "What did the Lord teach you in the hospital?" The honest answer: nothing new. I was not reading and praying in there. But I had a word from God before I went in: the Lord was going to get glory in this. Don't cram in the final hour. Get a word when things go well, and it will serve you when things turn.

3. Be Mindful of Your Training

Because the levels are sequential, you have been in training the whole time: sensing under the preaching, building the Holy Spirit's library through Bible reading, letting Him bring Scripture to remembrance, receiving a flow of revelation. All of it prepares you to receive directly from the Lord.

When a thought comes and you think, "That's the Lord," how do you know? Remember that the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). He used the hands and pens of men, but it is the Holy Spirit talking.

Illustration: the Alabama dialect. In Texas, people are fascinated by the way I talk. At a church in San Antonio I met a woman from Center Point, Alabama, and we sounded exactly alike. A friend from Birmingham once called a pastor in Texas, who answered, "Jason?" That is a dialect: the same language, said a particular way, with certain pronunciations and turns of phrase.

The Holy Spirit has a dialect, and He sounds like the Scripture. The more Scripture you take in, the more you learn not just what He says but how He talks.

Illustration: the King James ladies. Older women used to prophesy in church with "thee," "thou" and "thus saith the Lord," and I assumed they were putting it on. Years later a young woman prophesied in plain English: "God says." Then it clicked. The older saints read the King James Bible; she read the NIV. The Holy Spirit speaks to you in the dialect of the Bible you read.

So when a thought comes out of the blue while you are in prayer, ask: **Does that sound like me, or does that sound like the Holy Spirit?** Has this thought been rolling around in my head all week, or did it come out of nowhere in the middle of prayer? There is a grace on meeting God in the same place every day. When you receive there, you know who is talking to you there.

Conclusion: A Process, Not a Microwave

God wants to speak to you. If you take away anything from this series:

- **First: read your Bible and pray every day.**
- **Second: this is a process.**

We live in a microwave culture, and Pentecostals often attend microwave churches. We want healing, anointing and revival now. But "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it" (Proverbs 13:11). Little by little: that is how this journey works.

Illustration: the AI artist. As preached, the number one Christian artist on iTunes that week was not a real person but an AI. (Confirm the current facts before using this.) It is a picture of how easily we trade the authentic for something with the form of what we like, "having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). Put in the time, and the real thing comes little by little.

Illustration: the index cards and the margin note. I keep a growing stack of index cards with things the Lord has told me, and I have forgotten most of them. One day the Holy Spirit showed me something in a passage, and I wrote it down. Then I opened the first good wide-margin Bible I ever owned and found the same note, word for word, written years earlier. The Holy Spirit is faithful.

Do the math.

- One insight a month is twelve significant insights a year. Expand them, and that is enough for a book.
- One insight a week is fifty-two a year.
- Two a week is over a thousand insights in a decade, and about two thousand in twenty years.

Imagine sitting down with your grandchildren, or a Bible study you have led for years, and pulling out a stack of two thousand things the Lord has said to you. It adds up, little by little.

This will be a church that gets on the journey, gets rooted in the Bible and seeks God in the secret place. Close with praise.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

1 KINGS 19:11–13	11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

JOHN 14:26	26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
JOHN 1:1	1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
JOHN 1:14	14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
2 TIMOTHY 3:16	16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
PROVERBS 13:11	11 Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

PSALM 16:6	6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
EXODUS 20:7	7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
NUMBERS 23:19	19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
EZRA 3:12–13	12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.
PROVERBS 18:10	10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.
2 TIMOTHY 3:5	5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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