

## **V. WHISPERS FROM GOD**

- A. Bill doesn't think you ever get from *here* to *there* in a straight line. You don't amass fantastic people or make much progress on the journey without hearing from God en route.

## SESSION ONE: FROM HERE TO THERE

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- B. Some people are nervous by the idea of hearing from God because they've heard people like axe murders say they committed their crimes because God told them to.
- C. Jesus said that his sheep hear his voice and heed it (John 10:27). This isn't just in ancient times but today.
- D. The primary way God speaks to us is through the Bible.
  - 1. If you want to get to know the mind of God, read his Word.
  - 2. Every leader ought to be an incurable reader of the Bible.
  - 3. As you read it, Its wisdom soaks into your spirit and saturates your mind, and you become a better decision maker.
  - 4. Be regular, relentless readers of God's Word.
- E. But in addition to the Bible, God speaks to us directly by his Spirit.
  - 1. Bill has never heard an audible voice from God, but he knows God has put thoughts in his mind that are not his thoughts.
  - 2. You may have experienced a day when someone comes to mind repeatedly throughout the day, and you don't know why, so you call them and learn that they had a special need and your call was timely. And when you go to bed that night you wonder, "Why did I think of them? Did God put that person on my mind?"
  - 3. Maybe you're with a staff member and you feel this little nudge in your Spirit to find out if everything is OK beneath the veneer, and you find out that there's a marriage under pressure, a kid out of control, a medical report that didn't go well.
  - 4. Bill has had experiences like this hundreds of times.
    - a. Do you get these promptings?
    - b. Do you pay attention to them?
    - c. Do you believe God still speaks today?
    - d. To the core of his being, Bill believes that God does.
- F. Bill's father was a cosmopolitan, world-traveling businessman, and the whole script of his life was to walk into his dad's shoes and take over part of his business.
  - 1. Then he was sitting in a college classroom hearing a guy talk about the power and beauty and potential of the local church. He said the local church is the hope of the world, and if you're giving your life to something other than that, you should think about it.
  - 2. Bill would walk out of the classroom thinking maybe he hadn't really asked God what he was supposed to do with his life.
  - 3. Not long after, he got a two-word whisper from God about the church: "Start one."
  - 4. Bill's reaction was "no." He didn't like the church of his youth, and he liked what came along with a family-owned business, and he needed action and thought there would be more action in the marketplace than there would ever be in a local church.
  - 5. Now coming up on the thirty-fifth anniversary of Willow, he looks back and wonders what he would have missed if he had just lived out a script that someone else had for his life.
  - 6. He doesn't think in human strength he could have veered from that path, but God's whisper was enough.

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- G. Fifteen years into the development of the church, Bill got another whisper: “Serve pastors.”
  - 1. Over time, it became clear that he was supposed to put a serving towel over his arm and help in any way he could, so that not just Willow, but the whole church worldwide, gets stronger.
  - 2. When Bill got up that morning and while driving to campus, he thought, “I could have missed all of this if I blew off that whisper.”
- H. God tries to speak to you every single day.
  - 1. Bill saw a pick-up truck with an antenna on top of it that looked like an old television antenna.
  - 2. He thought, “There’s probably a reason why he has that kind of antenna. There’s probably a particular radio frequency that he needs to receive and that’s the best antenna to receive that.”
  - 3. If you felt God was transmitting to you on a regular basis, how concerned would you be about the quality of your antenna?
  - 4. God speaks, but because we don’t expect him to, we don’t clean our antennas, we don’t listen, we don’t lower the ambient noise in our lives.
- I. Not all whispers have to be life altering.
  - 1. A few weeks ago Bill was reading his Bible and came to a section that talked about the presence of God, how you can feel the friendship and the accompanying presence of God throughout your day.
  - 2. Then he was out running and saw a little kid in a stroller, and the thought occurred to him, “Bill, I’ve loved you since you were that size. I’ve loved you since the day you were born. I’ve had a heart to want to do your life with you since you were a toddler. ”
  - 3. Then someone coming up behind him on a bike said, “On your left.” Bill thought that God has been on his left, right, in front of and behind him his whole life.
  - 4. Then he saw an old man with a cane shuffling along. The Spirit said to him, “I’m going to be with you all the way to the end. You’re never going to have to do this alone.”
- J. Do you think God speaks? Will you do everything in your power to hear God’s voice and heed it?
- K. Bill waited thirty-five years to write about God’s whispers because people can misunderstand this and do more harm than good.
- L. If leaders worldwide were gaining the additional wisdom, support and direction that a whisper could give them, we would see incredible changes in leadership all over the world.
- M. The smartest moves Bill has ever made as a leader didn’t come from his human wisdom; it came from promptings of wisdom beyond his own.
- N. At a time when he wanted to quit, God whispered to him, “You’re a treasured child of the Most High God. Don’t you quit.” That whisper saved Bill’s ministry.
- O. If you hear whispers like that and heed them, there’s no telling what God might do.

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- P. Bill has found that many of the whispers that come his way are quite short: “Start one.” “Serve pastors.” “Stand firm.” “Admit your mistake.”
- Q. These are the kinds of whispers that God does a lot. See if one of them grabs you and might be exactly what God is whispering to you.
1. Don't quit.
  2. Step up.
  3. Take the risk.
  4. Apologize now.
  5. Make the tough decision.
  6. Get help.
  7. Stop running from God.
  8. Slow down.
  9. Show your heart.
  10. Let others lead.
  11. Feed your soul.
  12. Bless the team.
  13. Make the ask.
  14. Do something more impactful.
  15. Come clean.
  16. Embody the vision.
  17. Celebrate the victories.
  18. Speak the truth.
  19. Pay the price.
  20. Count your blessings.
  21. End the secret.
  22. Check your motives.
  23. Set the pace.
  24. Give God your best.
  25. Get physically fit.
  26. Serve your spouse/kids.
  27. Pray.
  28. Humble yourself.
- R. For the next couple days, try saying, “Speak, Lord; your servant is listening.”
- S. When you feel promptings, practice heeding them, and see where God takes you.
- T. It will help you get from *here* to *there* the right way for the right reasons.



5. Bill's final challenge was to always be listening for God's whispers.
  - a. If you've had a memorable whisper from God and you feel comfortable sharing it, tell your team about it now.
  - b. Go back to the list of whispers that Bill shared. Did any of them speak to you? If you would like, jot your thoughts about what you heard in the space provided. If not, you might reflect on whispers you heard in the past or express your openness to hear from God now and in the future.

<b>My Whispers from God</b>

- c. If you feel led, feel free to share your thoughts with your team.