***The Power of a Whisper***

***Hearing God. Having the guts to Respond.***

**Worship Series – Week 1**

***The Whisper-Led Life*(This service covers Chapters 1, 4 and 10 of the book which also follows Bible Study material)**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin. |

**Announcements and Offering**

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| **HC#178 – Speak, O Lord** | HC-178 | HCD16-T18 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#189 – Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing** | HC-189 | HCD17-T19 |
| **SB334– Give us a day of wonders** | TB-235 – To the uttermost he saves | No CD |
| **SB#27 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah**  **HC#231 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah** | TB-399 – Cwm Rhondda  HC-231 | HTD3-T7 (4 vs.)  HCD22-T11 |
| **SB#504 – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us** | TB-406 – Praise, my soul | HTD2-T12 (3 vs.) |
| **HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King** | HC-209 | HCD19 – T19 |
| **HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | HC-251 | HCD24 – T11 |

***Whisper: ‘Listen to Me…’***

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| **Drama: Samuel’s Ear** |

**Call to Worship:**

The greatest moments of the Christ-following life comes from hearing directly from God—sensing his guidance to lean into some situations and steer clear of others, to speak a word one moment and fall silent the next, to adopt bold new practices and ditch the self-destructive habits that only do us harm.

God’s wish is to speak into the situations faced by every government, every media outlet, every organization and every organism imaginable, and to train their steps according to his good and perfect will.

God still speaks relevant words to his followers, and most likely a grand adventure with your name on it is on your heavenly Father’s lips. Turn your ear toward heaven, and He will direct your steps, accompany your path and celebrate your faithfulness one day.

(*The Power of a Whisper*, back cover)

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| **SB#784 – Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire** | TB-112 – St. Agnes | HTD5-T17 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#756 – He walks with God who speaks to God in prayer** | TB-465 – Ellers | HTD9-T2 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#586 – I am thine, O Lord** | TB-603 – Draw me nearer | HTD7-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#707 – I need thee every hour** | TB-680 – I need thee | No CD |
| **SB#765 – I often say my prayers** | TB-159 – Trentham | HTD8-T17 (4 vs.) |
| **HC#35 – In the Secret of Thy Presence** | HC- 35 | HCD2B-T15 |
| **HC#47 – As the Deer** | HC-47 | HCD3-T17 |
| **HC#49 – Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord** | HC-49 | HCD3-T19 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19 – T15 |
| **HC#208 – Faithful God** | HC-208 | HCD19 – T18 |
| **HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah** | HC-213 | HCD20 – T13 |
| **HC#215 – Holy Spirit** | HC-215 | HCD20 – T15 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21 – T16 |
| **HC#228 – Still** | HC-228 | HCD21 – T18 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I need you** | HC-236 | HCD22 – T16 |
| **HC#242 – In your presence** | HC-242 | HCD23 – T12 |
| **HC#247 – Still, my soul, be still** | HC-247 | HCD23 – T17 |
| **HC#249 – Near to the heart** | HC-249 | HCD23 – T19 |

***Whisper: ‘Voluntarily demote yourself…’***

**Responsive Reading**

**Leader:** God tells his followers, “Don’t be clutchers. Instead, become relinquishers.” In the opening verses of Philippians, chapter 2, the apostle Paul says this:

**All:** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.*

**Leader:** In case we don’t fully comprehend what the exhortation means, Paul then offers an illustration by way of the life and legacy of Jesus Christ.

**All:** *Have the same attitude of mind that Christ Jesus had…*

**Leader:** Paul says, and then he unloads a litany of seven voluntarily relinquishments that Jesus himself made. Verses six through eight list Jesus’ relinquishments—or demotions:

**All:** *Who, being in very nature God…*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ starts out at the very top. He was “in very nature God,” which means he was (and is) a full-fledged member of the Godhead, equal with the Almighty Father in every way, shape, and form. He was just as present and participatory in the creation of the universe as God, and all of the divine prerogatives were not only God’s, but Jesus’ as well.

**All:** *Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped…*

**Leader:** I don’t know about you, but if I ever found myself in a position of equality with God, I’d be hanging on for dear life. Even the most mature believers among us wrestle with letting go of adoration and fame. Not so with Jesus. He as much as says, “I will take a demotion here. I will let go. I will surrender whatever is necessary in order to cooperate with God’s mission for me.” And down the ladder he stepped.

**All:** *He made himself nothing…*

**Leader:** Demotion number one dealt with loosening that grip. In another translation, this verse says he “emptied himself.” This doesn’t mean Jesus divested himself of his deity; rather, he laid aside those divine characteristics that would hinder him from becoming a man. Nobody stripped Christ of his power; he voluntarily let it go. It was the second in a string of relinquishments. And down the ladder he stepped.

**All:** *Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

**Leader:** Demotions three, four and five happen in rapid succession. The text says that Jesus agreed to take on the *appearance* of a man, he then was made in the *likeness* of a man, and finally he became a *bondservant* to man. The transcendent Creator of the universe came down to the world he had created—not as an emperor requiring subjects to bow before him—but, instead, as an ordinary guy, looking for those he humbly might serve.

**All:** *He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death. . . .*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ—the One who initiated all of life and sustains it to this day—stood toe-to-toe with death. “Okay, you win,” he conceded on our behalf. He voluntarily laid down his life so that his mission could be fulfilled. The fact that he laid down his life is striking enough—but *how* he laid it down is incomprehensible. Did he arrange for himself a painless slumber that would lead gently to the blackness of death? Far from it, which brings us to Jesus’ seventh and final demotion.

**All:** Jesus submitted himself to the point of death*—“even death on a cross.”*

**Leader:** Is there no depth to which Jesus did not go—is there no level to which he will not descend—in order to be faithful to his mission on our behalf?

**All:** This realization challenges us to up the ante on our own obedience in following the relatively simple whispers he asks us to obey. To follow Jesus Christ we inevitably will be prompted to take demotions. We will be asked to relinquish what is “rightfully” ours. We will inconvenience ourselves to the point of sacrifice, even when others call us fools. And we understand that the kingdom of God never advances without sacrifice.

**Leader:** This is what it looks like to live a life fully surrendered to God. It’s rarely a walk in the park. Obeying the Spirit instead of your own self-centered whims will lead you to places you’ve never been, challenge you in ways you have never been challenged and invite levels of sacrifice you never dreamed you could make. This is the power and the promise of full-throttle faith, of living a life fueled solely by God.

(*The Power of a Whisper*, pages 247-253; Philippians 2:3-8, TNIV)

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| **HC#159 – Spirit of the Living God** | HC-159 | HCD14-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#62 – When God Comes Near** | HC-62 | HCD5-T12 |
| **HC#89 – Knowing You** | HC-89 | HCD7-T19 |
| **HC#110 – He is Here** | HC-110 | HCD9-T20 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19 – T15 |
| **HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah** | HC-213 | HCD20 – T13 |
| **HC#215 – Holy Spirit** | HC-215 | HCD20 – T15 |
| **HC#228 – Still** | HC-228 | HCD21 – T18 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I need you** | HC-236 | HCD22 – T16 |
| **HC#242 – In your presence** | HC-242 | HCD23 – T12 |
| **HC#247 – Still, my soul, be still** | HC-247 | HCD23 – T17 |
| **HC#249 – Near to the heart** | HC-249 | HCD23 – T19 |

***The Congregation Prays***

**(This prayer time could be opened up to the congregation to pray either silently or publicly; a time of intercessory prayer in their seats or at the altar)**

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| **The Lord’s Prayer** | | |
| **HC#624 – Our Father, who in Heaven art** | TB-86 – Fewster | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Message – The Whisper-Led Life**

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| **HC#7 – Sprit of God, Descend** | HC-7 | HCD1A-T17 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#49 – Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord** | HC-49 | HCD3-T19 |
| **HC#62 – When God Comes Near** | HC-62 | HCD5-T12 |
| **HC#89 – Knowing You** | HC-89 | HCD7-T19 |
| **HC#110 – He is Here** | HC-110 | HCD9-T20 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19 – T15 |
| **HC#208 – Faithful God** | HC-208 | HCD19 – T18 |
| **HC#213 – In the presence of Jehovah** | HC-213 | HCD20 – T13 |
| **HC#215 – Holy Spirit** | HC-215 | HCD20 – T15 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21 – T16 |
| **HC#228 – Still** | HC-228 | HCD21 – T18 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I need you** | HC-236 | HCD22 – T16 |
| **HC#242 – In your presence** | HC-242 | HCD23 – T12 |
| **HC#247 – Still, my soul, be still** | HC-247 | HCD23 – T17 |
| **HC#249 – Near to the heart** | HC-249 | HCD23 – T19 |

**Benediction: (congregation in unison)**

**“Oh, give me Samuel’s ear, the open ear, O Lord,**

**Alive and quick to hear each whisper of Thy Word;**

**Like him to answer at Thy call,**

**And to obey Thee first of all.”**

*-- By James D. Burns, 1857*

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| **SB#359 – Eternal God, our song we raise** | TB-439 – Eternal God | HTD12-T5 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#112 – The Potter’s Hand** | HC-112 | HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#109 – Total Praise** | HC-109 | HCD9-T19 |
| **HC#202 – O Church, arise** | HC-202 | HCD19 – T12 |

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| **Week #1** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Samuel’s Ear**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2012 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | God’s call |
| **Scripture:** | 1 Samuel 3:1-10; “Samuel’s Ear” by James D. Burns |
| **Synopsis:** |  |
| **Characters:** | Reader 1  Reader 2 – Samuel  Reader 3 – Benjamin  Reader 4 – Nancy |
| **Props/Costumes:** | A cell phone for Reader 4 (Nancy). |
| **Setting:** | Bare stage. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Readers are standing in order.*]

**Reader 1:** Oh, give me Samuel’s ear, the open ear, O Lord,

**Reader 2:** Alive and quick to hear each whisper of Thy Word;

**Reader 3:** Like him to answer at Thy call,

**Reader 4:** And to obey Thee first of all.

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper*] Samuel!

**Reader 2:** [*to Reader 3*] Here am I; you called me.

**Reader 3:** I did not call; go back and lie down.

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper*] Samuel!

**Reader 2:** [*to Reader 3*] Here am I; you called me.

**Reader 3:** My son, I did not call; go back and lie down.

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper*] Samuel!

**Reader 2:** [*to Reader 3*] Here am I; you called me.

**Reader 3:** Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper*] Samuel! Samuel!

**Reader 2:** Speak, for your servant is listening.

**Reader 3:** God still calls today. Will you hear his voice?

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 4*] Nancy!

**Reader 4:** [*checks her phone*] Hello? [*no response*] Hello?

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 4*] Nancy!

**Reader 4:** [*checks her phone*] Hello? [*no response*] Is anybody there?

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 4*] Nancy!

**Reader 4:** [*checks her phone*] Hello? [*no response, agitated*] Whatever!

**Reader 2:** God still calls today. Will you hear his voice?

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 3*] Benjamin!

**Reader 3:** [*to Reader 4*] Yes, Dear.

**Reader 4:** Yes, Dear, what? I didn’t call you.

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 3*] Benjamin!

**Reader 3:** [*to Reader 4*] Yes, Dear.

**Reader 4:** Yes, Dear, what? I told you, I didn’t call you.

**Reader 1:** [*exaggerated whisper to Reader 3*] Benjamin!

**Reader 3:** [*looks at Reader 4*]

**Reader 4:** Why don’t you ever answer me when I do call you?

**Reader 1:** Oh, give me Samuel’s ear, the open ear, O Lord,

**Reader 2:** Alive and quick to hear each whisper of Thy Word;

**Reader 3:** Like him to answer at Thy call,

**Reader 4:** And to obey Thee first of all.

[*Blackout*]

**The Power of a Whisper Worship Series**

**Week 1 – Sermon – The Whisper-Led Life**

**(Captain Carol Lewis)**

**Introduction:**

As we begin this four-week worship series today on “The Power of a Whisper,” (based on the book and companion Bible study by Bill Hybels that you heard about earlier) I thought back to a time when speaking and listening resulted in a not-so-desired ending.

[Personal illustration] I remember the day my best friend’s father asked her to back his car out of the driveway. My friend heard the words, “Please back your brother’s truck out of the driveway.” The truck was parked in FRONT of her dad’s car in the driveway. She backed the truck out, all right—and you guessed it—right back into the front end of her dad’s car. (You see, that’s the joy of having a best friend. I can use all examples of her lack of listening skills and use none of my own!)

But that’s just not reality. For me, listening and obeying are easy to do when they’re not joined together. It’s one thing to say to God, “I want to obey the input I hear from heaven. I want to follow your whispers every step of the way.” But it’s quite another thing to actually follow through.

Time and again, I have failed miserably in this regard. At various points along my life’s journey, I have purposed to be a “just say the word and I will do it” follower of God. It has been in those times that I was listening to God that I was able to do the thing he required of me. There are times when God yells and there are times when God whispers. “God yelling” is easy to hear, but what about the “God whisper”?

**I. What does it mean to lead a God whisper-led life?**

Pope Paul VI said, “Of all of human activities, man’s listening to God is the supreme act of his reasoning and will.”

And in Mark 4:24 (ESV) we read:

*And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.”*

[Proverbs 2:1-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+2%3A1-5&version=ESV) (ESV) says,

*1 My son,* ***if*** *you receive my words  
    and treasure up my commandments with you,  
2making your ear attentive to wisdom  
    and inclining your heart to understanding;  
3yes,* ***if*** *you call out for insight  
    and raise your voice for understanding,  
4****if*** *you seek it like silver  
    and search for it as for hidden treasures,  
5****then*** *you will understand the fear of the Lord  
    and* ***find*** *the knowledge of God.*

Did you catch the pattern? **IF** we receive His words, learn them, listen to Him, humble our hearts, ask for insight, cry out for wisdom, **THEN**…we will understand, and we will find God. Understanding God always comes out of obedience to Him.

James 1:22 (ESV) says, *“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, thereby deceiving yourselves.”*

Paul reminds us in Romans 10:17 (HCSB) that *“Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ,”* which emphasizes the hearing of the word in salvation. Again, Paul emphasizes the need for the preaching of the word if people are to hear and respond in faith to the gospel in Romans 10:14.

David underscores the significant difference between the general revelation of God in nature and his special revelation in the Scriptures in [Psalm 19](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Ps.+19) and dedicates himself to use words that please the Lord. He concludes his psalm with the prayer,

*“May my words and my thoughts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my sheltering rock and my redeemer”* (v.14, NET).

Jesus concludes his exhortation to the churches with this command, *“The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7). It comes as no surprise then to hear the admonition throughout the Scriptures that people are to hear what God has to say. The ear—whether the physical ear hearing the word preached or spoken, or the spiritual “ear” taking to heart the word of God—is used frequently throughout Scripture in God’s communications with people.

**II. God speaks, man listens.**

God takes the initiative in approaching man and speaking to him. God is, of course, the one who created the ear. He has a right to ask us to hear him when he speaks.

This has always fascinated me. [Personal illustration] My husband was born deaf in his left ear. By the way, he named that his, “mother-in-law ear.” I asked him once why he always stood on her right. He didn’t answer, which of course, was to his great benefit. In truth, he adored his mother-in-law, but his left ear was not going to work, no matter what man did to fix it.

[Personal illustration] My best friend growing up was a girl named Jodi. She was born 100% deaf. We couldn’t have any kind of conversation until I learned American Sign Language. And so I did, because I wanted to talk to her. Then one day, I had the privilege of singing AND signing in her wedding. On one even more important day, years later, Jodi accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior. And she said to me, “Although I still cannot hear with my ears, I can now hear quite well with my heart, and my heart hears the voice of Jesus.”

The psalmist writes, *“Does the one who makes the human ear not hear? Does the one who forms the human eye not see?”* ([Psalm 94:9](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Ps.+94%3A9)). God made the ear of man to hear his word, and it is as if God has an ear to hear man’s prayers to him in turn. From the beginning, God calls man to hear him. It is God’s call that inaugurates salvation history, when he calls Adam ([Genesis 3:8](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Gen.+3%3A8)), and Noah ([Genesis 6:13-21](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Gen.+6%3A13-21)), and Abram ([Genesis 12:1-3](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Gen.+12%3A1-3)). Abram responds to God’s word in faith by obeying the call of God, *“and it was credited to him as righteousness”* ([Romans 4:3](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Rom.+4%3A3)).

So, too, with David; after God establishes his everlasting covenant with David by promising him a seed (the Lord Jesus Christ), King David responds in faith, praying, *“So now, O LORD God, make this promise you have made about your servant and his family a permanent reality”* ([2 Samuel 7:25](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Sam.+7%3A25)). And God did indeed: His Son, our Savior, his sacrifice, our Messiah, God’s grace, our gain, blood stains, our white robe exchange.

**III.God hears and answers our prayers.**

*“Call on me in prayer and I will answer you. I will show you great and mysterious things which you still do not know about”* ([Jeremiah 33:3](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Jer.+33%3A3)).

Where would we be if God did not have “ears”? What would life be like if he did not hear us when we called out to him? The Scriptures are full of promises that the Lord will hear our prayers and answer them. Through Isaiah the Lord promises, *“Before they even call out I will respond; while they are still speaking I will hear”* ([Isaiah 65:24](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Isa.+65%3A24)).

The ear of the Lord promises not only that he hears his people’s prayers, but also that he graciously and lovingly answers them for their own good ([Romans 8:28](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Rom.+8%3A28)). God’s ear therefore points to his omniscience AND his unfailing love for us.

Psalm 8:3-4 says,

*“When I look up at the heavens, which your fingers made, and see the moon and stars, which you set in place, of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them? Of what importance is mankind that you should pay attention to them?”*

Who are we that God should hear our prayers? He made the heavens and the earth by the word of his power. He sustains the universe. He is righteous and holy. He is the God of the nations.

Why would he listen to any one of us? Because he loves us with *‘hesed’* love. *Hesed* love is translated as “unfailing love,” “steadfast love,” “lovingkindness,” and “goodness” or “mercy.” This love saves and forgives us, sanctifies us, and provides for us. This is the love that allows us to call God “our Father,” for it places us in God’s family. And it is because of this love (and not because of anything good in us) that God hears us when we call on him.

God responds with his forgiveness and grace. Jesus Christ, as our great high priest, seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, is also an expression of divine love. While God’s love for the world is evidenced in his sending his Son to die for us ([John 3:16](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/John+3%3A16)), his love for believers is demonstrated in Christ’s role as our advocate with the Father. *“But if anyone does sin,”* John tells us, *“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One”* ([1 John 2:1](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/1+Jn.+2%3A1)). Christ’s role as our advocate is one dimension of his function as our great high priest who “always lives to intercede for” us ([Hebrews 7:25](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Heb.+7%3A25)). We need an advocate and we need a Savior because we will sin. Christ’s defense of us before the Father when we confess our sin is one more expression of his love for us.

**Conclusion:**

How does God’s special love relate to us as Christians in the twenty-first century? We are not one of the patriarchs or kings of old; we are not Abrahams, Moses’, or Davids. Will God’s ear be open to us? I can tell you from experience that it is. God remains true to his character in this; he still loves his people and he still hears and answers their prayers. He answers the sinner’s prayer for salvation in ([Romans 10:13](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Rom.+10%3A13)), and he answers the Christian’s prayer of repentance ([1 John 1:9](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/1+Jn.+1%3A9)). He works all things together for his glory and the good of his people in ([Romans 8:28](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Rom.+8%3A28)). In all of these important matters, he hears our prayers and answers them graciously.

What does God’s open ear mean to the believer today? It means that God is faithful in all things and that we can trust him entirely. [Psalm 5](http://net.bible.org/#!bible/Psalm+5) shows us the pattern. David begins by asking God to hear his prayers (vv. 1-3), and he ends with the assurance that God hears and answers his prayers:

*Hear my cry, O God,  
  listen to my prayer;  
Lead me to the rock  
    that is higher than I.* (Psalm 61:1-2, ESV)

Abraham Lincoln said, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go.”

Bill Hybels gives this challenge: “You can *choose* today to be a just-say-the-word kind of follower, someone who jumps at the chance to obey the divine whispers sent straight from heaven to your upturned ear. You can *choose* to live with an increased awareness of those whispers, an expanded heart to follow through and an enhanced eternity because of it. You can *choose* to take God at his word—that he has spiritual goodness and blessing in store for you, when you surrender to *all* of his ways.”

In the words of Samuel Logan Brengle, “Seek him with all your heart, and you shall find him; you shall indeed, for God says so, and he is waiting to give himself to you.”

God’s communication with us demands a response from us; we must listen and choose to obey or disobey. The choice is ours. God speaks. Even with just a whisper. God measures our response in obedience. What is God asking of you today? I don’t know the answer to that question. I only know that he is speaking. The question is, are you listening and will you respond to him today?