



How God Speaks!
by Valleta Lanier

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Chapter One • INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two • A PERSONAL CALL

Chapter Three • HOW GOD SPEAKS

Chapter Four • ANSWER GOD'S VOICE

Chapter Five • IDENTIFY YOUR CALL

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Chapter One • INTRODUCTION

Many Christians are in confusion today because they are not sure how to hear God's voice. Many doubt that God will speak to them, and others are not sure how to determine if they are hearing God's voice, or their own thoughts.

In this book I will share with you a few times that God spoke to me, and then look at the simple acronym below, developed by my husband, Gary Lanier, founder/pastor of Grace Place International, as a guide for hearing God's voice:

God will speak to you through –

WORD – The written Word of God.

OTHERS – People God sends to you.

REVELATION – A message or insight from the Holy Spirit.

DREAMS OR VISIONS – Something given by the Holy Spirit.

SITUATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE - Something you are going through.

I trust, by the time you come to the end of the book, you will be experiencing, and enjoying, hearing God's voice.

Chapter Two • A PERSONAL CALL

How can you KNOW that God is calling you? Will He make His plan known to you? YES! God is not silent. Let me share with you how I heard God calling me.

When I was a young girl, 12 years of age, I heard the call. It was God speaking me to believe in Jesus, His Son. I was sitting close to the aisle, in a pew three-fourths of the way back in the congregation of First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas. I can remember my heart beating loudly in my throat, as I realized who Jesus was, what He had done for me, and that I needed Him. I slowly got up from my seat and made, what seemed like, one of the longest walks of my young life. All alone, except for the presence and prompting voice of the Holy Spirit, I answered the call. Jesus became my Savior.

About one year later, now seated on the second row of this great church, I heard God's voice again. It was a wonderful evening, full of the excitement of God's energy. From my second row view I watched and listened to a great Evangelist, Angel Martinez, stir up the Spirit of God. My little heart was full of love for God and my Savior.

Toward the end of the evening, I listened carefully as the Evangelist instructed everyone to bow their heads for the time of God's invitation. Softly the piano played in the background. My eyes were tightly shut, just as he had instructed, and all the adults seated around me were quiet. Suddenly, from over my left shoulder, I heard a hushed

voice say, “*Valleta*”. Quickly I opened my eyes, head still bowed, and looked at the man sitting on my left side. I didn’t know him. Did he know me? Was he whispering my name for some reason? I looked closer. His eyes were tightly shut. He was not talking to me. I closed my eyes.

Suddenly I heard it again, from the same direction, “*Valleta*”, the voice whispered. I thought that it must be someone behind me. I quickly turned to see who was calling my name. As I turned to look, all I could see were adults, none that I knew, with eyes closed. All were quiet. No one even noticed me and no one was talking to me. I was confused. Who was calling my name?

I closed my eyes again, and then, for the third time I heard, “*Valleta*”. I opened my eyes to look at the great Evangelist, who by now was praying with people that had come to the front for prayer. No, he was not calling my name. My heart began to pound in my throat. I recognized this kind of pounding. It was what God did when He was talking to you! Could it be? Was God talking to me? I thought He had already done that. And I had answered His call. What could He be wanting?

Slowly I rose to my feet. I didn’t know what to do. There was only one thing I was sure of... I had heard someone calling me by name. It wasn’t the people around me and it wasn’t the Evangelist. I knew it was God.

Now I was at the front. I felt so small and everything seemed so big – the church, the front, the evangelist. He was walking toward me. I didn't know if I could talk with my heart still beating so hard in my throat. I heard him ask me, in his heavy Spanish accent, full of broken English, *“Why have you come?”*. I was amazed to hear myself saying, *“Someone called my name, three times.”*

I turned to look at the second row pew, where all the adults still sat with heads bowed. Angel Martinez listened attentively as a young girl explained hearing the voice of God, and then gently told me how another young child named Samuel, a long time ago, heard God call him by name also. He caringly prayed for me to say *“Yes”* to the call of God for my life.

It took many years for me to fully understand what happened that day. I had heard the voice of God calling me. It would not be the last time that I would hear the call. I finally grew to recognize the voice of God in my life.

In 1971 God brought a wonderful person into my life, Gary Lanier, a gifted Christian music composer. In 1972 we married. We both loved the Lord and were committed to serve Him with our lives. Gary was a Staff Writer for Crescendo Music Publishing in Dallas, Texas and God was opening doors for his music to be published.

One day, in 1973, while taking a lunch break from work at home, quite unexpectedly God spoke to me again. In the quietness of the

moment, I heard the voice of God, talking to me inside. He said one thing... *“I want you to help take Gary’s music around the world.”* Immediately I found myself on the floor, arms stretched out to God, realizing something life-changing had just happened. I said one thing to God... *“Yes”*.

In that moment, as in the other times when God spoke and I was willing to answer *“Yes”*, something was planted in my heart. The first time, the life of Jesus Christ was planted in me. The second time, as a young girl, the love for serving God was planted. And in 1973, the love for Gary’s music, and God’s call on his life, was planted in my heart. In those few seconds, God placed a lifetime calling in me to help Him, and Gary, fulfill the plan God had to touch lives through the music that would flow from Gary’s pen.

My calling from God has taken on many “faces” throughout the years. But always, it has been to fulfill the purpose God has for Gary’s music. In the early years, as Gary traveled across the country, I became secretary, manager, and booking agent! And in the lonely times of being apart, it was the reminder from God of a call in my heart that kept me, and Gary, going. During years of church staff positions I became Drama Director and Choir member. As God expanded our ministry to publishing I have the privilege to be the Director of Publications for our own publishing company.

But through all the years, what has sustained me to keep moving forward was the call I heard from God in 1973... *“I want you to help*

take Gary's music around the world." In this simple statement God told me several things... I will be walking by Gary's side in ministry. God has a great plan for Gary's music. God wants to touch the world with Gary's music.

When you say "Yes" to God, it changes your heart forever! Saying "Yes" to the call of God begins with His loving voice calling you to receive the gift of His Son, Jesus. Then it becomes a lifestyle. It can happen many times in the life of a Believer. I truly believe that we are all called by God, and He has a plan for our lives that fits into His master plan for The Kingdom.

It is my prayer that, through this simple book, you will come to recognize the voice of God, and answer "Yes" to His call. Let's learn more about how to hear His voice.

Chapter Three • HOW GOD SPEAKS

To know God's calling for your life, you must hear God. God can speak to you in many ways. The Bible is full of many accounts of God speaking to people, and He has not changed. He has placed His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, within each Believer as His voice. He is creative about how He speaks, and never limits Himself in ways to gain your attention.

As I mentioned before, we will be using the following acronym, and I believe it will help you easily remember how to hear God's voice.

WORD – The written Word of God.

OTHERS – People God sends to you.

REVELATION – A message or insight from the Holy Spirit.

DREAMS OR VISIONS – Something given by the Holy Spirit.

SITUATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE - Something you are going through.

Let's look a little closer at each of these.

WORD – The written Word of God.

God will always speak to you through His written Word, the Bible. This is probably the most familiar way that God speaks to each of us. We know that the Bible is not just dead words written on a page. The words in the Bible are alive, because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and they continually breathe life into all that read and believe.

The Bible is the total of God's words that He wanted written down for all mankind. The Greek word for the written word of God is

logos. It simply means, *something said, including the thought*. Some additional words that define *logos* are: *topic, account, communication, doctrine, matter, mouth, preaching, question, speaker, speech, talk, tidings, treatise, word, work*. Sometimes a *logos* word is repeated through communication by means of a preacher or speaker, as you can see from the above words. The following is a verse that uses the word of God as *logos*:

And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word (logos) of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. Acts 13:5

Throughout God's Word, you will hear His direction for your life and ministry. It may be through a story from the Old Testament, or the Gospels, about someone that God spoke to. Their story will inspire you to fulfill all that God has for you. Or, it may be from words of instruction given to Timothy, a young minister seeking to serve the Lord, by Paul.

God will speak to you as you read His Word, and you can be sure you are reading words of Truth. Always seek answers from the Word. It is the only sure source of Truth.

OTHERS – People God sends to you.

The written Word of God is not the only way to hear from God. His spoken word to you, in the Greek, is called *rhema*. It simply means, *an utterance*. What does the word utterance mean to you? Some

would say an audible voice. Think for a moment about your thoughts. Do you hear them? Of course you do. If you are a child of God, the Holy Spirit lives in you. His desire is to teach you and reveal to you the things of God. The enemies of God (Satan and his demons) want to steal, kill, and destroy you. In your mind you are going to hear thoughts from three different sources: 1) yourself; 2) the Holy Spirit and; 3) the enemies of God. God, through His Holy Spirit, wants you to discern where these thoughts are coming from. He will utter to you in your thoughts with a *rhema* word! The following verse is an example of God's word used as *rhema*:

For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word (rhema) of the Lord abides forever. "And this is the word which was preached to you.

1 Peter 1: 24 & 25

Throughout the Bible, accounts of history, and modern day reports, we see God using people to inspire greatness in others. God can also speak a *rhema* word to you through people.

It is important to surround yourself with the right people. The first chapter of Ephesians, verse 11, tells us that even God has a counsel! It's a counsel of three, made up of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit! Listen to people that are truly God seekers, and have your best interest at heart. These may not be "yes" people! They will probably challenge you to be the best you can be. They will see the hand of God in your life, and encourage you to stay the course.

Always be listening for the possibility of the voice of God to speak through people. Sometimes God speaks in unusual ways, and when you least expect it. It can be a word of confirmation, that encourages you. However, a word of warning... always consider what others say carefully. Be sure it doesn't contradict the Bible, and always pray about it. Never step out on words from others, until you have peace with God about the direction you are going.

REVELATION – A message or insight from the Holy Spirit.

God gave every Believer the Holy Spirit, so that He can talk to you. Spend some time reading John chapters 14 and 16. These are beautiful verses where Jesus is telling His disciples that He is sending them a Companion. He says that the Holy Spirit will help them remember everything He taught them. And, the Holy Spirit would reveal to them everything they needed to know about the things of God!

Wow! That's quite a promise. And, as always, Jesus fulfilled His promise. In Acts chapter 2 we have the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In verse 38 & 39 Peter tells everyone that all who believe will receive the same gift of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful plan God had.

The Bible goes on to tell us in 1 Corinthians 2: 12 & 13 that we have the Spirit of God, and He will teach us the things of God in spiritual thoughts and spiritual words.

One of the most powerful and consistent ways that God speaks to you is through the Holy Spirit, who lives in your heart. He speaks directly to your spirit, so that you can know God, and His plans for you.

Sometimes it is hard to understand the workings of God. He loves you, wants to be close to you, so He has a plan to live in you, through the Holy Spirit. When you read His Word, or think you hear His direction through others, it is the Holy Spirit revealing to you.

So, what does God sound like? Is it an audible voice? How can you be sure it is the voice of God you are hearing? Stay in fellowship with Him. Seek Him. Talk to Him. He will talk back! He sounds different to everyone. Sometimes people hear an audible voice, or a whisper like I did. Other times the “voice” sounds like their own thoughts. Learn to listen to how God is speaking to you. If you know He spoke to you at sometime in the past, remember it and learn from it. Most of the time, He will communicate to you in a way that you understand. He designed a unique plan especially for you, and He is speaking through His Spirit, to reveal it. It is not something He wants to hide from you. Trust Him, and expect to hear!

DREAMS OR VISIONS – Something given by the Holy Spirit.

Some people today do not believe that God speaks through dreams and visions any longer. If you are one of those, that’s O. K.! I know God loves to speak to His children, but if your belief system is not

in Him speaking through dreams and visions, He will find another way to communicate to you.

I believe that God still uses dreams and visions to speak. I base that belief on Acts 2:17, and the accounts in the New Testament of continuation of dreams and visions into the Church age, as with Peter and Paul.

A dream is God communicating with your spirit and soul while you are asleep, and vision is God's unique way of allowing you to "see" something while you are awake.

Sometimes what we place in our mind, or stomach, the night before can produce a dream that absolutely does not come from God! I like to say some dreams are because of "*too many tacos*"!

It is important to meditate on dreams and visions for awhile, and perhaps seek counsel. God has gifted people among His children that can help with interpretation. Or, He can speak to you about the meaning of the dream or vision.

Remember, God wants to speak to you. He is a unique, creative God. He is the Creator. Don't limit the power of God in your life. Let me encourage you to open you heart and mind to the possibility of God's voice coming through dreams and visions.

SITUATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE - Something you are going through.

The last way, but probably the most everyday way that God speaks, is through your situation or circumstance that you are going through.

God is always using every opportunity to gain your attention. The Bible says to “*acknowledge Him in all your ways.*” That means He wants to be a part of your everyday life. God will speak to you through the everyday things of life that you are going through! Be listening!

Wow! God is full of variety in how He speaks. I’m sure there are other ways, too! But this simple acronym, W – O – R – D – S, should be an easy way to remember that God is always speaking! Now it is important for you to listen, and answer!

Chapter Four • ANSWER GOD’S VOICE

It is important to write down the times God spoke to you, and how you answered. Be honest! Did you say, “No!”, “Maybe!”, or “Yes!”?

MY GOD CALLING JOURNAL

TO BE BORN-AGAIN

God spoke to me on (date) _____

I received Jesus as my Savior on (date or age)

FOR MINISTRY

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He Said...

I Answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

God spoke to me on (date) _____

He said...

I answered...

Chapter Five • IDENTIFY YOUR CALL

Your call from God starts with HEARING GOD, then ANSWERING GOD. The next step is to IDENTIFY YOUR CALL. Why is this important? To keep you focused!

As I have mentioned before, Gary and I have been serving our Heavenly Father for over 35 years! In all of those years, the purpose of our calling has not changed... *“to reach the world with Gary’s music”*. However, HOW we do that is continually changing. Some may look at the different venues we walk in and think that our calling has changed, but it hasn’t. I like to say that, *“God never changes, but how He does things is continually changing”*. If you look at the miracles of Jesus in the Bible, most of them did not happen in the same way. Jesus was called by God to perform miracles here on earth, and He received His instructions about how to accomplish them from His Father! God is continually being creative about HOW He accomplishes His calling in lives. He did that when Jesus was touching people, and He does that in each of His children.

So, in identifying your calling, keep in mind that HOW God accomplishes it may change through the years. Learn to be flexible! God wants you to move and flow with Him!

There are three things to consider to ID Your Call...

What is God Saying?

Look back over your GOD CALLING JOURNAL and meditate on what God has been saying about what He wants you to do. Remember the acronym W.O.R.D.S. Be specific, and write down what God has been saying here:

What is in Your Heart?

Sometimes we have the concept that, whatever God has called us to do, will go contrary to what we want to do! Perhaps that is true, if you are in rebellion to God's plan for your life. But, since you are reading this book, it is my assumption that you are serious about seeking God's plan for your life, and that is not rebellion! So, what makes us think that our heart is not a good measure for identifying God's call?

My belief is, if you are honestly seeking God, He will place a desire in your heart for His Kingdom plan! Psalm 37:4 says, “*Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.*”

What is the desire of your heart in serving God? Write it down here:

Who is Listening?

God will give you an audience to fulfill your calling. Through the years, your audience may change. But God’s purpose in using you to change lives for His Kingdom requires an audience. So, who is your audience? Who is listening to you? Write it down here:

Seek Help!

If you are having trouble identifying your call, seek help from someone you trust. That might be your spouse, close friend, pastor, or

professional person. Just be sure that, whoever is counseling you, has an active relationship with the Lord.

I trust this book will allow you to hear God's voice, answer His call, and clearly identify how He wants you to be a part of building His great Kingdom, while you are here on earth.