

Chapter One

Come and Listen

Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Matthew 17:1-2)

What a breakthrough! Peter had finally recognized that Jesus really was the Christ of God – and it led to Jesus taking him up a high mountain to pray, along with two other favored disciples, James and John.

The three of them must have wondered what the trip was all about. If Jesus was going to teach and feed the multitudes again, then where were all the crowds? Why bother traipsing up a mountainside when there were so many needy people in the towns and villages clamoring for attention?

They had no idea they were about to witness something still more wonderful than when Heaven had opened at Jesus' baptism.¹ The Father was about to reconfirm the seal of approval He had previously placed on his Son. The appearance of His face changed, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light, as bright as a flash of lightning. Moses and Elijah conversed with Jesus – and in a moment the Father would speak from heaven.

The call to come higher

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” While he was speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” (Matthew 17:3-7)

The Cross was already beginning to cast its long shadow when Jesus led Peter, James and John up the high mountain. Knowing the difficult path that lay ahead, Jesus Himself would have been strengthened by this experience – but the word from Heaven was primarily for the benefit of the disciples.

Notice particularly what the Father did not say, ‘Pray to Him,’ because Jesus had already taught them how to pray. He said, ‘Listen to Him.’ He would not have said this had it not been possible for them to do so.

For Reflection and Prayer

*Lord, on the slopes of Mount Hermon
You showed the disciples how much You love Your Son.
We heed the words the Father spoke from Heaven,
And let the realization of who You really are
penetrate still deeper in our heart.
At any moment, Lord,
Your power and presence can break through.
So suddenly Your glory came:
One moment a bare mountain,
And then the veil parted as Heaven came to earth.
Shekinah glory flooded the mountainside,
Fills both Heaven and Earth.
You are surrounded with glory, Lord Jesus –
And so by Your mercy are we.*

The Lord confides in those who fear Him

The Lord confides in those who fear Him.
He takes the upright into His confidence.
(Psalm 25:14, Proverbs 3:32)

In the midst of a world where so many who use the name of God as little more than a swear word, can you sense how precious it is to the Lord when He finds someone – better still a whole fellowship – willing to share the things that are on His heart?

As we turn away from life's many distractions and 'follow Jesus up the mountainside' – even by taking a few minutes out of a busy schedule – we become more aware of Heaven's perspective, and are better equipped to face life's challenges.

Just as we may share our greatest joys with those we trust and feel most comfortable with, so Jesus took 'the inner three' (Peter, James and John) up the mountain in order that they should see Him as He really was: the Lord of Glory. This was doubly important, because the forthcoming ordeal might appear to make Jesus look like nothing more than a battered victim.

Just as parents long for the day when they can take their children more fully into their confidence, so the Lord wants to share how He feels with us – whether about personal, political, spiritual or environmental issues.

'You are those who have stood by me in my trials,' Jesus assured His disciples, at what we now call the Last Supper. 'I have eagerly desired to eat this meal with you.'² He grieves when such closeness with His people is missing.

In every century there have been those who have loved Jesus with all their hearts. One such was Margery Kempe. The Lord spoke often to this woman, who gave her all to Him. Back in the fourteenth century she wrote, ‘In my soul I heard Jesus say, “I ask no more of you than that you love Me as I love you. I would take you by the hand so that people know that you are My friend. I would speak to you more often than you will let Me.”’ Would He not say something similar to us?

For Reflection and Prayer

At the height of the persecution in the Soviet Union, a man imprisoned for his faith penned a highly challenging note. Smuggled out of a concentration camp it reached believers in the West. ‘Yes,’ it read, ‘our main need *is* for prayer – but lead such lives that God can answer your prayers.’

*We agree together, Lord;
To do whatever it takes
To make us into people who lead such lives
That You can answer our prayers.*

One word from Heaven

In any situation we find ourselves in, it is good to ponder ‘What would Jesus do?’ It is even more prophetic to ask, ‘What are You *already* doing, Lord?’

If I had to select one verse to summarize the Lord Jesus’ ministry, it would be John 5:19 ‘I only do what I see my Father doing.’ Because Jesus listened constantly to the Still Small Voice, He knew what to do in any given situation. As a result, the blind saw and deaf heard.

The briefest word from Heaven can bring about the most far-reaching effects. When the Lord spoke on the road to Damascus, Saul the Persecutor became overnight a devoted follower of Christ. The Holy Spirit spoke again at Antioch,³ summoning Paul to his apostolic calling. Because the Lord spoke, and the disciples heeded the Still Small Voice, churches were planted wherever they went.

Only Eternity will reveal the full story of *whom* the Lord has spoken to, and *how* He has worked His purposes out. The most ordinary people have received the most surprising and challenging assignments.

Only the Lord knows, too, all the fruit that will come as a result of the words that He has spoken to you.

For Reflection and Prayer

Have you ever felt a bit disappointed by the disciples' reaction to the Transfiguration? Befuddled by sleep and decidedly fearful, they were desperate to preserve this remarkable moment. Peter's suggestion of building high altitude booths seems somewhat wooded, but when you consider what a decisive leader he became later on – and how slow we often are to respond to the Spirit's leading – our impatience disappears. We are meant to be at home in God's presence, but what He does will often take us by surprise.

The most important thing is to open ourselves to God's leading, and not to let fear in. He is not going to send us to darkest Peru. I made this point in a meeting once, and a lady put her hand up, 'He did!' she replied. Perhaps I should have said, 'He won't send us there unless it really is the best thing for both Him and us!'

*Lover of our souls, we come close now to listen.
We set ourselves to follow You
Up the mountainside.
It thrills Your heart
When we give You the love of ours.*

*Forgive us when we hold back, Lord.
Lead us further on and further in.
When we are caught up in Your presence,
How beautiful it is.
There is nowhere we would rather be.*

Word and Spirit in balance

Many years ago, Smith Wigglesworth declared that revival will come when God's people put sufficient emphasis on both Word and Spirit.

Precisely because the concept of listening to the Lord appears so experience oriented, we cannot stress too strongly from the outset that Word and Spirit *must* flow together. We are, in fact, only safe to embark on the highway of listening to the Still Small Voice if we are rooted in the Word.

Far more than through any other means of communication, it is by reading, studying and meditating on the Word of God that we hear the Still Small Voice. The only reason I am not devoting more space in this publication to this crucial topic is because other authors have covered the theme of biblical meditation so eloquently.

When Scripture 'lives' within our heart, it provides a bedrock of faith with which to meet life's many challenges. Just as many great musicians and actors claim they can only bring a piece of music or drama fully to life when they have committed it to memory, in much the same way the Word of God assumes new power and depth once it is stored in our heart.

Bishop Hans Lilje relates that it was the constant rehearsing of the Psalms and hymns he had learnt as a boy that saved his hope and sanity when the Nazis placed him in solitary confinement. Watchman Nee claimed the same after spending twenty-five years in prison undergoing extreme Communist indoctrination.

Most of us, if we are honest, could do a great deal more when it comes to developing these important aspects of Scriptural meditation and memorization. There are many underused 'channels' in our brain that we could so usefully fill with the Word of God!

For Reflection and Prayer
We praise You that Your Word is living and active;
Help us to hear You through it,
Now wild and disturbing, now calm and reassuring.
Let it enter the secret places of our heart,
Dispersing fear and bringing light and love.
Take it deeper into the pores of our heart,
To shape our thinking and check our impulses.

Do not limit God!

'If we are careful not to limit Him, He shows up as the God who answers by fire. He sends His presence, His healing and His deliverance power.' (Suzanne Pillans)

Suzanne Pillans is a horse riding instructor who lives in Oxfordshire. Whenever circumstances permit, she responds to the Lord's call to preach the gospel and journeys forth to the ends of the earth.⁴

Her first overseas work was in Malawi. Despite being poorly when she was preaching, she saw many people accept Jesus into their hearts, and receive His healing in their bodies. From there she went to preach the gospel on the Mozambique border. She was somewhat disappointed when fewer than twenty-five people showed up at the meeting.

'Don't limit God!' she reminded herself, for that was the phrase the Lord had been burning on her heart for the past few weeks. She was somewhat prepared, therefore, when the Lord said to her, 'Invite them to bring the sickest person in the village to the evening meeting. Let them come and watch Jesus heal them.'

That night the church was packed as the villagers brought someone along who had not been out of bed for two years and who could neither stand nor walk. 'Sickness, leave in Jesus' Name,' Suzanne commanded. 'Body, be healed in Jesus' Name. Strength, come back in Jesus' Name. In the Name of Jesus, stand up!'

The lady stood to her feet and walked. 'Now,' Suzanne commanded, 'in the Name of Jesus, run down the aisle and back again!' The lady looked at Suzanne in horror. 'In Jesus Name you can do it,' she reassured her. The lady took off and ran down the aisle and back again.

As a result of seeing this miraculous healing, all the people present became Christians, and continued worshipping the Lord until three o'clock in the morning.

The following day, two deaf and mute girls received Jesus into their lives and were also miraculously healed. They are now learning to speak.

None of these events would have come about had Suzanne settled for the self-evident 'fact' that African villagers do not turn out en masse to listen to little known visiting female evangelists. It was because she listened to the Still Small Voice that the Lord Jesus was so immensely glorified.

Imagine how grateful you would be if you had been that sick person, and someone had come along with the spiritual authority to make you better. That is how important the theme of listening to the Lord really is.

Beyond the miracles themselves, God has a message for the Church. The Lord showed Suzanne that we in the West are *limiting* Him by our unbelief, our lack of prayer and by putting other things before Christ.

In a vision, she saw Judas Iscariot receiving the thirty pieces of silver. At that moment, he loved the silver more than Jesus. Too many of us today love our money more than Jesus, and our homes, holidays, jobs, promotions, sport and life-styles. Some of us even love our ministries more than Jesus. All of this hinders the Lord from moving in revival power.

The Lord told Suzanne to call God's people to repentance. Everywhere she goes, she preaches this message. Entire congregations have come to repentance, often with tears.

The depth of our repentance will vitally determine how far the Lord can take us as individuals and as fellowships. As we yield our lives and agendas to Him, the word of the Lord comes and He is free to move in power. With less of us and more of Him, it is so much easier for Him!

For Reflection and Prayer

Show us ways in which we are limiting You, Lord.

Lead us into a deeper repentance,

So that we may hear what You are saying.

Determination that defeats distractions

Did you ever see two romantically-challenged people who were reluctant to spend time together/ If Jesus took time away from the crowds to climb a mountain and go 'on retreat,' then we must be willing to take similar measures.

It is not only on mountaintops or in special meetings that we hear the Still Small Voice. It often happens when we are at our most relaxed. ‘Fallow’ times are so conducive for promoting intimacy with the Lord, and for receiving His ideas, that there is everything to be said for deliberately setting aside times when we switch off our over-analytical brain and *let* the Holy Spirit commune with us.

Simple steps can make our listening environment more conducive. For example, dedicating a corner of the house as a place where we seek the Lord regularly will make us want to stay there longer in His presence.

Nevertheless, listening to the Lord requires discipline and dedication as well as inspirational settings. If we need to stay up late, or rise early in order to obtain the space and seclusion we crave, then we are following in the Master’s footsteps.

It is precious to spend time with the Lord at an hour when there are fewer distractions around. The more we use odd moments during the day to seek His face, the more easily we will recognize the Still Small Voice calling us to pray when we wake unexpectedly, or when He points our attention in a certain direction.

For Reflection and Prayer

*Lord Jesus,
You share the heart-beat of Heaven
With those who hunger and thirst for Your presence.
Come, Light that knows no night,
Infuse and quicken our dull and listless minds.
Let love push back the frontiers of our shame,
And trust grow strong where guilt once reigned.
Bit turmoil cease and hope shine through
The clutter of vain and empty thoughts –
For this makes room for You to work
And draws us close to Your heart.*

¹ Matthew 3:16-17

² Luke 22:15, 28f

³ Acts 9, 13:2

⁴ Material in this section has been used with Suzanne’s permission. See *Dare to Step out in Faith* (New Wine, 2006) and *Miracles of the Master* (Harrison House, 2006)