

Voice Activated

Turning Up God's Volume

July 19, 2026



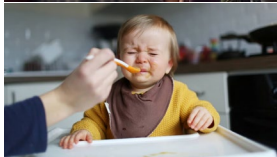
Today we're learning to turn up the volume on the only voice with value. Cuz everything on earth is screaming for our attention but the *life* we get to *live out* all depends on the *lord* we *listen to*. And the *lord* we listen to *all depends* on *how loud* they're *allowed* – to speak! Which means we need to *analyze* who we *authorize* or we'll *jeopardize* everything! So, **who's the loudest voice in your life?**



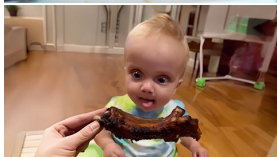
And be honest! We're *not* talking about your *future life's aspirations* – we're talking about your *present-day operations*. Cuz we can't make a change until we acknowledge our current *course* – and **we can't let the Lord lead until we admit He's hard to hear!** Which He is!



[And Jesus explains *why*.] Why is My language *not* clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. – John 8:43 NIV



And here we go – this is *classic Jesus*: **He loves to say challenging things to challenge how we hear!** Cuz, the Pharisees gotta be like, “Uh... You *know* we can hear You, right? *You're* like the only one talking...” – to which I imagine Jesus *winking* at His *disciples* to remind *them of His style*: **if something sounds untrue – it's usually a clue to question yourself.** And since *literal volume wasn't* the problem, His listeners are led to *consider* if He meant something *else* was obstructing *understanding* – *which it was!* Cuz just a *few verses* later He *reveals* how it's a *heart* problem, saying:



Whoever *belongs* to God *hears* what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God. – John 8:45-47 NIV



The *language* isn't hard to *hear*, **our problem is the truth is hard to swallow!**

For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food. – Job 34:3 NIV

And the same way *toddlers* pitch a *fit* when *meals* are made to keep them healthy *over happy* – **our heart won't welcome what it doesn't want to hear!** So, we try to *spit out* the hard truths God speaks in our lives so we can *swap it out* with the sweet stuff we already *want*. And to avoid *conviction*, we **convince ourselves that our wish was His command.** And that's why Jeremiah says:

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. – Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

So, **even devoted Christians need to be careful when ascribing whose words they heard.** Cuz we can be a little too *eager* to give the *feelings* of our *flesh* a *heavenly* accent – attaching **“God told me”** or **“The Spirit said”** to the *self-serving* words of a *deceitful* heart. So, don't *mishear* me, God *absolutely* speaks into every believer's life – but, *confirming* it's Him we heard is *critical!* In fact, *it's commanded*:

Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. – 1 John 4:1 NIV



So here's the deal: Scripture warns us *not* test God – on *our* terms; [MAT 4:7] but it also *commands* us to test God – on *His* terms! [MAL 3:10] And *that's* cuz **our tests make God earn our trust but His tests make us learn to trust.** Get it? He'd love to give you *everything* you *really* want – but *getting* it all on *our* terms would make us spoiled and *self-centered* – while getting it on *His* terms makes us *grateful* and *trusting*. So **we shouldn't tell Him to verify His voice, we should seek Him to verify His voice.**

And *seeking* Him *always* starts with the *Scripture* we know *He spoke* – to *learn and trust* the way *He speaks and leads*. And *that* was the point of last week's *Hindsight Foresight*: even when it's *hard* to hear exactly *why* God would *guide* us into a *pit* – if we *trust* our trials to *teach* us to hear His voice, then like Joe, our *ears* will *hear* when *He* shares the *happy ending*. But God's voice *didn't* take Joseph *straight* to *power*; *first* it led him to *learn* the *humility* and *patience* Joe needed to *trust* and *follow*. And since his *faith* came into *focus* as his *flesh* got *out of the way* – his *heart* got *trained* to hear God's guidance, even if it had to *wait* for *hindsight*! Cuz every voice leaves a *trail* that's easy to see *once* it's been *walked*. And **God's Word shows us how He speaks but our walk shows us how to hear!**

So, if we want to walk the *walk* that *tunes* our *ears* to make God's voice easier to *hear* – we can condense His Scriptural *examples* into a simple *equation*: **Aim + Attention = Amplification.** Cuz God's voice gets louder in *our* life when we seek to *strengthen* the *aim* and *attention* of our *conversation*.

And it all comes *down* to what comes *out of our mouths*. Cuz **our praise and worship is what decides our aim and attention.** They *correct* our *aim* by reminding us *who God is* and they *focus* our *attention* by reminding us *who God isn't*. Cuz *consistent* contact with His *real* character *amplifies* the *conversation* – not by making God literally *louder*, by making *false idols* completely *speechless*. Cuz **having the real relationship makes it impossible for our heart to trust a counterfeit.**

So, start with step *one*: **check your aim.** Cuz *aim* verifies the *identity* of the God you're talking to. And even our most *sincere* praise can use God's name but still be aimed at an *idol of our heart*! Cuz if the "*lord*" I'm talking to exists to *only approve* my politics, *fix* my family, *bless* my plans, and *never correct* me – it's *easy* to *worship* him as Jesus, but I'm really aimed at *myself* doing a God *impression*!

[The way Micah says we like it] If a liar and deceiver comes and says, "I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer," that would be just the prophet for this people! – Micah 2:11 NIV

[But Ezekiel reminds us what that means] Have you not seen *false* visions and uttered *lying* divinations when you say, "The LORD declares," though I have not spoken? – Ezekiel 13:7 NIV

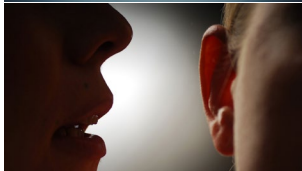


Ouch! That's a convicting reminder – cuz it means we're **false prophets when we put our words in God's mouth.** And yet, it's *so easy* to do cuz our *appetite* for everything *earthly* is *so loud*, we *allow* ourselves to believe it *must* be God! But, *just like that* – we've adjusted our aim cuz we get *excited* to worship a god who *strangely agrees* with everything I want!

But just like *postage*, **no prayer, praise or appeal can reach the right ears if it has the wrong address!**

But **praise and worship can recalibrate our aim every day**. Before I tell God *what I want*, worship reminds me *who He is*: “**You’re holy, You’re wise, You’re good, You’re God – and I’m not.**” So, when we *disagree* on where *my path should lead* I won’t be surprised – I’ll be *strengthened*; cuz it’s constant *agreement* that *should* make me *suspicious*. But, even *after* praise helps keep the *address* of my words *correct*, the *conversation* still *fails* if we don’t *listen*. So after fixing our *aim*, it’s time for step two: **we need to focus our attention!** Cuz like Timothy says, we’ve *all* got spiritual ADD:

[So,] To suit *their own* desires, [some people] will gather around them teachers to say what *their* itching ears *want* to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth. – 2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV



But notice that turning *away* from the truth means they *were* once turned *toward* it – so they *knew* better but didn’t *want* better! Cuz **when your heart’s not in a conversation, your mind wanders**. And that’s a problem, cuz *wandering attention* means an *aimless walk*. And if you’re *not* focused on *where* you’re walking and *why* – you’re susceptible to *every* desirable *distraction*. And if an idol *gets* your heart’s *attention* it’s just a matter of *time* before it gets your *worship*. Cuz **Attention creates affection. Affection produces allegiance. And allegiance demands obedience**. So, every *product, politician, and person* panders – to *capture!*

Don’t believe it? Social media exposed the *science!* And it’s the *same* three steps – but they’re just called *engagement, retention, and revenue*. Cuz like every earthly idol, the *algorithm* uses what *you want* to worship to *steal* your *attention* and make you a *slave*. Does your heart like a little *gossip*? Well you won’t believe what we caught *Jennifer Aniston* wearing – *click here!* Do you wish you had a better *body*? Well, we’re giving the first 100 people who *subscribe* a free *trial* of our new *muscle-building, hair-growing, wrinkle-smoothing, GLP-1, anti-depressant, snake-oil serum!*

Idols *don’t care* what they need to *say*, as long as it *captures* our *attention!* Cuz *they* already know, **our heart receives its orders from whatever receives its attention**. And it’s not just *people* and *products* – if our heart is set on *approval*, *approval* will tell us, “**Don’t admit that,**” and we’ll obey. Give *comfort* your *attention* and it’ll say, “**Avoid that conversation,**” and we’ll obey. Focus on *fear* and it’ll convince you to, “**Always assume the worst,**” so it stays in control! But *here’s* the *good news*: if *idols* can do it, *so can we!* We can use *our worship* to *reclaim* our *attention* and *choose* our lord!

[Cuz it goes both ways when Paul says] Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves *of the one you obey?* – Romans 6:16 NIV

Remember why Jesus said we couldn’t *hear* Him? *We weren’t His!* And He’s *right* – our hearts might *already* belong to *fashion, football, cars, computers, money, and even marriage* more than *Him!* And we *won’t* hear *His voice* until we shift *our attention* by being *deliberate* about *our worship!* Cuz worshipping the *real* God will *discipline* your heart to focus on His *real* voice long enough to finally *hear* where His plan *really leads!* And **the more attention He gets, the more hope fills our heart!**

[Cuz as Jesus says, only a *real* God can give a *real* reward, so] Consider carefully what *you hear* ... With the measure *you use*, it will be measured *to you*—and even more. – Mark 4:24 NIV

Jesus *isn't* saying we can *control* God's *speech*; He's teaching us we *can* control *its* *influence*. Cuz ***we authorize power when we vocalize approval*** – not cuz *His plan* had to meet *our terms* – but because *our plan* has to meet *His terms*. Otherwise, it's just us, *our terms*, and *our gods* in the end! Like *Israel* when they let *their idols drown out* God til *trouble* made them *cry out* to God – *who said*:

You have forsaken Me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble! – Judges 10:13-14 NIV

And I want you to *really hear that*: ***whatever we worship will be the savior we summon***. But *money* can't *forgive* us. *Approval* can't *resurrect* us. *Comfort* can't *carry* us. And *any* god created by *our heart* can't *guide* us beyond *itself*. Which leads to a *disturbing* thought that struck me one Sunday during *worship* – while I was *mouth*ing the words but *mentally* wandering: ***What if the volume you use to worship God down here – was the volume He uses to call you up there?!***



Imagine it: what if, when you opened your eyes *after death*, everything was dark and you knew you were in *trouble*? And what if *your worship* decided what *you could* hear on *the way to heaven* the *same* way it decided what you were *willing* to hear on *your way through life*?! Are you *happy* with *who's loudest* when you're trying to find your way? *Who* would *you* hear when you shout, ***“Which way do I go now?!”***

Is your TV yelling over everyone else cuz you couldn't get enough *Netflix* on *earth*? Are the *Seahawks* screaming for *your attention* the way *you did* on the Sunday *you skipped church*? How *loud* is *money* allowed to speak based on the *attention* and *importance* you gave it *in life*? How many *other lords* like *politics*, *popularity*, or *pleasure* are competing for your attention with the amplified voices *you enabled* – while *Jesus* is *mouth*ing the words, ***“Over here! You're almost home!”*** in the *exact same* way *you barely sang His praise at church*... Think about it...

Cuz I'm not saying God's love is measured in decibels or earned by singing – but I am saying ***how we hear is up to us***, and God *does* warn:

When I called, *they* did not listen; so when *they* called, I would not listen. – Zechariah 7:13 NIV

[And Jesus *does* say:] Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. [Not from a lack of *love* – but from a lack of *relationship*] – Matthew 10:32-33 NIV

Cuz while He'd *love* to take you home – when asked if *you* were ready, He'd *have* to say *He* never knew *you* – cuz *you* never *heard* Him over all the *other* gods that *had* your attention – even the ones *you called* Jesus... I gotta tell you – *these thoughts scared* the Jesus *into me*! Cuz the *question* may be *convicting* – but it's *critical* to this life *and* the next: ***what have you made loud enough to lead you?***

[Well, *forget it!*] Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. – Hebrews 3:7-8 NIV

Instead, *amplify His voice* with the *worship* that *softens your heart* to *hear* what *He* has to say! Cuz ***every single voice wants to be your lord – but every single day, it's up to you who gets heard.***

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.