



The Scroll

Spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping the People of God through the written word.

Guest Columnist—Hearing the Voice of God

Minister Felix Amenyo

“**C**all unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not,” Jeremiah 33:3.

At a time when external sources and our internal thoughts constantly influence us, it is crucial to pay attention to the voice of God. For most of our lives, we learn how to communicate. From uttering our first words as infants, we know how to form sentences and share our opinions. However, we must include a vital part of communication: hearing (listening to) the other person. When we pray, we concentrate on what to say and ask, subconsciously ignoring what the Spirit tells us. The Holy Spirit is here to help us sieve through the chaff of distractions and hear directly from God.

Hearing the voice of God comes with a responsibility. It is our duty to not only incorporate God’s instructions into our daily lives but to relay those messages to the people around us. Samuel received his calling at a very young age, and his first assignment terrified him. When God first called Samuel, he had no idea his entire life was about to change. He could not even perceive the voice of God. Luckily, he was ministering under the auspices of Eli, someone who was well acquainted with deciphering the voice of the Most High. Thus, Eli advised Samuel to respond to the voice when his name was called out again by saying, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,” 1 Samuel 3:9. To Samuel’s surprise, God gave him a prophecy that foretold the destruction of Eli’s

household. Nonetheless, he had to deliver the message to Eli the next day. Samuel’s ability to carry out this assignment eventually established him as a prophet of the Lord.

To discern the voice of God, we must be willing to accept the responsibility that comes with it. God entrusts His mission to us because He knows we can handle such tasks. Since God created us in His image and likeness, we have all the tools to carry out His prophetic mission. Sometimes, circumstances and life events make us wonder if we hear the right voice. This happens when we expect things to happen within our timeline. We make plans and draw out schemes. Our human instincts influence our decision-making process, but when we factor God into those thoughts, we will make room for the voice of God in moments of uncertainty.

Charles Spurgeon said:

“Sometimes God sends His love letters in black-edged envelopes. He allows us to taste the bitterness of want and the desolation of bereavement. If you have lived many years, you have passed through the narrows. We have all been there. It looks as if things have got out of hand, and somehow or other, we have been forgotten. When there is no one at hand to say it to you, say it to yourself, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer the pain to exceed the

measurement of my endurance.””



As we embark on the latter part of the year, we must discern which voices influence us. Is it the world? Our families? Our friends? Or even ourselves? As much as we would like to think we are immune from external influences, we are very much susceptible to the 24-hour news cycle and social media algorithms. Sometimes, the memories of our past selves hold us back from allowing the Holy Spirit into our most private thoughts. These mufflers distort the still voice of the Holy Spirit that is always near us. The second part of Romans 8:6 says, “*But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace,*” (RSV).

We are guaranteed peace when we converge our attention onto the Holy Spirit. Once we set our minds on things of the Spirit, the Spirit will then lead us, and the Spirit will guide our thoughts, goals, plans, and visions of the future. I believe the difference between a Spirit-led life and a flesh-led life is the promise of a divine helper that guides every step we take. No matter what life throws at us, we are confident that we are never alone.

Editor's Corner—Hearing the Voice of God

Sister LaTonja Brown

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As we edge closer to a new year, hear from God before you move.

Many years ago, I was talking to a woman who had been following God for decades. I remember her saying that she seeks God's input in everything, even for small items like what to wear each day, which I found a little odd.

Hearing the voice of God is such an interesting topic to me. In our humanity, we are very capable of convincing ourselves that whatever we want and desire is the will of God. When it comes down to it, some of my choices are made from gut instinct followed by me asking permission later. I am not sure if this is necessarily a bad thing, but the theme of this newsletter does make me mindful of thinking before leaping.

Something happened recently that reminded me of the importance of slowing down to hear the voice of God. I have an older car (circa 2001), and the car is starting to show its age. There are certain parts of the car that wear down because of use and other parts because of time. I went to get what was supposed to be a routine repair. The mechanic recommended some other services, and the quote made me wonder if it was time to buy a new car.

I do research for a living, so I quickly sprang into research mode. I looked up the value of my car for trade in and private sell. I also investigated certified used cars, and I found three that were reasonably priced, had good gas mileage, were available, and still under warranty.

Quite frankly, buying a new car is not something I was planning on doing for another few years, but my more reactive side was ready to turn my old car in that very day. I bought the car from a friend, who had said she would buy the car from me if I ever decided to sell it.

I am so glad the Spirit led me to call her. From that conversation, I was able to find a company to get a second quote. I was also able to point out some of the cost differences to my mechanic based on average prices found online. The mechanic came back with another quote,

and I was also able to get a better understanding of what was crucial and what could wait. The second quote I received was much lower because it only addressed the part (of the part) that needed to be repaired.



This experience is a reminder of a few things.

- One. When you feel like God has you on a path, do not to get detoured when interruptions or distractions pop up.
- Two. Seek trusted wise counsel before you act.
- Three. Don't make decisions on the cuff. Stepping back to think through options helps you make sounder choices.
- Four. Sometimes a second opinion is needed. The Bible asks us whose report will we believe. When life happens, it is often easy to lose sight of the promises of God because of what our natural eyes see.
- Five. Know what costs you are willing and able to bear.

There is a meme I see quite a bit that says, "God answers requests in three ways: Yes, No, and Wait." The "No" is because God gives you something better. The "Wait" (or "not yet") is because something better is coming.

As life happens, I intend to fully seek the voice of God in all things. Little things. Big things. Now I might not get to the level of asking God about what to wear, but I will be more mindful of seeking God's will instead of asking for God to meet me wherever I find myself.

Luckily, God knows me. Just like He knows you. As we edge closer to a new year, hear from God before you move. It will save you from unnecessary costs down the road.

Word of the Quarter—Hearing the Voice of God

Scroll Editing Team

In the last issue of *The Scroll*, we finished the overarching theme “Discerning Truth: Learning to Recognize the Character and Word of God in a Sea of Information.” In this edition, we begin a new overarching theme: “Submitting to the Spirit of God.” In this issue, we come from the topic “Hearing the Voice of God.”

How did we get here? We are not sure if we have ever shared our process with you, but since our new overarching theme is “Submitting to the Spirit of God,” we wanted to share how we practice “Hearing the Voice of God.” The editing team has an annual retreat to plan the calendar year, which runs from October to September. Prior to the retreat, each editor is asked to reflect on what God is doing in their life and the lives of those around them. Not only what God is doing, but also what God is saying.

At the retreat, we have a conversation and develop an overarching theme. Once we have the overarching theme, we then drill down to four topics. Based on the topic, we can assign

people to “Women of the Bible” and “Men of the Bible,” as well as topics for “Fit for the Kingdom” and “Your Money Matters.”

During the retreat, one editor wondered if we are prepared for what is ahead of us? Are we preparing for what is next? Are we factoring in rest and restoration, which are important for the journey ahead? With all that is going on in the world, it is important for us to stay in the fight and not become disillusioned, discouraged, or worn out. We must stay focused on our journey and remain built up. If we follow the voice of God and focus on our calling, we will impact the world. If we seek God and don’t limit ourselves or our gifts, there is so much we can do.

What is the voice of God saying to you in this season, and how will you submit to it?

Another editor has been reading the book of Acts. The upper room experience

was a catalyst for ministry in the world. The focus of our last couple of issues has been establishing and strengthening ourselves. Now what? It is time to turn our inner-view focus and learn what it means to be the church in sacred community as was modeled by the early church. We must ebb and

flow when we allow people to journey with us, otherwise we can create harm when we share in community.

One editor asked what does the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among people look like? If we are trying to become Christ like (living out the word of God and following the example of Christ), how does that change our actions, thoughts, and attitudes? Christ spent His life in service to those marginalized in society, showed love to people around Him, put God’s will before His own, and fulfilled His purpose. Christ’s life was one of sacrifice and serving, not a life of being exalted and served. What changes do we need to make to model Him?

What is the voice of God saying to you in this season, and how will you submit to it? Often, we are moving at a fast pace, so what does it look like to slow down and be present even if it feels like an “inconvenience.” Why the word *inconvenience*? The Holy Spirit often interrupts our day and our agenda to bring us back to God’s will for our lives. Even when we only recognize the voice in the distance, it is what is needed to bring us back to focus on our calling.

As we prepare for what is coming, live in sacred community, and strive to become more Christ-like, let us submit to God’s Spirit and follow His voice.

Prayer Requests:

- ♥ Pastor and Minister Jo Ann
- ♥ National and local leaders
- ♥ Military and their families and veterans
- ♥ Youth, families, singles, and marriages



Women of the Bible—Deborah

Sister La'Shandra Perkins

Name: Deborah

Meaning: Bee

Her Character: She had strong faith and was a competent leader.

Her Sorrow: The people continued to do evil.

Her Triumph: She helped lead the Israelites to victory over the Canaanites.

Key Scriptures: Judges 4 and 5

Deborah was one of few women in the Bible who attained authority as a judge, and she is one of five women in the Bible who was called prophetess. She is the only woman in the Bible to be known as a military leader and strategist.

Deborah was known for **her** faith and **her** actions, not the actions of her husband or other male family member. Deborah's leadership was remarkable, especially in a time when women were overlooked and underestimated. During her time, women were supposed to be silent and domestic.

During Deborah's time as a judge, the Israelites had again done evil and were enslaved by the Canaanites for almost twenty years. She was fierce, and she inspired confidence and courage in those around her. She ruled for over 40 years, and she brought peace and stability to Israel. She's known as the mother of Israel because of her grace, demeanor, and leadership skills.

I believe that God chose her to speak to and through because she was willing to be guided by Him. God knew that Deborah could be trusted with handing out honest and fair judgements, and it wouldn't sidetrack her devotion in serving Him.

Deborah had to have nothing but confidence that oozed from her. She

was married to Lapidoth, and she was probably a mother as well. Her faith gave her strength, and she depended on and trusted in God for all things. She must have felt the pull of God to stand up for her people and be the voice of reason and stand on God's commandments.

One of the most significant events in Deborah's life was her call to lead the Israelites in battle against the Canaanites. Under the oppressive rule of Jabin, the king of Canaan, the Israelites suffered greatly. Deborah, with her unwavering faith in God and her strong leadership skills, knew when it was time to act. She summoned Barak, a military commander, and instructed him to gather an army of ten thousand men to confront the Canaanites. Barak, however, was hesitant and lacked the confidence to lead the army without Deborah's presence. He requested that she accompany him into battle, and she agreed.

Deborah's willingness to step into a traditionally male-dominated role demonstrated her courage and determination. She knew that God had called her to lead, and she did not let societal expectations or gender norms hold her back. Her presence inspired the soldiers. In Judges chapter 5, when the song of the battle was written, Deborah took no credit for the victory. She gave all the glory and praise to God.

Deborah had plenty of opportunities to get in her own way, but she remained humble. She was about peace. She knew that if she sought God's face, guidance, and wisdom, the people who she loved

dearly would live in peace and victory.

I want it to be understood that Deborah's selection as a judge was not based on her gender but on her exceptional qualities and abilities. Deborah's wisdom, discernment, and close relationship with God made her an exceptional and unique individual, transcending societal expectations and norms.

Women today can learn and study about the wonderful women who have come and gone. Women like Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth I, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Michelle Obama, and so many others. Deborah is among the women who paved the way so other women could accomplish the things that they have.

Deborah's selection as a judge highlights the inclusive nature of God's plan for His people. God does not discriminate based on gender or any other societal constructs. He chooses individuals based on their character, faith, and willingness to serve Him and His people. Deborah's selection as a judge also serves as a powerful reminder that God can use anyone — regardless of their background or gender — to accomplish His purpose.

Deborah was a leader far advanced and before her time. What can we learn from Deborah? No matter what our position, race, or religious beliefs, if we put our faith in God and listen to His voice, we will be victorious.

Deborah is among the women who paved the way so other women could accomplish the things that they have.

Men of the Bible—Ezekiel

Sister Cassandra Broomfield

Name: Ezekiel

Meaning: God will strengthen

His Character: He was inflexible, zealous, and detailed.

His Sorrow: His wife died.

His Triumph: He was faithful toward the plan of God.

Key Scriptures: Ezekiel 1:4-28, 2:10, 3:1-14, 24:15-17, 39:17-29

Ezekiel and his wife were among the first captives of the Babylonians. While in captivity, he was walking by the Chebar River when he saw visions of God (1:1). There was what appeared to be a whirlwind in the sky, which came from the north, and a fire that seemed to enfold within itself. There also appeared to be four living creatures, which appeared suddenly, with four faces on each creature: the face of a man, a lion, an eagle, and an ox. They each had four wings, and their feet were like calf’s feet. They each had the ability to move as fast as lightning and beside each of them was a wheel and inside that wheel appeared another wheel (1:3-16).

This is the account of the commissioning of Ezekiel into service to God. God began by instructing Ezekiel on the rebelliousness of the people. God warned him that they were impudent and stiff hearted. Ezekiel was told that some of the people would recognize him as a prophet, but others would not. God admonished Ezekiel to not be afraid of them, their words, or how they responded to him. God continued to remind Ezekiel that the people were rebellious (2:1-6). We can see this in today’s churches. There is resistance to authority, and there is a

lack of belief in the authority of those who declare the truth of God.

Because God knew His people and all that Ezekiel would face, God had Ezekiel open his mouth. When Ezekiel did, God placed a roll of a book in front of him that contained lamentations, mourning, and woe (2:10). Ezekiel was told to seek, eat, and speak. Ezekiel ate the book that contained the oppressive nature of man, yet it tasted as sweet as honey (3:3). God told Ezekiel that the task would not be easy. He would face challenges, but he would be equipped with everything that he needed to succeed. The knowledge that he would not be received kindly caused some doubt, but he forged his way forward with the knowledge of the victory of God.

God made sure that Ezekiel understood that his job — as the watchman of Israel — was to hear and declare what God said (3:17-18). He was warned that if he didn’t, he would suffer the consequences. In our zeal to persuade others toward the kingdom, we must remain clear in what we are saying. We must never detour from the truth. We are not to enhance the reality of the promises of God. 2 Timothy 4 admonishes us to preach the word and be prepared in season and out of season.

This is very powerful because it reminds us that there is order in everything that God does.

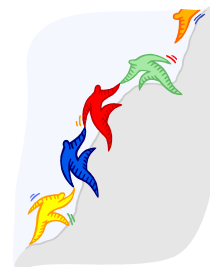
Ezekiel was required to bear the iniquity of Israel for 390 days (Ezekiel 4:1-17), which is equal to the number of years for the punishment of the children of Israel. God showed Ezekiel a fraction of the

suffering that the people of Israel would endure.

Throughout the book of Ezekiel, God had Ezekiel proclaim rebukes on the people of Israel. Just like today, people were doing whatever their hearts desired, defiling their bodies, and dishonoring the sanctuary. By the time we reach chapter 37 of the book of Ezekiel, God had brought Ezekiel to a valley, which was covered in bones that were dry. God asked Ezekiel if the bones could live. Ezekiel, in his wisdom, declared, “O Lord God, thou knowest,” (37:3).

With this acknowledgement, God told Ezekiel to tell the bones to hear the word of the Lord (37:4). This declaration was the process in which the bones were to receive the gift of God. This is very powerful because it reminds us that there is order in everything that God does. Every one of us has a calling and a place in the body of Christ, and we must follow the process.

Empowered by God to Empower Others



Your Money Matters—Best Practices

Sister LaTonja Brown

When it comes to financial best-practice articles, it often feels like rinse and repeat. When I research the topic, I see the same items over and over.

Budget

While we probably have a rough idea about how much we spend, it is worthwhile to track spending over the course of two months. Budgeting is important because, if followed, it can stop you from spending more than you make.

I see the 50/30/20 spending rule a lot. You spend 50% of your monthly budget on needs. Needs are expenses essential to your wellbeing. Think groceries, housing, and transportation. You spend 30%

of your monthly budget on wants. Wants are things that, while nice, are not essential. Think eating out, cable, and the newest gadget. I feel wants and needs are

subjective. For example, some lists include gym membership as a want because you can work out for free. However, others consider it a necessary investment for later health. You spend 20% of your monthly budget on savings or paying off debt. This is considered paying yourself. This 20% includes savings as well as investments for retirement. More on both later.

Don't forget God in your budget. Whether tithes or free-will offering, invest in the Kingdom. I would also add the importance of giving to charities as part of your budget. During times of inflation, people cut back on charitable giving. If your budget allows, consider donating to

a cause that is close to your heart. Whether a children's hospital, foodbank, or homeless shelter, the need is great.

Eliminate Debt

Eliminating debt is important so you can invest and save. Some debt like student loans, mortgages, and car loans are "good" debt. If you can, eliminate debt early by paying extra each month. When it comes to using your credit card, ask yourself if it is something you need urgently. Some people use their credit card throughout the month. This helps them build reward points that can be used for travel. Just be sure to pay it off each month to avoid costly interest.

Savings/Emergency Fund

Having an emergency fund is a way to stay out of or minimize debt. Set up automatic deductions to streamline the saving process.

It may be a good idea to separate savings and emergency funds into different accounts. When I think of savings, I think of something I am saving for. For example, saving for a vacation or putting money aside for a big-ticket item I want to purchase. When the expense occurs, the money is already in place.

When I think of an emergency fund, I think of money set aside in case I lose my job or for an unexpected expense, such as unplanned car maintenance or appliance replacement.

Save for Retirement

A common best practice for retirement savings I hear often is 15% of your income. This may not be practical for everyone, and it is something that can be built toward. As you get your yearly increase, increase the money you have going toward this fund. Having the money automatically withdrawn is another best practice.

The future will hold unknown expenses, so plan as best as you can. For most, Social Security will not be enough to cover all expenses, so it is important to have multiple streams of income including IRAs and 401s. Discussing medical care is another topic entirely. Medicare and/or Medicaid will need supplemental insurance.

It is a good idea to think about how you want your retirement to look. Do you want to travel? If so, add that to your budget.

Plan to be debt free when you retire.

Invest in Yourself

Managing your money is all about balance, so it's important that you treat yourself. The extent of this treat will be unique to your budget. Whatever the treat, make sure it falls within your budget.

When it comes to financial best practices, think about the life you want to live and make decisions based on that.

**Plan to be
debt free when
you retire.**

Fit for the Kingdom—Choose Well

Minister Demetrius Robinson

I've been working on creating better habits in terms of my health and other areas of my life. To be totally honest, it's been a battle! Identifying, making small adjustments, and adopting a new behavior is challenging, so changing habits as the years move on is not easy to do. It's not impossible, but it does require work to create change in our lives. Particularly, when we consider the separate factors of our lives to include nutrition, exercise, family, work, mental health, and spiritual.

A habit is a routine of behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously. It is a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up. Habits apply to behavior or practice. What are your habits? Do you describe them as good or bad? If you're like me, you have some good ones and some that need changing. To create a change of habit, we must be willing to identify what needs to change.

Start small. Creating tiny changes can help alter bad or unwanted habits. I am currently studying this while reading *Atomic Habits* by James Clear. For example, I am on a quest to walk more during my work hours because I sit at a desk eight to 10 hours a day. Did you know, "Sitting is the new smoking?" This phrase suggests prolonged sitting is as harmful as smoking for health. Because sitting for long periods is linked to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and depression, I set a goal to complete at least 3,000 steps

by 10:00 a.m. every day. I created this small goal to help change my habit of sitting at my desk for way too long without moving. During breaks while teleworking, I walk upstairs three times or down the block with our dog. It takes less than five minutes. If I do this every hour, I accomplish my goal with no problem.

What does it take to change a bad habit? Dedication. It takes dedication to change habits that no longer fit your life. You may not get it right the first, second, or third time. Here are some tips for forming good habits:

- **Get regular sleep** – You should get more sleep because it has benefits for your health and wellbeing.
- **Get regular exercise** – It is important because it aids in weight loss and helps prevent chronic health issues.
- **Eat healthy food** – Fueling your body, lowering your disease risk, and supporting immune function are just a few reasons for eating healthy.
- **Organize your schedule** – It can help improve focus, organization, and productivity.
- **Practice mindfulness** – Better memory, reduced anxiety, stronger relationships, and decreased depression are a few of the benefits of mindfulness.
- **Stay engaged in situations which cultivate the desired behavior** – This protects you

You may not get it right the first, second, or third time.

from serious health problems.

- **Plan on repeating the behavior** – This helps with reaching goals.
- **Pay attention to current habits and identify the ones you want to change** – Knowing what our current habits are helps inform us on how we show up in our lives. We have the power to change; we just need to understand what needs changing.
- **Make a list of your daily routines and steps** – Planning helps us meet all daily goals, boosts productivity, limits procrastination, and helps establish healthy habits.

The list above is a great way to help implement good habits. Now with an awareness of how to create good habits, it's time to make decisions. You can create healthier habits. You are defined by your habits, so choose wisely. It may not be easy, but let me encourage you, "You can do it!"

This is my prayer for you. *"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul,"* (3 John 1:2 ESV).

Recommended Reading:

- Judges 4 & 5
- Ezekiel

Creative Expression

Sister LaTonja Brown

Imagine

Imagine
if you possessed
all the happiness I wish for you
Imagine
if you possessed
all the love I have for you in my heart
Imagine
if you possessed
all the beauty I see in you
Imagine
if you possessed
all the magic in your soul
Imagine
if you possessed
all the light filtering from the darkness of your heart
Imagine
if you possessed
all the prayers I have prayed for you
Imagine
if you possessed
the joy and peace I wish for you
Imagine
if you possessed
all the potential I see in you

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