

THE VOICE



THE VOICE

by [Kim Butts](#)

When my husband calls me on the phone, he never has to identify himself. I know his voice so well that further identification is not needed. At the risk of embarrassing us both, I will share that almost every phone conversation begins with Dave saying, "Hi Gorgeous!" and my response of "Hi Handsome!" The calls almost always end with "I love you!" I know his voice, and even after the call has ended, the pronouncement of being known as his "beloved and beautiful bride" is always embedded in my heart. I feel loved and cherished, even in the simple act of hearing his voice on the phone. How much greater the love of Jesus is for me, for you...and for His Beloved Bride, the Church. There are two things

about prayer that resonate deeply with me in the simple act of a phone call with the person I love most on earth. First, I know his voice, and he knows mine. Yet, how well do I know the voice of the One who created my innermost being? Jesus, whose voice I should fully recognize and follow? In John 10, Jesus states that those who are His sheep know His voice, but do not acknowledge the voices of strangers. I must be a good listener to the voice of the One who is always present to me and within me. I need to learn to discern His voice above every other...to cherish it, and to obey it. Listening prayer is a transformational spiritual discipline. Until I can determine Jesus' voice above and in the midst of all of the others, I cannot discern and live in the kingdom of God in all of its fullness. Living in and leaning into the presence of Christ reminds me always that He is my Beloved, and I am His. He loves me beyond any love my husband could ever hope to have for me, or I for him. His voice instructs, admonishes, encourages, builds up, convicts, and is filled with all of the peace, wisdom and strength I need to love Him fully, and to love others with the love of Christ.

How does one practice listening prayer? First of all, listening requires slowing down and paying attention. It is not emptying one's mind, but filling it with Christ alone. Jesus is the Word of God. Therefore, Scripture is perhaps the best way to, as Psalm 46:10 states, "Be still and know" that He alone is God. Any "voice" that does not agree with this Word, is not of God. This is why knowing the Word is so important to listening.

I know my husband well, and because we have lived together for so long, we often finish sentences for one another, or think the same things at the same time. This is how we should continually live with Jesus. Sometimes walking in nature or contemplating the beauty of what He has created draws me into an acute awareness of His Divine Presence. Sometimes it is dwelling upon the character and nature of Jesus. Perhaps I

will settle on His loving kindness, His compassion or His power and meditate on one of these characteristics, asking Him to reveal more of Himself to me. Listening helps me to know Jesus better as He unfolds Himself into my heart. I can “be still” at any time of day or night for He is fully present to me 24-7 unlike any human relationship.

Secondly, I know from his voice that my husband’s love remains with me always. Even when we are not physically present in the same place, I feel that love and know it to be true and real. This knowledge stays with me always...even when we disagree or when we hit a rough patch or season in the midst of life. Jesus, the One I love even more than my own husband, lives with and within me. His presence is continual. His love will never fail because He is the Divine Love.

Jesus tells us: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5). The verb abide is closely related to the word stay. Just as my husband’s words and love stay with me continually, how much more do the words and love of Christ abide with me? Most importantly, my husband cannot always be physically present with me; however, Jesus is continually abiding within me, and, if I am obedient to Scripture, I also stay continually with Him. Being aware of this spiritual mystery is vital to all believers.

Yet, how does one abide continually with Jesus so that fruit can be produced? We must stay attached to the Vine, and prayer is the best way I know to do this! Prayer is a love relationship with God. It is continual remembrance of what Henri Nouwen calls our “belovedness” in Him. It is living within that love that gives us strength to live it out as fruitfulness. We must first abide (stay) in Him, recognizing also His presence in us so that we are available to love Him

fully and to take part in the work of His kingdom that extends His love to others. It is cultivating a continual awareness of His presence.

Jesus has promised to be with us "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). In his book *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, Henri Nouwen states, "Staying with Jesus and he with us requires walking the road together, not turning back, anticipating seeing Jesus in unexpected ways in our hearts." He is referring to the revelation of the person of Jesus in the lives of the two men on the road to Emmaus. Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, but it was not until they begged Him to stay with them...and he accepted their invitation and broke bread with them that they recognized who He truly was. They did not yet recognize His voice, even though their hearts were "burning" within them. It was an act of remembrance (taking communion together) that triggered the recognition of His Presence. They had lost hope that Jesus was truly who He said He was until this moment. They were not yet completely attached to the Vine. Once this connectivity was established, the fullness of the kingdom was theirs! Their eyes were opened to the presence of the living Jesus! It is this awareness that fuels relationship and recognition. My guess is that these two men never again had trouble recognizing that Voice!

Prayer as every day life includes abiding with Jesus and listening to His voice. The longer we dwell in His presence, the more we will know that we are His beloved and He is ours!

Life update: Since this article was written, my precious Dave has gone to be with Jesus. Now, more than ever, I am leaning in to hear the voice of Jesus. I am learning daily what an amazing husband HE is, comforting me in the loss of my earthly spouse: "For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth" (Isaiah 54:5). Jesus is worthy of our attention and as God has said, "...This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him"

(Matthew 17:5)!

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Biography

Kim serves as the Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries which she co-founded in 1993 with her late husband, Dave (1953-2022). Her ministry involves teaching/training and consulting as well as writing and developing resources. She is content coordinator for HPM's teaching platform, PrayerU.com and also compiles and edits HPM's free daily devotional, [Connection!](#) as well as [Prayer Tip Tuesday](#).

Kim has written multiple books and has published articles in a variety of magazines and publications. She is a member of America's National Prayer Committee and serves as President of Gospel Revivals, Inc. (Herald of His Coming).

Kim has a BA in Psychology and a Masters degree in Spiritual Formation and Leadership.

Some of Kim's Books



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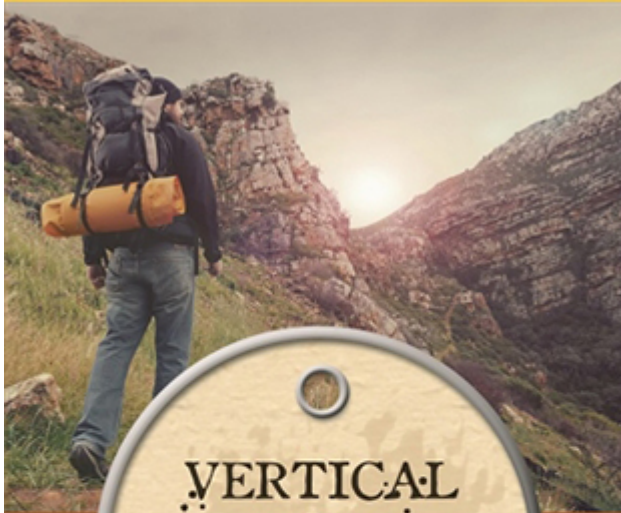
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