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# SPEAK LIFE

RESTORING HEALTHY COMMUNICATION  
IN HOW YOU THINK, TALK, AND PRAY

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# TUNING IN | CHAPTER 1

## *Respond*

1. Describe a time when you suspected that God was “out there” trying to communicate with you. What did you suppose he wanted to say?
2. What associations does the phrase *relating with God* bring to mind for you? What experiences have informed those thoughts?
3. What emotional or spiritual walls have you erected along the way in an attempt to keep God’s business and your business distinct?

## *Reflect*

Spend a few minutes reflecting on God’s invitation to you, as noted at the end of the chapter. He is here. He loves you. And he’s ready to talk whenever you are. What fears or insecurities surface in your heart as you consider such an invitation?

## *Read On*

Look up the full story of the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11–32. How does the father’s reaction to the prodigal relate to how you envision God’s posture toward you whenever you’re far from home?

## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 2

### *Respond*

1. What doubts do you harbor about God? That his grace is too good to be true, perhaps? That his love has to be earned somehow? That he would never speak to the likes of you? Or something else entirely?

2. What thoughts come to mind as you consider the idea that a loving, gracious God is, in fact, speaking to you, and that the static that is keeping you from hearing his voice is actually your doing instead of his?

3. What type of static do you find causes the most interference in your life?

- **Distraction:** What people, responsibilities, dynamics, or desires tend to take your attention away from hearing God's voice?
- **Stubborn independence:** In what ways have you caused your life to run so smoothly that you've rendered God's intervention largely unnecessary—at least in your estimation?
- **Disobedience:** What requests has God made of you in the past that you have yet to fulfill? What effect do you suppose neglect of this type has on your ability to communicate clearly with him today?

## *Reflect*

At the end of the chapter, I made this assertion:

When we tune in to God, we learn things from his Spirit that we wouldn't have learned any other way. When we tune in to him, things get revealed to us that we could never have known otherwise. When we tune in to him, we're filled with divine wisdom that people in the natural realm would love to have. When we tune in to him, we become a stabilizing force that can anchor those being tossed about on the wind. It's only when we're living tuned in to God that we experience life as it's meant to be lived. It's only when we're living tuned in to God that we have anything useful to say.

Do you buy these ideas? Why or why not?

## *Read On*

Read the story in 1 Samuel 8 of the Israelites begging God for a king. In what ways can you relate to the idea that someone or something other than God can take better care of you than he can?

## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 3

### *Respond*

1. In what ways can you relate to the idea that making progress in any facet of life isn't always linear?
2. As it relates to how you use your words, how would you describe the gains you've made over the years? What relational setbacks have you experienced?
3. How does the idea sit with you that prayer is nothing more than putting yourself in the hands of God? What assumptions, training, or firsthand experiences inform your thoughts?
4. What words would your own morning prayer include, or if you already have a morning prayer, how might it change for the positive?

### *Reflect*

What might be different about your ability to hear from God if you began each day with a morning prayer (if that is not already part of your current routine)? Consider giving it a try this week.

### *Read On*

Read the full account of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection found in Luke 23. What emotions do you suppose Jesus was feeling as the criminal on the cross beside him asked Jesus to remember him?

## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 4

### *Respond*

1. What do your typical self-talk themes reveal about your views on God and on yourself? (If you've never stopped to assess your self-talk before, here's a good question to start with: "What are the eight to ten most wonderful things about me, and what are the eight to ten things I desperately wish I could change?" Once you make your lists, see which side of the ledger you tend to live from most days, the positive or the negative.)

2. How does the idea that God is well pleased with you mesh with your understanding of who he is and who you are?

3. Which of the truths presented in this chapter do you wish you believed more wholeheartedly and lived from more frequently?

Circle all that apply:

- God loves you.
- God will honor you.
- God will promote you.
- God will protect you.
- God will deliver you.
- God will build you up.
- God will keep you alive.
- God will richly bless you.
- God will give you goodness and grace.

### *Reflect*

Based on your selection(s) above, meditate for a few minutes on what you think would change for you if you embraced each of these truths more completely.

### *Read On*

Review Luke 3:21–22 in your Bible and imagine God speaking those same words over you today.

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## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 5

### *Respond*

1. Can you relate to the idea of not measuring up in some aspect of your life? How do such feelings hamstring your ability to stand up to the Enemy's taunts?
2. When are you most tempted to self-promote? Why does self-promotion feel more satisfying than waiting on God to "lift you up in due time," as 1 Peter 5:6 says?
3. What situations (hypothetical or real), people, or assumptions about the world threaten your sense of "all-right-ness"?

### *Reflect*

Spend several minutes thinking about what your negative self-talk has cost you along the way. Time? Energy? Opportunities for advancement? Relationships that were important to you? Inner peace? Something else?

### *Read On*

Read the full account of Jesus and Pilate found in John 19. How powerful do you suppose God truly is? Do you believe that his power is available to you today?



## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 6

### *Respond*

1. What does the negative-self-talk energy drain typically entail for you? In other words, after you've entertained self-condemning thoughts for a while, how do you usually feel?

2. Which of the following promises from God speaks most profoundly to you, and why?

- “I have plans for you to prosper and succeed” (see Jer. 29:11).
- “I will carry your burdens for you and give you rest” (see Matt. 11:28–29).
- “I will meet all your needs” (see Phil. 4:19).
- “I will give you peace every day” (see John 14:27).

3. I mentioned that when Christ is set apart as Lord, other things can't then be lord in our lives. What other things do you need Jesus to be Lord of today? A particular fear or insecurity, maybe? A stressful situation? A relationship that's causing you pain? Something else?

### *Reflect*

In the last section of this chapter, I mentioned that as we learn to make positive agreements—self-talk statements that align with God's truth—we can “refuse to lower our heads when times get tough, choosing instead to listen up, look up, and lift our heads to God.” Think on this promise for a few minutes, and then write

down how your demeanor would change if you lived from this reality instead of accepting negative agreements.

*Read On*

Take time to meditate on Isaiah 55. What is God saying to you through these verses?

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## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 7

### *Respond*

1. When have you encountered a battle that seemed spiritual in nature, a time when you were endeavoring to make a God-honoring decision but were opposed, or a time when you walked headlong into a situation that you knew would not end well? Did you attribute the situation to the work of Satan? Why or why not?
2. What effects of isolation have you known? Do you agree or disagree with the idea that a big part of Satan's strategy to destroy us is to isolate us?
3. When have you been tempted to respond poorly to something someone said, and how did you handle it? What factors played into your decision regarding how to respond? What forces do you believe are at work as you communicate with people throughout each day?

### *Reflect*

When have you known better but not done better? Think about the situation—how you acted, what the results were, and what, if anything, you would do differently if you could replay the scenario and try again.

### *Read On*

Scan the verses from 1 Kings 19, meditating on the strength of emotion Elijah—and God—expressed. What fresh perspective or new awareness can you take away from this encounter that can help you fend off hopelessness in your own life?

# TUNING IN | CHAPTER 8

## *Respond*

1. Which communication patterns from Ephesians 4 seem easier for you to abide by, and which seem more difficult? Scan the following list, putting a plus sign (+) beside descriptions that usually characterize your speech and a minus sign (–) beside the ones that often don't.

- Speak the truth in love.
- Say what will build others up.
- Speak without bitterness.
- Speak without rage.
- Avoid getting into verbal fights.
- Avoid gossip.
- Avoid hateful speech.
- Be kind and compassionate.
- Be quick to forgive.
- Speak words of life.

2. When you grumble, what do you tend to grumble about? What does your answer reveal about your posture toward God?

3. What role do harsh words play in your communication patterns?

4. How has being the subject of gossip hurt you? Given that gossip has stung all of us, do you still find it alluring? Why or why not?

5. What triggers your anger? What assumptions, experiences, or predispositions shape your feelings about the appropriateness of anger in a person's life?

6. When are you most vulnerable to jumping the fence—e.g., to playing into Satan's destructive plans for your life? What precautions might help you avoid such situations with greater frequency?

7. What do you hope tomorrow's strength will look like for you? In other words, which part of the fence do you hope never to jump again?

### *Reflect*

Take a moment to ponder the truth that each time we speak an unkind word, we have in essence jumped God's fence. How does this assessment square with your understanding of how relationships work? What reservations (or outright protests) do you have about residing within the communications fencing that God has put in place?

### *Read On*

Read Ephesians 4, making note of the one aspect of communication you'd like to make progress in.

## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 9

### *Respond*

1. Early in this chapter I made the assertion that while we desperately want forgiveness for ourselves, we tend to withhold it from those who wrong us, which plays directly into Satan's divisive goal. How do you react to this thought? Is it true for you or not? What examples come to mind that bolster your position?

2. Which of the following explanations of what forgiveness is *not* do you most struggle to believe? Why?

- Forgiveness is not denying the wrong occurred.
- Forgiveness is not seeking revenge.
- Forgiveness does not mean instantly restoring trust.

3. When have you chosen gratitude and seen benefits in your life as a result?

4. What assumptions about God come to mind when you consider the idea that he is forever pointing you toward a lifestyle of forgiveness, no matter the situation, no matter the offense?

### *Reflect*

Whom do you need to forgive today? Come before God in a posture of grateful humility and recount the forgiveness he has extended to you. Tell him the truth about the wrong that has been done to you, detailing the offense and how it made you feel. Listen

carefully to any promptings you receive—to pick up the phone and call the person, perhaps, or else to simply write a letter you'll later shred. And then trust him to guide you into a future free from bitterness and pain. Let his healing ways have their way in you today.

### *Read On*

Read Matthew 18. How can you apply these principles more effectively in your life?

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# TUNING IN | CHAPTER 10

## *Respond*

1. Early in this chapter I wrote that “when we spend time in [God’s] presence, our hearts soften toward the people he created; and when our hearts toward them start to soften, our words toward them soften too.” How have you found this to be true in your own experience? Give examples.

2. What dividing lines have you drawn along the way, separating you from those who aren’t like you?

3. What would “soft words,” loving words, toward the ones on the other side of those dividing lines sound like? What fears or insecurities keep you from speaking them?

4. In the same way the three gay men reached out to me, leaping over their assumptions about how a megachurch pastor would behave, when has someone reached out to you instead of drawing a line of division? What resulted from the connection that was made?

## *Reflect*

As you encounter frustrations because of other people’s attitudes, words, actions, or lifestyle preferences today, pray the real-time confession to God. Refuse to draw dividing lines, choosing instead to forgive all the way through to unity. You’re more at peace when you make this shift, aren’t you? See if I’m right today.

## *Read On*

Read Psalm 133 and then write out the words in your own hand. What “blessings” of unity have you seen unfold in your life thus far?



# TUNING IN | CHAPTER 11

## *Respond*

1. How does this chapter's definition of *prophecy* mesh with yours?
2. Which of these three prophetic questions intrigues you most? Why?
  - What can I say that will provide strength, courage, and comfort?
  - What has God spoken that I can confirm?
  - Is there an opportunity for me to be generous here?
3. Which of your key relationships is most in need of prophetic conversation?

## *Reflect*

Using one or more of the prophetic questions, take time to brainstorm ways you can engage in the key relationship you mentioned in the previous question. For instance, if the relationship you cited is the one between you and your spouse, then (focusing on the first question) consider all the ways you could provide strength, courage, and comfort to him or her today. Write the words down, get them on your mind and in your heart, and then ask God for the opportunity to speak them to your spouse soon.

## *Read On*

Meditate on the words of Hebrews 10:24–25. How can you spur someone else on today?

## TUNING IN | CHAPTER 12

### *Respond*

1. What words would those who know you well use to describe your communication style?
2. Are you satisfied with that description? Why or why not?
3. If you were to honestly assess your effectiveness in communicating—with God, with yourself, and with others—do you see progress year after year, or do you suspect there has been a decline?
4. What feelings or emotions do the words of Psalm 1:2–3 stir up in you as you move closer to manifesting that which is wise?

### *Reflect*

What do you hope your communication legacy will include? Spend a few minutes crafting your own group of words that you want to be known and remembered for—as I did with “kind, timely, and wise.”

### *Read On*

Write out the words of Psalm 1:2–3 and post the verses in a prominent place so that you can hold fast to its imagery throughout your day.

# NOTES

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## CHAPTER 3: TUNED IN

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2. *The Help*, directed by Tate Taylor (Universal City, CA: Dreamworks, 2011).

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## CHAPTER 7: DIVISION UNTO DESTRUCTION

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