

Do You Hear What I Hear - A Note from the Authors

Some sounds never leave you.

Long before this book became a book—before we had language for many of the thoughts contained within these pages—there was the sound of our Papa’s voice, his name was **Vito**.

Our father was transparent about his humanity and remarkably gifted in the way he loved people. He never needed to convince us that he was perfect; we knew better—and so did he. Papa could be strong and tender, certain and vulnerable, inspiring and frustrating, imperfect and deeply loving. And standing beside this wonderfully complicated man was our beautiful mother, **Gloria**. There is no honest telling of our father’s story without telling something of hers; Mom knew both his gifts and his failures; she experienced the strength of the man and the frailty of the man. And through seasons that undoubtedly required far more of her than we understood as boys, she remained.

My mother’s presence had a different sound, perhaps quieter, less imposing, but no less formative. If our father’s voice filled a room, **our mother’s love helped hold the room together**.

Only as sons looking backward can we begin to appreciate how much of what we remember as “home” was created not by one presence, but by two very human people whose lives became intertwined with ours. And then there was our father’s voice.

Papa Vito came from Italy, he carried with him a thick Italian accent that could somehow be both mesmerizing and, at times, a little intimidating. When he spoke, you knew he was in the room and sometimes discovered he was in the room before he even spoke a word. And then there was his fragrance; our father loved cologne, there was fragrance we all remember called **Signature**, and Papa did not believe in applying a subtle application, he poured it on.

You could sometimes sense that our father had entered a room before you ever saw him, and after he left, something of that fragrance remained. Looking back now, the name seems almost prophetic: **Signature**. Because that is exactly what our father left, a signature, not one written in ink, but one written into people:

His voice, his accent, his laughter, his intensity, his failures, his transparency, his affection, and his love. His fragrance remained after he left the room, and somehow, all these years later, so does his presence.

Perhaps three ancient words help us understand what we experienced in our earthly father—and what this book is really searching for.

The first is the Hebrew word *qol* —**sound, voice; that which is heard**. It is the word Genesis uses when Adam and Eve hear the *qol* of the LORD God moving through the garden.

The second is the Hebrew word *kavod* —usually translated **glory or honor**, but carrying an underlying sense of **weight, substance, and significance**. It describes something with gravity—a presence that matters.

The third is the Greek word *doxa* —commonly translated **glory, splendor, or honor**. Within the biblical story, it becomes a way of speaking about glory becoming perceptible—the beauty and character of Presence somehow becoming known.

We have come to think of them this way:

Qol — the Sound that is heard.

Kavod — the weight of Presence that is carried.

Doxa — the glory of that Presence becoming revealed.

Our father carried something of all three.

He had a *qol*, you heard Vito;

He carried *kavod*, you felt Vito;

And there was *doxa* ...whenever something beautiful within him became visible through the way he loved another human being.

But perhaps we understand something now that we could not have understood as children: **Vito did not carry that story alone.**

Gloria was there; she, too, left a *qol*. She, too, carried *kavod*, and through her faithfulness, endurance, forgiveness, and love, something of *doxa* became visible as well.

Their sounds were different; their presence was different, but together they became part of the soundscape in which his 5 children learned what it meant to be human—to succeed and fail, to hurt and forgive, to leave and remain, to receive love and give it—and eventually to listen for God.

Maybe that is why the fragrance of **Signature** means something more to us now, a signature is what someone leaves behind that tells you: **I was here.**

Our father's fragrance eventually disappeared from the room.

His physical voice eventually became quiet, but his *signature* did not, and neither did our mother's; **their lives left something in us.**

There is the Sound we hear, there is the Presence we carry, and there is something of that Presence that becomes visible through the way we live.

Our father Vito left a sound; our mother Gloria helped give that sound a home.

And now their three sons and two daughters—**Vito, Mario, Carlo, Giovanna and Maria**—find themselves listening for something beneath the voices of the parents who formed us:

the **Sound** beneath their sound, the **Voice** beneath every voice, and **The Presence** from which Love itself originates.

Five Children Still Listening

This book was written by two brothers, **Carlo and Vito**, but its journey belongs in a meaningful way to all five of Vito and Gloria's children.

As for this writing, our brother **Mario** has walked this road alongside us, he has contributed countless hours of conversation, insight, questioning, laughter, encouragement, and love. His contribution cannot adequately be measured by how many sentences he may have written or ideas he may have suggested.

Some people contribute to a book by writing paragraphs, **Mario has contributed by writing something with his life.** Mario is a man who has endured significant physical pain, and yet pain has not been allowed to have the final word about the man he has become.

We have watched him continue to love his wife, his children, his beautiful grandchildren, and his love is not merely something he talks about... **He demonstrates it:** he shows up, he gives, he remains, he serves, he loves.

Perhaps that, too, is *kavod*, there is **weight** to a life like that, and perhaps that is also *doxa*: something invisible becoming visible through the way a human being lives.

We have come to believe that the Sound of God is not only something we hear with our ears, **sometimes we hear it through another person's life.** There are sermons spoken from pulpits, and there are sermons lived quietly in kitchens, hospital rooms, family gatherings, difficult nights, ordinary telephone calls, acts of forgiveness, and years of choosing to love when pain has given someone every opportunity to become bitter. Mario has taught us something about that kind of Sound.

So, although the names on the cover are **Carlo Griseta and Vito Griseta**, there's something of our brother Mario and our two sisters, Giovanna and Maria, that are woven throughout these pages.

In many ways, this book represents the continuing conversation of **five children who are still listening to the echo of a father they loved—and beyond our father's voice, listening for the Voice that taught us how to love.**

We Want to Hear the Sound of God

We five children have traveled different roads.

We have experienced God differently.

We have asked different questions.

We have wrestled with different things.

We have carried different wounds.

But somewhere beneath all those differences has remained a common longing:

We want to hear the Sound of God.

Not simply what someone else has told us God sounds like.

Not the accumulated noise of religious systems.

Not denominational traffic.

Not doctrines and dogmas shouting over one another for our attention.

Not the voices that measure people, categorize them, compare them, determine who is in and who is out, and then call that discernment.

We want to hear something deeper.

We want to hear again the *qol*—**the Sound, the Voice—of God moving through the garden**, and perhaps our greatest difficulty has never been that God stopped speaking, perhaps we have simply become surrounded by noise.

Some of that noise is cultural.

Some is religious.

Some comes from our wounds.

Some comes from fear.

Some from shame.

Some from disappointment.

Some even comes from our certainty, and some comes from the countless voices that have told us what God is supposed to sound like.

Even movements that began with a sincere desire to discover the grace and love of God can slowly become systems for measuring, comparing, correcting, excluding, and judging others, and somewhere in all that traffic, we can lose the Sound.

Yet beneath the noise, we believe there remains a Voice.

A Voice that calls us by name.

A Voice that sounds like grace.

A Voice that moves toward wounded people rather than away from them.

A Voice that restores dignity.

A Voice that does not manipulate us into following.

A Voice that sounds remarkably like Jesus.

An Invitation to Listen

Do You Hear What I Hear? grew from our desire to rediscover that Voice together.

This book is not our attempt to tell you exactly what you must hear.

It is an invitation to **listen**.

To become still.

To become curious again.

To question some of the noises you may have mistaken for God.

To recognize the echoes that fear, trauma, religion, disappointment, and shame may have left within you.

And perhaps beneath all of them, to discover a Sound that was there before you learned to be afraid.

Jesus often spoke of people who had ears but did not hear and eyes but did not see.

Yet we have tremendous hope for this generation.

Perhaps this generation is not losing God nearly as much as some fear.

Perhaps it is losing its tolerance for the noise surrounding God.

Perhaps another generation is awakening—not because it possesses all the answers, but because it is becoming willing to question the answers that have kept it from hearing.

There is something sacred about a generation willing to become still enough to listen.

We believe treasures remain undiscovered.

Not because God is unwilling to reveal them, but perhaps because some things can only be recognized when the noise subsides.

Scripture says:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.” —Deuteronomy 29:29

We love those final words: “...**to us and to our children.**”

Because perhaps the Sound was never intended to stop with us.

Our father carried a *qol*; his *qol* carried *kavod*.

And through the way he loved, something of that *kavod* became *doxa*—something visible, something experienced, something his sons could carry forward.

But now we understand something more.

We are not merely trying to preserve the sound of our father’s voice.

We are listening together for **the Sound beneath his sound**, the Voice beneath every voice; the Presence from which Love itself originates.

Perhaps every generation receives something from the generation before it—not merely beliefs to repeat, doctrines to defend, or systems to preserve, but **a Sound to discern, a Presence to carry, and a Love to reveal**, and that raises questions much larger than the title of this book.

Not merely:

Do you hear what I hear?

But:

What are we hearing?

What are we becoming because of what we hear?

What sound does our life make in the lives of others?

And perhaps most importantly:

*What *qol* will our lives leave behind?*

*What *kavod* will remain after we have left the room?*

*What *doxa*—what glimpse of Love—will have become visible because we were here?*

Somewhere Quiet

Our hope is that these pages will not give you more religious noise, in fact, our hope is that somewhere along the way you will put this book down...

Go somewhere quiet.

Perhaps beneath a tree.

Beside some water.

On a mountain.

In a field.

In a favorite chair.

Or simply somewhere you can become still and listen.

Listen... not anxiously....

Not striving to manufacture a spiritual experience.

Simply listening.

And perhaps you will discover that the Presence you have been searching for has been nearer than you imagined.

The Sound is still moving through the garden.

May we have ears to hear, and when we hear it—**may we no longer hide.**

May we *turn* toward the Sound.

May we *walk* toward the Sound.

May we *live* from the Sound.

And eventually, may something remarkable happen:

May the *qol* we have heard become the *kavod* we carry,
and may the *kavod* we carry become the *doxa* others encounter...

May our lives become an echo of Love, and when our own voices have finally grown quiet, may something of Love remain in the room—a **fragrance, an echo, a presence, a signature**... something that quietly says: **Love was here.**

May that Sound continue in our children and our children's children, long after our own voices have grown quiet.

With love and gratitude, **Carlo Griseta & Vito Griseta** *with deep gratitude for our brother and sisters, Mario, Giovanna and Maria whose presence, perseverance, insight, and demonstrative love are woven throughout these pages.*

A Special Word of Thanks

Vito and I also want to thank **Mel Quillen** for the spark that helped ignite this book.

Sometimes an entire journey begins with a single question.

Mel asked Vito and me:

“What was the Sound of God?”

The question exploded in our ears.

It followed us into our conversations. It opened memories, questions, Scripture, wonder, and possibilities neither of us could simply put back where they had been.

And eventually, that one question became part of the Sound that gave birth to this book.

Thank you, Mel, for asking the question.

Sometimes the greatest gift someone can give us is not an answer.

Sometimes it is the question that teaches us how to listen.

Chapter 1 The Sound of God

Genesis 3:8 is usually translated:

“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...”

The Hebrew language is fascinating... the word translated “sound” is *qol*. It can mean sound, voice, noise, thunder, or proclamation, depending upon its context.

So Adam and Eve hear the *qol* of YHWH God moving through the garden, not necessarily footsteps, not necessarily a voice speaking words. Simply—the sound of His Presence.

The phrase traditionally translated “*in the cool of the day*” also contains the Hebrew word *ruach*, a word that can mean *wind*, *breath*, or *spirit*. In this expression, “*wind*” or “*breeze*” is probably the most natural meaning, but the larger biblical resonance is difficult to miss: *Breath... Wind... Sound... Presence*.

Genesis gives us an almost sensory picture:

The sound of YHWH moving through the garden in the wind of the day.

What If God’s Sound Was Never Merely Footsteps?

We tend to imagine Genesis anthropomorphically:

Crunch... crunch... crunch... God walking through fallen leaves, perhaps, but what if this language is also humanity's attempt to describe The Presence becoming perceptible?

Throughout Scripture, encounters with God repeatedly contain sound:

At Sinai there is thunder, trumpet, and voice.

Elijah encounters wind, earthquake, and fire, followed by the mysterious *qol*—traditionally translated “*a still small voice*,” though it may convey something more like *a thin silence, a gentle whisper, or the sound of sheer stillness*.

Ezekiel describes divine manifestations with sounds like rushing waters.

Psalms 29 transforms “*the voice of the LORD*” into almost cosmic music:

The Voice *moves* over the waters.

The Voice *breaks* cedars.

The Voice *shakes* the wilderness.

The Voice *causes* creation to tremble.

At **Pentecost**, Presence arrives with “*a sound like the blowing of a violent wind*.”

Revelation repeatedly describes divine realities through waters, thunder, trumpets, harps, voices, and songs.

Perhaps **Presence** has a sound:

Sometimes *thunder*.

Sometimes *wind*.

Sometimes *voice*.

Sometimes *silence*.

Sometimes *song*.

...and sometimes a sound so gentle that only the quiet recognize it.

Creation Begins With Sound

There is an enormous biblical pattern connecting creation, breath, voice, rhythm, and song.

Job 38 imagines the morning stars singing together at creation.

The Psalms picture rivers clapping their hands, mountains singing, and heavens declaring.

And **Genesis** itself begins with God speaking,

“And God said...”

Creation begins not with a description of God's hands constructing the universe, but with divine utterance:

God speaks... Light appears.

God speaks... Waters separate.

God speaks... Earth emerges.

God speaks... Life multiplies.

Perhaps creation itself is, metaphorically, God's song becoming visible.

Scientifically, sound involves vibration moving through a medium. Scripture is not making a scientific claim about acoustics when it says *God spoke creation into existence*. Yet the theological imagery is extraordinary: **Reality responds to Voice**.

Before humanity ever spoke to God, humanity existed because God had spoken.

Adam awakens inside an already-sounding creation: Wind moves. Water flows. Creatures call. Human lungs fill with breath, and eventually, Genesis tells us that humanity hears the qol of YHWH moving through the garden.

Perhaps Adam did not need an introduction.

The text does not explicitly tell us, “*Adam recognized the sound,*” so we should be careful not to make it say more than it does, but Adam certainly knows whose sound he is hearing, there is relationship here.

There is familiarity, and then something tragic happens, The Sound that once belonged to communion is now heard through fear: God's Presence has approached; Adam hides. What changed? Perhaps not the Sound, perhaps the hearer.

When Shame Changes the Way We Hear

The tragedy of Genesis 3 may not be that God suddenly became frightening; it may be that shame changed humanity's interpretation of God.

Adam says: “*I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid...*” that sentence may describe far more of human spirituality than we realize...

I heard You—and fear interpreted what I heard.

Perhaps salvation therefore includes more than convincing an absent God to approach us, perhaps it includes the healing of humanity until we can once again experience the Presence of God without hiding from it.

Maybe the great spiritual question is not simply: *“Where is God?”*

Perhaps it is: *“Have I become quiet enough to recognize the Presence that has been here all along?”*

We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

Paul writes: *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”* —2 Corinthians 5:7

We commonly understand this to mean: Trust even when you cannot see; that is certainly part of it, but beside the garden story another beautiful possibility emerges.

Genesis does not say that Adam saw God approaching; he heard the qol.

Then Romans says: *“Faith comes from hearing...”*

And Jesus says in John 10: *“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

Notice the movement: Hear... Know... Follow.

Perhaps spiritual formation involves recovering our ability to recognize the character of the Voice? After Eden, humanity still hears, but fear distorts interpretation: The Presence that may once have communicated communion now sounds like danger, and perhaps much of our spiritual journey involves the healing of that distortion.

Maybe we begin learning again:

That Sound is not coming to destroy me.

That Voice is not approaching to humiliate me.

That Presence is not waiting for me to become worthy enough to come near.

Love has always been moving toward us.

Mary in Another Garden

After the resurrection, Mary Magdalene stands near Jesus, she sees him, but she does not recognize him, she assumes he is the gardener.

Then Jesus speaks one word: **“Mary”** ...and she knows.

Mary *saw* him and did not recognize him; she *heard* him—and turned.

That is an extraordinary reversal of Eden.

In the **first garden**: *Humanity hears the Sound and hides.*

In the **resurrection garden**: *Humanity hears the Voice and turns toward Him.*

The **first garden** contains the *sound of God approaching* frightened humanity.

The **resurrection garden** contains *the voice of God calling* humanity by name.

Perhaps the gospel is, among many other things, the healing of our hearing, Faith becomes recognition: Learning the Sound... Recognizing the Voice... Trusting the Presence... and Turning toward what we once ran from.

We walk by faith rather than sight...

...because sometimes the deepest realities are recognized before they are fully seen.

Isaiah: Undone by the Sound

Isaiah 6 contains another extraordinary encounter:

Isaiah does not merely receive information about God, he is overwhelmed,

“Woe is me...”

Traditional translations sometimes render his response: *“I am undone.”*

The Hebrew carries the sense of being *ruined, silenced, brought to an end.*

Isaiah’s existing “categories” cannot contain what he has encountered, and notice how much sound fills the scene:

The seraphim call to one another: *“Holy, holy, holy...”*

...and the thresholds shake at the sound of their voices: Sound... Vibration...

Presence... Awareness...

And Isaiah discovers that the self *he has constructed* cannot stand untouched before ***what he has encountered.***

We might think of something like sympathetic resonance: Place one tuned instrument near another, strike the corresponding note, and a string on the second instrument will begin vibrating. It did not manufacture the original sound, it responded because it possessed the capacity to resonate with it and it was in proximity to the other string.

What if Presence awakens something within humanity that was always capable of responding to Presence?

Adam hears.

Isaiah hears.

Elijah hears silence.

Mary hears her name.

Jesus says: *“My sheep hear my voice.”*

Paul says: *“Faith comes by hearing.”*

Perhaps faith is not primarily straining harder to believe something invisible, perhaps faith also involves becoming attuned, and what happens when an instrument is tuned? It does not become a different instrument; it becomes capable of sounding according to what it was created to be.

That sounds remarkably like formation: not adding Christ to fundamentally worthless human beings; not manufacturing spirituality; not desperately trying to pull God closer, but becoming sufficiently still... sufficiently awake... sufficiently receptive...

...Until something within us begins resonating with the Presence already here.

Perhaps being “undone” is not ultimately annihilation, perhaps it is dissonance giving way to harmony:

Fear loosens...

Shame loosens...

Performance loosens...

Ego loosens...

Religious identity loosens...

The false structures by which we protect ourselves begin loosening...

And what emerges is not less human, it is more fully human.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

What do you imagine when you hear “the sound of God”?

Where have you experienced God’s Presence through sound, silence, breath, music, or another person’s life?

When have shame or fear changed the way you interpreted something good?

What might it mean for you to become quiet enough to recognize Presence?

Where are you being invited to move from sight toward trust?

Chapter 2 The Sound Produces Movement

Consider the biblical pattern.

Adam and Eve — Genesis 3

They hear the *qol* of God moving through the garden.

Fear moves them away from the Sound.

Abraham — Genesis 12

“The LORD said to Abram, ‘Go...’”

A Voice interrupts settledness.

Abraham hears—and moves into the unknown.

Moses — Exodus 3

From the burning bush comes: “Moses, Moses.”

A shepherd hears his name and eventually returns to Egypt.

Israel at Sinai — Exodus 19–20

Thunder. Trumpet. Voice.

A people are summoned into covenant.

Samuel — 1 Samuel 3

“*Samuel! Samuel!*”

At first Samuel does not recognize who is calling.

Eli helps him learn how to listen.

“*Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.*”

Samuel must learn to recognize the Sound.

Elijah — 1 Kings 19

Wind. Earthquake. Fire.

Then the mysterious *qol demamah daqqah*.

Elijah comes out of the cave.

The Sound draws him from hiding.

Isaiah — Isaiah 6

“Holy, holy, holy.”

The thresholds shake; Isaiah becomes undone.

Then comes another Sound: “Whom shall I send?”

And Isaiah answers: “Here am I. Send me.”

Ezekiel — Ezekiel 37

“Prophecy to these bones.”

Then Ezekiel hears a sound, a rattling.

Bones begin moving before the restoration is complete.

John the Baptist — John 1

“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

Before people recognize Messiah, a voice prepares the way.

The disciples *“Follow me.”*

Peter; Andrew; James; John; Matthew...

They hear—and leave what they know.

Mary Magdalene — John 20

She sees Jesus without recognizing Him.

Then: “Mary.” She turns.

Paul — Acts 9

Light surrounds him.

But the encounter also contains a Voice:

“Saul, Saul...” His direction changes.

Pentecost — Acts 2

Before tongues like fire are seen:

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven...”

The Sound fills the house...

Then the people themselves become voices.

They hear a Sound from heaven—and become a sound in the earth.

The Sound does not merely inform, it summons.

Abraham hears—and leaves.

Moses hears—and returns.

Samuel hears—and responds.

Elijah hears—and comes out.

Isaiah hears—and volunteers.

Ezekiel hears—and speaks.

Mary hears—and turns.

The **disciples** hear—and follow.

Paul hears—and changes direction.

Pentecost hears—and becomes proclamation.

The Sound produces movement, that gives fresh texture to: *“We walk by faith, not by sight.”*

Faith does not merely agree with what it has heard.

Faith moves in response to what it has heard before sight supplies every detail.

Abraham did not see the destination, he heard: *Go*.

Moses did not see Israel liberated, he heard: *I am sending you*.

Isaiah did not know how his mission would conclude, he heard: *Whom shall I send?*

Peter did not see Pentecost, resurrection, or the worldwide church when Jesus said:

Follow me... they heard, and they walked.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

Which biblical example of hearing and moving most resonates with you?

What have you heard that you have not yet acted upon?

What is the difference between agreeing with faith and moving in faith?

What sounds: fear, shame, ambition, grief, love, or Presence move you most often?

What would “Hear → Know → Follow” look like now?

Chapter 3 Our Walk Becomes a Prophetic Sound

What if our walk itself is prophetic? Not prophecy merely as predicting future events. But prophecy as making something of the heart and character of God audible in the world.

Perhaps our walk becomes the echo of what we have heard.

Abraham heard “Go,” and his footsteps testified that he had heard.

Moses heard “*I am sending you,*” and his return to Egypt became a prophetic sound.

Isaiah heard “*Whom shall I send?*” and his “*Here am I*” became a sound in history.

The disciples heard “*Follow me,*” and abandoned nets became a proclamation.

Mary heard *her name* and carried resurrection news into the world.

Perhaps, *the Sound of God* becomes *the walk of humanity*.

The world may not need more people constantly announcing: “*God told me...*”

It desperately needs people whose lives possess the recognizable resonance of the One they claim to have heard.

Mercy becomes a prophetic sound.

Forgiveness becomes a prophetic sound.

Sitting quietly beside someone who is grieving becomes a prophetic sound.

Refusing to shame someone becomes a prophetic sound.

Giving without demanding recognition becomes a prophetic sound.

Loving an enemy becomes a prophetic sound.

Remaining present when everyone else leaves becomes a prophetic sound.

Perhaps the prophetic is not primarily: “*I have a message from God for you,*” perhaps sometimes it is: “*Something of God has become audible through the way I live.*”

Acts 4:13 says people recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus, something about them carried the residue of encounter, they had heard a Sound, they walked according to that Sound. Eventually, their walk became a sound.

Faith hears; Presence forms; Love moves, and movement becomes prophetic.

Every step of faith leaves an echo.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

What does your life communicate before you speak?

Where might mercy, forgiveness, patience, or presence become a prophetic sound through you?

Who has recognized something of God through the way you have lived?

What would it mean for your walk to echo the One you have heard?

What kind of sound do you want people to experience when they encounter you?

Chapter 4 Run Toward the Sound

At first we *hear* the Sound.

Then we *recognize* the Sound.

Then we *turn toward* the Sound.

Then we *walk toward* the Sound.

Eventually we *begin to live* from the Sound.

And finally *our walk becomes a prophetic sound* for someone else.

Hear the Sound.

Turn toward the Sound.

Run toward the Sound.

Live from the Sound.

Become an echo of the Sound.

Humanity once heard the Sound and hid;

Grace teaches humanity how to hear The Sound without running away.

Eventually we stop merely asking:

“Can you hear God?”

Our lives begin asking:

“Can you hear something of God in the way I walk?”

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

What are you currently tempted to run from?

What might change if you turned toward the Sound instead of hiding?

Where are you being invited to move from hearing to living?

What does “run toward the Sound” mean practically for you?

What is one next step you can take?

Chapter 5 Trauma Echoes

If divine Presence leaves an echo, human presence does too.

For a child especially, the sound of those entrusted with their care may remain long after the event itself is over...

...A slammed door.

...Raised voices from another room.

...Footsteps approaching down a hallway.

...A parent's tone suddenly changing.

...The sound of someone leaving.

...Or the terrible silence when comfort should have come.

Those sounds may become trauma echoes.

Years later the original event is gone, but the nervous system can react as though something similar is happening again; that gives Adam's words another possible dimension:

“I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid.”

The qol itself is not described as threatening, yet Adam hears Presence through fear.

And perhaps one of the tragedies of human experience is that we can begin interpreting the Sound of God through the echoes of other sounds we have known.

If *authority* sounded angry, *God* may sound angry.

If a *father* was unpredictable, the word “*Father*” may sound unsafe.

If *religion* sounded condemning, *Scripture* may sound like accusation.

If *love* was conditional, *God's love* may sound conditional.

If *abandonment* shaped childhood, even *silence* may sound like someone leaving.

This becomes enormously important for spiritual care...

Which sound are we hearing?

Some people may not actually be running from God, they may be running from an echo they have mistaken for God.

A person can spend decades hearing:

God is disappointed in me.

God is angry.

God is waiting for me to fail.

God will leave if I get this wrong.

But is that actually the Sound Jesus reveals?

Jesus becomes profoundly important because He clarifies the Sound.

"If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

Want to know what God sounds like?

Listen here...

Listen around the woman dragged before Jesus in shame.

Listen around Zacchaeus.

Listen around children welcomed into His arms.

Listen at Lazarus's grave.

Listen to Peter after his failure.

Listen from the cross: *"Father, forgive them."*

Jesus is, among many other things, **the clarification of the Sound.**

And then the question becomes not merely: *What sound am I hearing?*

But: *What sound am I leaving behind in someone else? In children? In frightened people? In grieving people? In employees? In those over whom I have authority?*

When someone hears our footsteps approaching, does something within them tighten? Or does something within them whisper: *I am safe.*

Presence is learning to carry a sound that does not create another wound.

Healing may not mean erasing every trauma echo.

Perhaps it means encountering another Sound—again and again—until the old echo no longer gets the final word.

The **echo** says: *Hide...*

The **Presence** says: *Where are you?*

The **echo** says: *You are unwanted...*

The **Presence** calls your name.

The **echo** says: *Run away...*

The **Presence** says: *Come.*

The echo says: *You are alone...*

The **Presence** says: *I am with you.*

And perhaps our walk becomes prophetic when another human being encounters our presence and, perhaps for the first time, **God sounds safe.**

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

What sounds from your past still carry emotional weight?

Have you ever mistaken an old echo for the voice of God?

What messages about God did you learn from authority, family, religion, or painful experiences?

What does Jesus reveal about what God sounds like?

What sound are you leaving behind in the people entrusted to your care?

Chapter 6 The Womb: Knowing Sound Before Sight

Consider the womb.

A developing child does not begin relationship with its mother by seeing her.

The womb is a world largely experienced through rhythm, vibration, movement, sound, and presence.

As development progresses, the child becomes increasingly capable of hearing sounds from within and outside the mother's body, with the mother's voice becoming particularly familiar. Heartbeat. Breathing. Blood flow. Movement. Speech. Cadence.

Before the child sees the mother's face, something of her sound is already familiar.

Before explanation—relationship.

Before theology—presence.

Before knowledge about—experience of.

Our earliest human existence therefore gives us an evocative analogy for faith.

We spend months living in intimate relationship with someone we cannot yet see face-to-face... then birth comes.

The Sound we knew becomes connected with a Face.

Not because Paul had fetal development in mind when he wrote about faith, but as an analogy it is beautiful:

Perhaps faith recognizes the Voice before we fully see the Face.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

What does the womb image suggest about knowing Presence before understanding it?

Where have you experienced relationship before explanation?

When have you recognized something before you could explain it?

What might it mean to trust the Voice before you can see the Face?

Where do you need to practice receptive listening?

Chapter 7 The Two Trees and the Interpretation of Sound

Now return to Eden.

Genesis gives us two significant trees:

The Tree of Life *and* The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We should be careful here, Genesis does not say Adam and Eve continually ate from the Tree of Life before the fall, but it does create an extraordinary before-and-after picture.

Before eating: “They were naked and were not ashamed.”

After eating: “The eyes of both were opened.”

And shortly afterward: “I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid.”

Notice the movement: Presence→ nakedness→ no shame...

then: knowledge→ eyes opened→ self-consciousness→ covering→ hiding→ fear.

The Sound may not have changed... the hearer changed.

The tree did not necessarily change God's Sound, it changed humanity's consciousness in relationship to the Sound.

Before the rupture, the Divine approach apparently required no defensive interpretation; no: *What does He want from me? Am I acceptable? Am I in trouble? Do I measure up?*

They simply existed: naked and unashamed.

Then humanity becomes painfully self-conscious of: Good. Bad. Acceptable. Unacceptable. Covered. Exposed. Safe. Dangerous. God for me. God against me.

Perhaps **shame** becomes an interpreter standing between humanity and Presence.

God approaches → Adam hears → Shame translates: Danger.

Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge

One possible theological reading is that the Tree of Life represents received life, while the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represents humanity's grasping for the authority to define, judge, and categorize reality independently.

One says: *Receive and live.*

The other becomes: *Evaluate and judge.*

And how easily religion can become dominated by that second posture:

Am I good? Am I bad? Are you good? Are you bad? Am I saved? Are you saved?

Does God approve of me? Does God approve of you?

Am I in? Are you out?

Everything becomes categorization.

Eventually we may possess enormous amounts of knowledge about God while becoming increasingly unable to recognize the character of God.

Jesus continually disrupts this.

Religious authorities bring to Jesus a woman and effectively ask: *Which category belongs to her?* Jesus sees a person.

They bring Him a blind man and ask: "Who sinned?"

They seek a category of blame; Jesus moves toward restoration.

They condemn healing on the Sabbath: *Right. Wrong. Lawful. Unlawful.*

...Jesus keeps moving toward life.

Perhaps that is why John so relentlessly connects Jesus with Life:

“In him was life.”

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

“I came that they may have life.”

And eventually Revelation returns humanity to: the Tree of Life.

Genesis ends Eden with access to the Tree guarded.

Revelation ends with the Tree of Life available again and an invitation:

“Come.”

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

Which “tree” seems to dominate your spiritual life: receiving and living, or evaluating and judging?

Where have you allowed categorization to replace relationship?

What questions arise when God approaches you?

How does Jesus disrupt your tendency to categorize people?

What would choosing life over judgment look like this week?

Chapter 8 Presence Before Explanation

The unborn child possesses no theology of its mother, it cannot explain maternal physiology, it does not know her biography, it may not even know her name, yet it has lived surrounded by her: Presence precedes understanding. Perhaps Eden hints at something similar. Before elaborate systems of evaluation: Presence. Life. Breath. Sound. Relationship. Perhaps salvation, without reducing its enormous biblical meaning, includes a movement from fearful interpretation back toward recognition,

not ignorance, not anti-intellectualism, not abandoning discernment, but refusing to allow our knowledge about God to drown out our recognition of God.

Perhaps we knew something of the Sound before fear taught us what we were supposed to hear, and redemption just may include discovering that beneath accumulated echoes of shame, trauma, religion, judgment, and fear, the original Sound has never stopped sounding.

The Tree of Knowledge asks: *“What does this Sound mean about me?”*

The Tree of Life says: *“Come closer and live.”*

The Bible ends not with humanity possessing every answer, but with an invitation: *“Come... take the water of life freely.”*

From womb to garden, from garden to Christ, from Christ toward new creation:

- Presence before explanation.
- Relationship before evaluation.
- Life before condemnation.
- The Sound before our fearful interpretation of the Sound.

...Perhaps formation means learning to hear again.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

☐ What have you learned about God that sometimes makes it harder to recognize God?

☐ Where might knowledge about God be drowning out awareness of God?

☐ What does “Presence before explanation” mean in your journey?

☐ Where do shame, trauma, religion, or fear still distort what you hear?

☐ What would it mean to learn to hear again?

Chapter 9

The Final Trumpet

And then something extraordinary happens... the biblical story ends with sound.

Paul writes: “*The Lord himself will descend... with the trumpet of God.*” —1 Thessalonians 4:16

Jesus uses trumpet imagery in Matthew 24.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15: “*The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised...*”

Notice that language: *the trumpet sounds—and death responds.*

It sounds like Ezekiel’s valley: a word is spoken, a sound begins, bones move, breath comes, life appears.

Sound in Scripture frequently does more than announce:

- Sound summons.
- Sound calls Abraham out.
- Sound calls Moses back.
- Sound wakes Samuel.
- Sound brings Elijah from the cave.
- Sound sends Isaiah.
- Sound calls Lazarus from a tomb: “*Lazarus, come out!*”

And Jesus says something remarkable in John 5:

“*The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*”

Later: “*All who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.*”

Resurrection itself is described as responding to a Voice.

Suddenly our phrase becomes even larger: *Run toward the Sound.*

Perhaps ultimately even death cannot prevent creation from responding to the Sound of Life.

- The child in the womb knows sound before sight.
- Adam hears the Sound in the garden.
- Humanity becomes afraid of the Sound.
- Prophets learn to recognize the Sound.
- Jesus reveals the Sound of the Father.

- Mary recognizes Him by His Voice.
- Lazarus hears the Voice from within a tomb.
- Pentecost begins with a Sound from heaven.
- And resurrection culminates in a trumpet.

There is breathtaking symmetry: the Voice that calls creation into being is the Voice that calls creation out of death. Perhaps the final trumpet is not an entirely new Sound, perhaps it is the culmination of the Sound echoing since: *“Let there be...”* Creation hears its Maker again, and this time:

- Nothing hides.
- Nothing runs away.
- Even the grave releases what it has been holding.
- The trumpet sounds.
- The dead rise.
- Life answers Life.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

☐ What does sound calling life out of death stir in you?

☐ Where do you need to hear a call toward life?

☐ What does the resurrection arc add to “Run toward the Sound”?

☐ How does the final trumpet image shape your hope?

☐ What would it mean to live as though Life is still answering the Voice?

Chapter 10

But What About Romans?

Then we arrive at Romans 10: *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

This text deserves careful handling; it should not be emptied of its force. Paul clearly gives enormous significance to faith, confession, and calling upon the Lord, but the passage has sometimes been reduced to something far smaller than Paul’s argument:

Say the correct words + believe the correct propositions = persuade God to save you.

Paul is describing something richer, he continues: *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Then: *“How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?”*

And eventually: *“Faith comes from hearing...”*

Listen to the movement: *proclamation → hearing → faith → confession → calling*

The Greek *homologeō* means to confess, acknowledge, profess, or openly affirm.

So confession is not magical speech, it is not an incantation, it is the outward expression of something inwardly recognized:

- Heart → belief
- Mouth → confession

The Sound has been heard; something awakens within; then the human voice answers. Confession is response, not manipulation.

Romans itself gives us an important safeguard, earlier Paul writes:

“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” —Romans 5:8

Notice the order... God's action in Christ does not begin because we first say the correct words. God acts. Then humanity is invited to respond.

Paul says elsewhere: *“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...”*
—2 Corinthians 5:19

Therefore: Confession does not create God’s loving disposition toward humanity; confession responds to what God has revealed and accomplished in Christ, that does not make confession insignificant, it makes it meaningful. The mouth is no longer trying to talk God into grace, the mouth is answering grace.

Romans 10 and the Sound

Now place Romans 10 beside Eden”

In Eden:

Humanity hears → fears → hides.

In Romans:

Humanity hears → believes → confesses → calls.

The fundamental human capacity remains: hearing... but the response changes.

In Eden, shame interprets the Sound and produces hiding.

In the gospel, the announcement is heard as good news, and humanity begins answering the Voice instead of hiding from it.

Perhaps confession can therefore be imagined as: *the human voice answering the divine Voice.*

God speaks → Humanity responds: *I hear You → I recognize You → Jesus is Lord.*

Not a password; not a religious incantation...

Resonance. A sound produced through proximity?

And notice what Paul asks people to believe: *“That God raised him from the dead.”*

The center is resurrection: Life overcoming death.

Lazarus hears: *“Come out.”*

Jesus says the dead will hear His Voice and live.

Paul says the trumpet will sound and the dead will rise.

And Romans calls us to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.

So Romans 10:9 need not be heard as:

“Make the correct sound so God will finally save you.”

Perhaps it can be heard more deeply as:

“You have heard the announcement of resurrection, and now your own voice begins to sound like what you have heard.”

You confess Life → You trust Life → You call upon Life →

And eventually the confession becomes larger than speech.

Our walk becomes our confession.

We hear Life → We believe Life → We speak Life → We walk in Life...

And our lives become *a prophetic echo* of the Sound that awakened us.

Perhaps salvation, seen through this lens, is not humanity desperately producing the correct sound so that God will finally respond...

God sounded first.

- Creation exists because God sounded first.
- The prophets moved because God sounded first.
- Mary turned because Christ spoke first.
- Lazarus came out because Life called first.
- Pentecost erupted because heaven sounded first.

Romans begins with the announcement of what God has done, then humanity answers, and perhaps that is faith:

God sounds... and something within humanity begins to resonate.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

☐ How have you understood confession and salvation in the past?

☐ What changes when confession is understood as response rather than manipulation?

☐ Where do you see proclamation → hearing → faith → confession → calling?

☐ What does it mean for your mouth to answer grace rather than create grace?

☐ How might your walk become your confession?

Chapter 11

The Sound of God

Perhaps the entire biblical story can be heard as one enormous movement:

- God speaks—and creation comes alive.
- God walks—and humanity hears.
- Humanity becomes afraid and hides.
- God continues calling.
- Abraham hears.
- Moses hears.
- Samuel hears.
- Elijah hears.
- Isaiah hears.
- Mary hears.
- The disciples hear.
- Paul hears.
- Lazarus hears.
- Pentecost hears.
- And one day, Paul says, the dead will hear.

The Sound has always been moving creation toward Life.

So perhaps the question is not merely: *Do you hear what I hear?*

Perhaps it is: *What have you learned to hear when God approaches?*

Judgment? Disappointment? Demand? Condemnation?

Or have we begun recognizing beneath all the echoes: Love.

And once we recognize the Sound, we *turn* toward it, we *walk* toward it, we *live* from it, and eventually something extraordinary happens: we begin carrying the Sound ourselves,

- Our mercy sounds like Him.
- Our patience sounds like Him.
- Our forgiveness sounds like Him.
- Our compassion sounds like Him.
- Our presence beside the grieving sounds like Him.
- Our refusal to shame sounds like Him.
- Our willingness to remain sounds like Him.

... and the world encounters someone who has spent enough time with Love, that Love has become audible through the way they live, and our walk becomes prophetic.

- *Hear* the Sound.
- *Recognize* the Sound.
- *Turn* toward the Sound.
- *Run* toward the Sound.
- *Live* from the Sound.
- *Become* an echo of the Sound.

Because perhaps redemption is not humanity learning how to make enough noise to get God's attention, perhaps redemption begins with discovering:

God has been sounding all along, and faith is humanity finally answering.

Journal & Reflection

Pause here before moving on.

Write freely. These questions are invitations, not tests.

☐ What have you learned to hear when you believe God is approaching?

☐ What echoes—judgment, disappointment, demand, condemnation—need to be distinguished from Love?

☐ Where are you being invited to turn toward the Sound?

☐ How could mercy, patience, forgiveness, compassion, or presence become audible expressions of Love?

☐ What would it mean for your life to become an echo of the Sound?

Hear the Sound.
Recognize the Sound.
Turn toward the Sound.
Run toward the Sound.
Live from the Sound.
Become an echo of the Sound.

God has been sounding all along.
And faith is humanity finally answering.