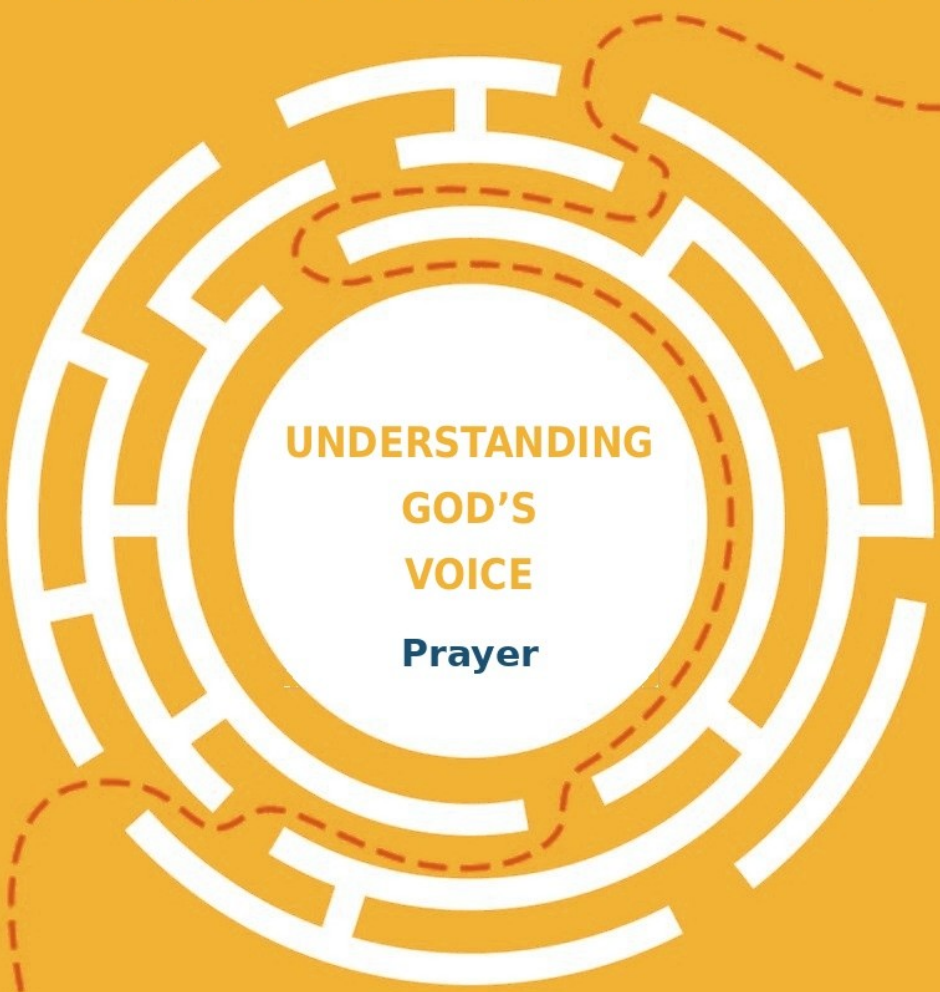
NUDGES 8

Nudges in the right direction



UNDERSTANDING GOD'S VOICE

Prayer

Wim Kamphorst

NUDGES

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Foreword

The disciples had seen Jesus heal, preach and walk on water. Yet they never asked Him: “Teach us to perform miracles.” They asked: “Lord, teach us to pray.” Apparently they saw that everything Jesus did came out of His time alone with the Father.

When I first came to faith, I did not know how to pray. I started very properly, in formal language and with sentences I had heard in church. What should I say? How do I listen? Does God even speak in a way I can understand? I had all those questions.

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

This booklet is about prayer as a conversation. Not about the right words or the right posture, but about a relationship in which you speak and He speaks too. These are nudges: small pushes to let your prayer grow from a monologue into a dialogue.

Wim Kamphorst, founder of (F)Luister Nederland

Introduction

Many people see prayer as something you send upward. You name your worries, say amen and go on with your day. There is nothing wrong with that. God wants to hear what is alive in your heart. But if it stops there, you miss half of the conversation.

Imagine visiting a good friend. You talk about yourself for half an hour, then you get up and walk away before he can say anything. That is how many Christians pray, and so did I, for years. Prayer only became a real conversation for me when I discovered that God talks back.

> *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."*
> Luke 11:9

Asking, seeking and knocking. Those are three verbs that keep going. You do not pray once and stop. You stay in conversation.

A closer look:
Jesus addressed God with the Aramaic word Abba. That is the word with which a child addresses his father, familiar and close. Paul writes that the Spirit lets us cry out the same: "Abba, Father!" So prayer does not begin with a formula, but with a child who knows that he may come to his father.

Chapter 1 Prayer is a conversation

Jesus said something that always gives me rest. Your Father already knows what you need, even before you begin to pray. So you do not have to explain anything to God. You do not have to convince Him. Why would you still pray, then? Because prayer is not first of all information. It is relationship.

> *"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."*
> Matthew 6:8

From formal to "Dad"

In the beginning I prayed very formally. I used formal language and tried to get it right. When I discovered the quiet time, it was mostly searching. What should I pray? How does this actually work? But the longer I practiced, the more a relationship began to grow. I discovered that Jesus knew everything about me, including the things I would still do wrong, and that He still found me worth the trouble.

That made it more intimate. In my inner room it slowly shifted from "God" to "Father", and from "Father" to "Dad". That is not a matter of losing respect. It is a matter of coming closer.

I love you

I once faced a choice and I wanted a clear answer from God. Left or right. Instead, through an inner picture, I received the impression that God said: "I love you." I thanked Him politely and asked again for an answer to my question. He said it once more.

Only after a few attempts did it sink in. At that moment He did not want to give an answer, He wanted to be close. When that landed in my heart, His love flowed in so powerfully that my fear of making the wrong choice melted

away. I thought God was mostly occupied with what was still to come. But He wanted to be with me in the now.

Perhaps you recognize that. You pray for an answer and you get something else. That is not a failed prayer. Sometimes the answer is a Person.

You do not have to say it beautifully

Jesus warned against praying with many words. You are not heard better if you pray longer or use more difficult sentences. An honest “help” is enough. In the (F)Luister magazine a young woman told how she became insecure at her new job. She prayed very simply: “Holy Spirit, help.” A little later she walked outside and songs came into her mind that reminded her of who she is in Jesus. Her work did not change. She did.

Prayer you do not see working

Only years after my conversion did I realize how much had been prayed before I knew Jesus. My mother and her friend had been praying for me all that time, precisely when things were getting worse and worse for me. I did not notice anything of it then. Still, I believe that thanks to their prayers openings remained for me to finally hear His voice. Prayer often works in secret. You only see it later.

Chapter 2 Making room to listen

Samuel was still a boy when God called him. He thought it was the priest Eli and ran to him three times. Eli was the first to understand what was happening and taught him one sentence.

> *"Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."*
> 1 Samuel 3:10

That may well be the most important prayer there is. Not: "Listen, Lord, for Your servant is speaking." But: "Speak, for I am listening."

A fixed place

Ever since the beginning of my life of faith I have had places where I meet Jesus. Such a place is not holy in itself. But a familiar place helps me to focus my heart on Him more quickly. Over the years that place changed when I moved, sometimes I even had two. What remained was the habit.

Jesus said: go into your inner room and close the door. For one person that is a chair by the window, for another a walk or the car on the way to work. It is not about the place, but about the door that you close for a moment on the rest of the world.

Paper and pen

Something that has helped me enormously is simple: writing. I keep a notebook or my notes app at hand and write down what comes up while praying. A thought, a picture, a sentence, a Bible verse that lights up. At that moment I do not yet need to know whether it comes from God. Later I look back and test it against the Bible and against the character of Jesus.

During a period of fasting I once wrote down three questions. In those days I was reading a book and came to pages I had never opened before. The three

answers were simply there, neatly one after the other. That does not happen every time. But it taught me that God answers in all kinds of ways, if you expect Him to.

Every ten minutes

The habit that has helped me most is small enough to do anywhere. I try to have a heart-to-heart moment with Jesus every ten to twenty minutes. No long silence, no special place. Just my attention turned to Him for a moment. After a while you notice that those short moments make you more sensitive to what He says during the rest of the day. Paul called that: pray without ceasing.

> *"Pray without ceasing."*
> 1 Thessalonians 5:17

When it stays quiet

Sometimes it stays quiet. You pray and you hear nothing. I have known that too, and it is not always a sign that something is wrong. Sometimes God speaks later, through a friend, a sermon or a thought during work. Sometimes His presence is the answer.

After my quiet time I once wanted to go for a bit of a walk. Suddenly I experienced His presence, like a warm blanket over me. I lay down and enjoyed His love for an hour. Nothing needed to be arranged. No question, no answer. Just being together.

> *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*
> Hebrews 4:16

Chapter 3 How do you grow in prayer?

You learn prayer by doing it. Not by reading a book about it, not even this booklet. A few nudges that have helped me:

1. **Start with listening**

   At the beginning of your prayer, do not immediately recite your list. First be quiet for a few minutes and ask: “Father, what do You want to say to me?” Write down what comes up, even if it seems small. After that you may tell Him everything that is on your heart.

2. **Find a fixed place and a fixed time**

   Choose a place where you meet Jesus. A chair, a walking route, the car. Sit there for a quarter of an hour every day for a week, without your phone or with only your notes app open. It is not about performance, but about the appointment.

3. **Pray honestly and briefly**

   You do not have to make beautiful sentences. Say what is there: “I am tired.” “I am angry.” “I don’t understand.” “Help.” God can deal with honesty much better than with a pious exterior.

4. **Practice the short moments**

   For a week, set a reminder on your phone every hour. When the signal sounds, turn your attention to Jesus for a moment. Say good morning to Him, thank Him, ask what He thinks of this moment. After a while you no longer need the signal.

5. **Pray for one other person**

   Choose someone you will pray for every day this month. Also ask God how He looks at that person, and write down what you receive. Perhaps you may share it someday, perhaps not. Your prayer does something either way, even if you do not see it.

Praying is not a technique to get God to do something. It is time with your Father. He is not waiting for your best words. He is waiting for you.

FAQ

Question: I keep getting distracted while praying. How can I prevent that?
Answer: Almost everyone has that. Put a piece of paper next to you and write down the thoughts that distract you, then you can let them go. Pray out loud or while walking, which helps many people stay focused. And be gentle with yourself: a distracted prayer is also a prayer.

Question: How do I know whether what I receive while praying comes from God?
Answer: Test it. Does it fit with the Bible? Does it fit with the character of Jesus? Does it bring peace, edification and love, or rather pressure and condemnation? If it concerns big choices, discuss it with people who are further along in faith. Write it down, so you can look back later.

Question: May I also ask God for things for myself?
Answer: Yes. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their daily bread. The Father knows what you need and He gives gladly. Just ask. I do notice that my prayers change the closer I live to Him. I increasingly ask what He Himself has on His heart.

At whispermagazine.org you can read true stories of people who heard God speak, learn more about hearing His voice and read our free Whisper magazine.

About (F)Luister Nederland

(F)Luister Nederland is a movement that wants to help believers understand the voice of God and grow in it. We believe that God still speaks today and that His children can learn to recognize, understand and obey His voice.

Our mission

We want to equip and encourage people to walk in relationship with Jesus in their daily lives, led by the Holy Spirit. It is our desire that more and more followers of Jesus learn to listen to His whisper and take bold steps in response.

Our vision

We see a church and a society in which God's voice is central once again. Where believers do not only listen to sermons or opinions, but live out of an intimate relationship with their Father in heaven. A generation that understands God's voice and, as a result, makes a difference in their surroundings.

Together we learn to understand His voice

There is more

This booklet is a nudge in the right direction. Do you want to go further? Whisper has more to help you on your way.

Whisper magazine
Our free magazine, to read online. **whispermagazine.org/magazine.html**

Seliah, our app
Our free app, for on the go. **whispermagazine.org/app**

How do you test an impression?
Ten questions to test what you hear. **whispermagazine.org/how-do-you-test.html**

More Nudges
Booklets on other themes. **whispermagazine.org/nudges.html**

Listening together
A guide for your small group. **whispermagazine.org/listening-together.html**

Quiet. I am listening.
A free 30-day reading plan. **whispermagazine.org/magazine.html**

The Listening Profile
How do you hear God? **whispermagazine.org/listening-profile.html**

True stories
People who heard God speak. **whispermagazine.org/stories.html**

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Prayer

Listening to Him. Praying as a conversation.

God speaks. Every day. Not only to prophets or spiritual leaders, but to each one of us. The problem is not that He is silent, but that we often do not tune in properly.

In this book, Wim Kamphorst takes you on a journey to learn to recognize, understand and obey the voice of God. You will discover:

- why praying is a conversation and not a shopping list;
- how you make room in your prayer to listen;
- five nudges to grow in prayer.

Wim Kamphorst once began his prayers very formally and properly. Slowly it became a conversation, from "God" to "Father" and from "Father" to "Dad".

With personal testimonies, clear Bible passages and practical examples, this book makes clear that praying as a conversation with the Father is something that is close to God's heart.

God speaks.
Will you let Him have His say too?

