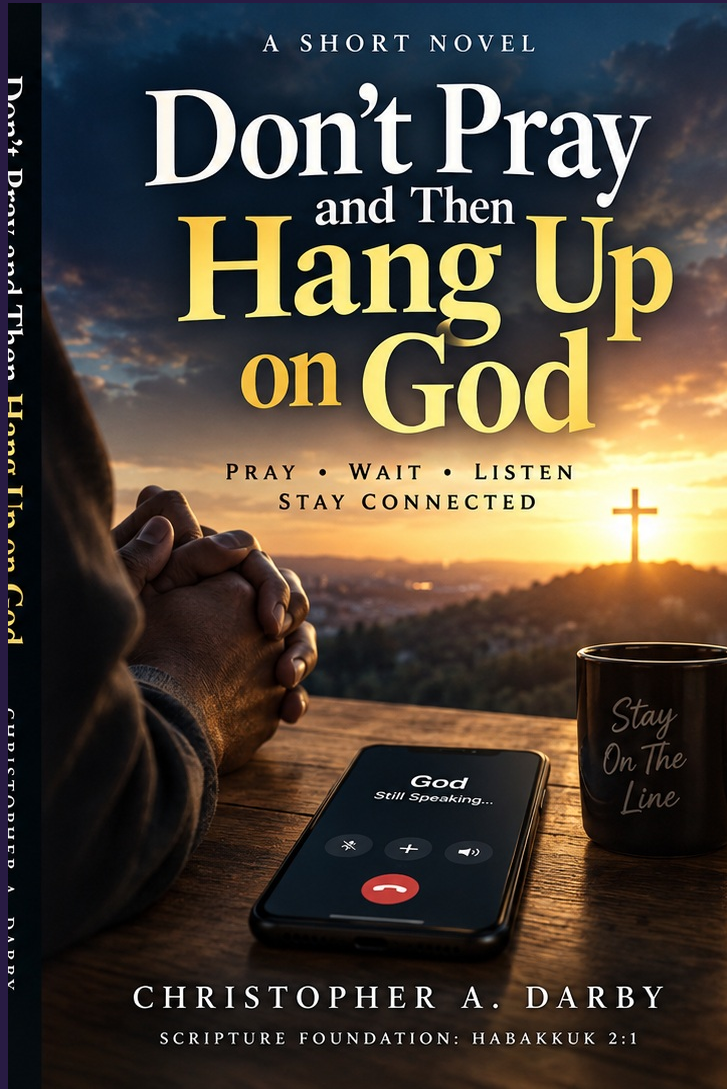




FREE CHAPTER ONE SAMPLE

Christopher Alan Darby

A FREE READER PREVIEW

DON'T PRAY AND THEN HANG UP ON GOD

Learning to Listen After You Say Amen

A timely call to move beyond one-sided prayer, remain spiritually attentive, and make room to hear what God may say after our words are finished.

Inside this complimentary sample, you will receive the complete first chapter exactly as presented in the book.



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FREE SAMPLE

CHAPTER 1 When Heaven Gets a Dial Tone

Pastor Jordan stood at the pulpit, the weight of both his Bible and the burden on his heart evident in the tremble of his voice. The sanctuary was quiet, yet charged with expectation.

"We've been taught to pray," he said slowly, voice cracking with conviction, "but not to listen."

The congregation leaned in.

"We say 'Amen' like it's the end of the call... then we walk away--like hanging up on God."

He paused, letting the words settle like seeds on tender soil.

"In this world of texts, tweets, TikToks, and soundbites," he continued, "we've turned prayer into performance. A monologue. A checklist. A spiritual Instagram story--we post it, then move on. But what if Heaven wanted to reply? What if God wasn't done speaking when we stopped praying?"

The church murmured in agreement.

Jordan stepped away from the pulpit and held up his smartphone. "We check for replies here," he said, waving the device. "We obsess over read receipts. We panic when someone leaves us on 'seen.' But how many of us have left God on 'seen'? How many of us poured out our pain, then walked away before He had the chance to whisper peace?"

Eyes widened. Heads nodded. Conviction filled the room.

He went on, "We pray in crisis, but clock out before clarity comes. We throw our hearts toward Heaven, then hang up before Heaven throws healing back."

He walked the aisle now, slowly, deliberately. "You don't hang up on a doctor before the diagnosis. You don't cut off your lawyer mid-counsel. But we treat the Creator of the universe like a voicemail box."

Gasps and gentle amens filled the air.

Jordan returned to the pulpit and flipped his Bible to Habakkuk 2:1. He read aloud: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me..."

"That's what we've lost," he said. "We've lost the watch. We want the word, but not the wait. We want the promise, but not the process."

He set his Bible down, eyes brimming. "But I believe," he said softly, "that God is raising up a generation who won't just pray and walk away. They'll linger. They'll listen. They'll stay on the line until Heaven answers back."

There was silence--holy silence.

Then someone in the back whispered, "I'm staying on the line, Lord."

And that's where revival begins: Not in the speaking, but in the stillness. Not in the monologue, but in the meeting. Not when we hang up... but when we hold on.

Pastor Jordan's words followed Tasha home long after the benediction. She had heard sermons about prayer all her life, but this one exposed a habit she had never questioned. Her prayers usually ended the moment her requests ended. She could spend twenty minutes telling God what hurt, what frightened her, what she needed fixed, and what she hoped would happen next. Then she would rise, reach for her phone, and reenter the noise of the day. That evening she tried something different. After saying amen, she remained seated at the edge of her bed. At first the quiet felt unproductive.

Nothing dramatic happened. No voice filled the room. No sudden answer appeared. Yet as the minutes passed, she noticed how much of her inner life had been hidden beneath constant motion. She recognized resentment she had been calling discernment, anxiety she had been calling urgency, and a decision she had nearly made simply because she was tired of waiting.

The dial tone was not proof that Heaven had disconnected. It was exposing how quickly she disconnected from herself, from Scripture, and from the possibility that God might answer in a form quieter than the question. Tasha had always associated God's voice with certainty. If she did not feel certain, she assumed she had heard nothing. But Pastor Jordan had suggested that listening often begins before certainty arrives. It begins when a believer stops filling every silence with another request. She opened her Bible without searching for a verse that would agree with her. She simply read. The words did not give her a map of the next six months, but they gave her enough light to recognize the attitude she needed to surrender that night. For the first time, she understood that an answer from God might address the person praying before it addressed the problem being prayed about.

The following Sunday Jordan explained that listening prayer is not an attempt to manufacture a mystical experience. It begins with what God has already spoken. Scripture gives believers a vocabulary for recognizing God's character, priorities, and boundaries. If an impression contradicts the revealed character of Christ, it should not be baptized with spiritual language. If a desire requires dishonesty, revenge, pride, or irresponsibility, silence is not permission. Jordan told the congregation that some people keep asking God for a new word because they do not want to obey the clear word already in front of them. Listening, therefore, is not passive. It is the willingness to let truth interrupt preference. Tasha began

reading smaller portions of Scripture more slowly. Instead of racing through chapters to complete a plan, she asked what the passage revealed about God and what response it required from her.

Zion approached the lesson from another direction. He was comfortable with silence when silence meant avoiding people, but uncomfortable with silence when it required facing God. Without music, messages, or movement, his own motives became loud. He realized that he often prayed for opportunity while resisting discipline, prayed for influence while avoiding accountability, and prayed for peace while feeding habits that kept his mind restless. The quiet after prayer became a mirror. That discovery was not condemnation; it was invitation. A real conversation with God could include confession as well as requests. Zion began ending prayer with three questions written in his journal: What truth do I already know? What obedience have I delayed? What fear is pushing me to rush? Those questions did not turn prayer into a formula, but they kept him from pretending that every unanswered prayer was a mystery. Some answers had already arrived in the form of responsibility.

Pastor Jordan also warned the church about another danger: confusing every passing thought with the voice of God. A listening posture still requires discernment. God is not honored when believers place His name on every preference, hunch, or impulse. Jordan encouraged them to test impressions against Scripture, wise counsel, the character of Christ, and the fruit a decision was likely to produce. The point of staying on the line was not to become spiritually superstitious. It was to become spiritually attentive. Tasha found freedom in that distinction. She no longer felt pressured to interpret every coincidence. She could wait. She could test. She could admit, 'I do not know yet,' without treating uncertainty as failure. Listening became

less about chasing extraordinary experiences and more about cultivating a faithful, teachable heart.

During the next few weeks, the congregation practiced several minutes of silence after corporate prayer. At first people shifted in their seats. A child coughed. Someone dropped a program. The ventilation system suddenly sounded loud enough to be part of the service. Jordan smiled because the discomfort was revealing something. Most of them had been trained to believe that meaningful worship must always be filled with sound. Yet the silence slowly became less awkward. People began bringing notebooks. Some wrote a verse that came to mind. Some wrote a name they needed to call. Some simply sat. Jordan reminded them that the goal was not to force God to speak on command. The goal was to become available. Silence could not manipulate Heaven, but it could expose how rarely they allowed their own souls to become still.

Tasha noticed that waiting after prayer changed the way she entered the rest of her day. She became less reactive. She stopped answering difficult messages immediately just to relieve pressure. She gave conversations room to breathe. When a coworker criticized her, she did not assume the criticism was an attack. She prayed, listened, and discovered that a portion of it was true. The discipline that began beside her bed followed her into relationships. Listening to God made her more capable of listening to people. She began to see that hurried prayer and hurried living were connected. Both were driven by the fear that pausing might cost her control. But every pause did not cost control; some pauses restored perspective.

By the end of the month, Tasha and Zion understood Pastor Jordan's original image more deeply. A dial tone can feel empty only when the caller believes speaking is the entire purpose of the call. In relationship, pauses matter. Tone matters. Presence matters. The willingness to remain matters. Prayer was

becoming less like leaving a message and more like living in communion. They still brought urgent needs to God. They still cried, asked, pleaded, and hoped. But amen no longer meant, 'I am finished with You.' It meant, 'I have said what I know to say, and I am still available.' That small change reshaped their days. They became less frantic about signs, more attentive to Scripture, more willing to seek wise counsel, and slower to call every delay a denial. They were learning the first discipline of spiritual hearing: do not confuse the end of your words with the end of God's work.

Jordan later met with a young couple who had been praying about a move. They had already chosen the city, toured apartments online, and told friends the move was 'what God was doing.' When Jordan asked how they had reached that conclusion, they described their excitement but could name no time of listening, no wise counsel, and no examination of the financial strain the move would create. He did not tell them whether to go or stay. Instead, he asked them to slow the conversation down. Prayer should not be used as a ceremonial signature on a decision already made. The couple left with homework: list what was known, what was assumed, what Scripture clearly required, and what questions still needed honest answers. Their situation gave Tasha another picture of the dial tone. Sometimes we hear only ourselves because we have filled the entire conversation with our own conclusion before we ever pray.

That week Tasha experimented with ending prayer differently. Instead of saying amen and immediately moving, she repeated one sentence: 'Lord, I am listening for what I need to notice.' The wording helped her because it did not demand a supernatural message. It simply turned her attention outward and inward. On one morning she noticed exhaustion. On another she noticed a name that had been recurring in her thoughts, and she sent that person an encouraging message.

On another she noticed nothing except the need to be still. The practice taught her that listening is not always about receiving new information. Sometimes it is about becoming aware of what hurry has kept invisible.

Zion began to understand that God's response may unfold across time rather than arrive as a single sentence. A conversation with a mentor might clarify one part. A closed door might remove another option. A verse might correct a motive. An unexpected opportunity might reveal a gift. Weeks later, the pieces make sense together. This was frustrating to him because he preferred complete answers. Yet he saw that relationship is often built through continuing dependence. If God handed him a full blueprint for every decision, he could follow the plan without continuing the conversation. Dependence kept him returning. The dial tone was no longer empty space; it was an invitation to remain in relationship while clarity developed.

Before preaching the chapter's theme again, Jordan wrote one line in the margin of his notes: 'Do not teach people only how to speak to God. Teach them how to remain.' That became his pastoral concern. A church can be loud in prayer and still be weak in discernment. It can know how to ask publicly while having little patience privately. Jordan wanted the people to leave with more than a slogan. He wanted them to build lives in which Scripture, silence, wisdom, and obedience had enough room to shape decisions. The dial tone would come in many forms over the years - delays, uncertainty, unanswered questions, and long pauses. He wanted them to know what to do when it did: stay present.

Jordan's own prayer life had to submit to the message he preached. There were mornings when he could speak eloquently in the pulpit and still rush through private prayer because the schedule was full. One Tuesday he caught himself closing his Bible, checking the time, and mentally moving to

the next appointment before he had spent even a minute in quiet. The irony made him smile. He sat back down. Leadership did not exempt him from the discipline he was asking of others. In fact, the more people depended on his words, the more important it was that his soul was not sustained only by producing words. He needed to listen before he taught others to listen.

Tasha began noticing how often the first answer to prayer came as a change in perspective. A difficult coworker did not disappear, but Tasha saw her own defensiveness. A financial concern did not vanish, but she saw spending habits that needed adjustment. A relationship did not instantly resolve, but she recognized a boundary she had been afraid to set. None of these were the dramatic answers she would once have posted as testimonies, yet each moved her closer to wisdom. The dial tone was becoming a classroom where she learned that God's work could begin inside her before anything around her changed.

Zion shared the lesson with a friend who said, 'I pray, but I never know if God answers.' Zion did not pretend to have a formula. He told him to begin with what is certain: Scripture, honest self-examination, wise counsel, and obedience to what is already clear. 'Do not start by chasing a voice,' he said. 'Start by becoming available to truth.' The advice surprised Zion because months earlier he would have wanted a more dramatic method. His own failure had made him more grounded. He was learning that mature discernment is less fascinated with mystery and more committed to faithfulness.

The chapter ended in Jordan's mind with a simple picture: a hand still holding the phone after the talking stopped. That hand represented patience, humility, and trust. It refused to interpret quiet as abandonment. It did not demand that every answer arrive immediately. It simply remained. Jordan knew many people would face seasons when prayer felt like that - no

thunder, no obvious sign, no instant relief. He wanted them to remember that staying present can itself be an act of faith.

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Christopher Alan Darby - Retired Senior Pastor, Author, and Independent Church Consultant