



# *Able Soul*

Empowering God's Spirit Within



Lucy Goncalves



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I loved reading *Able Soul*—what an inspirational easy read! Written and constructed in short chapters it will equally work as a daily devotional, or an absorbing one sitting read from cover to cover, or as an occasional “fire-side” book that one can come back to again and again. Whichever way, the reader will laugh, cry, pray, reflect, and learn as Lucy Goncalves draws insightful analogies from the challenges and triumphs of her own life as someone with cerebral palsy. It is a strikingly honest account that is sometimes lighthearted, and other times raw and disturbing. But through it all one will learn profound lessons of amazing grace, God’s love, personal accountability, courage, and keys to overcoming set-backs to get the very best out of life. Lucy is a much loved member of our church.

**—Graham Fletcher, Pastor of C3 Church Vancouver  
Author and Itinerant Minister**

Modern society flaunts success based on physical ability and social status; very clearly implying that the value of each life is determined by outward image, physical performance and social achievement.

*Able Soul* is a wake-up call to all of us.

Today’s society has lost its soul, and it has lost its way. We may be “physically able”, but with suicide, bullying, self-harm, violence, and depression at an all-time high, we all need an “able soul”, like Lucy.

Thank you to Lucy for this book that opens our mind and our heart to a different way of thinking and living. Society needs this gift, and Lucy you are showing us the way to an Able Soul.

**—Carrie Williams, Former Executive Director  
Signal Hill Life Education Society**

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Lucy Goncalves

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Published by Able Soul Wheel Press  
Vancouver, Canada

ISBN 978-1-9990326-1-6 (paperback)  
ISBN 978-1-9990326-0-9 (ebook)

Interior design by [Sun Editing & Book Design](#)  
Cover design by Candesign  
Back cover photo by Shaun Huberts

Printed in Canada

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# ***About Me***

**M**y name is Lucy. I love going on adventures and particularly enjoy the outdoors; anytime I'm near the water it brings me such joy! I'm keen to try new things, including food, and I'm a lover of dark chocolate. I'm a Netflix binger (please don't judge me yet.) My friends and family are the gold nuggets that I treasure close to my heart. Most important is my love for God. By the way, I have a physical disability—cerebral palsy (CP)—hence the wheelchair on the front cover.

Some more interesting tidbits:

- I've been skydiving, water sit-skiing, horseback riding, sailing and rock climbing. Hang gliding and travelling to Australia remain on my bucket list.
- My favourite musicians are Elton John, Billy Joel and Garth Brooks. The Wow Worship series is my favourite praise music.
- My family is from Portugal and I love Portuguese food, especially my mom's cooking.
- I'm the first member of my family to earn a bachelor's degree (business administration). It took a bit longer for me, but I did it!
- Volunteering is a lifestyle practice that I value. Serving on several boards for over 28 years included being president of two non-profit organizations. It's an awesome way that I can serve my community. You could say that I'm a master of chairing meetings.
- Once I got a ride home in a paddy wagon. I was downtown when my power chair stopped working and the police came to my

rescue! Not being intoxicated in any way, made the ride more memorable.

- I like to make fun of myself and often laugh at my own stupidity.

I wanted to give you a sense of who I am and hopefully you'll be able to relate on some level. None of my accomplishments would be fulfilled without God. The Lord has been with me every step of the way. He has given me grace and unconditional love to carry me through the difficult and challenging times. The following verse is my life's motto, a good reminder that there is always hope in God:



*"... through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*

ROMANS 5:2-5 (NIV)



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# ***Preface***

**S**o, what led me to write this book?

This book is birthed from prayer. It is my heartfelt passion to encourage others to have a deeper connection with God's Spirit—the Holy Spirit—in everyday life.

I was recently interviewed at church for a sermon. One of the questions was: "What is the greatest barrier keeping people from living in awareness of God at every moment?" This question directly relates to why I have written this book. My answer is twofold: not continually inviting God into one's life throughout the day, and not understanding the value of time.

Since God has made us each unique, there are various approaches to prayer. As a reflective person by nature, my approach is to invite God into my life throughout my day. I typically ask him one of the following questions:

- What can I learn from this situation?
- How can I change my perspective to see through your eyes?
- Do I act now or remain quiet, waiting for your Spirit to nudge me?

If I'm not sure I hear God's voice I ask for clarification until I sense a calming in my soul. Through prayer, inviting him in on a day-to-day basis, I have discovered ways to be more receptive to the Lord.

Many people have forgotten or don't understand the value of time. Quite a few were puzzled at my response to the question at church. I said that due to my cerebral palsy, whenever I'm rushed, my involuntary movements increase causing my body to become spastic. For example, when getting on the bus, I try to be as fast as possible

in parking my power chair in the designated area. Sometimes the bus driver notices that I'm having difficulty and his response is "take your time." When I hear that, my body calms down and I can park in a more efficient and timely manner.

I went on to say that this principle applies in our relationship with God as we often rush our time with him. However, when we don't take time to be with God, our souls too, can become spastic on an emotional level. Whenever a muscle spasms, it causes tension and can lead to severe pain. Therefore, the affected body part is not fully functional.

Over the years I've witnessed an overwhelming sense of oppression among faith-believers and observed many people struggling to find God in their everyday life. When we don't allow God the time to renew our souls, we tend to get stressed or overwhelmed. As a result, we are less receptive to hearing God's voice and receiving his nurture. However, when we invite God's Spirit in throughout the day, this aligns our souls with his Spirit and widens the pathway of communication.

One of the biggest challenges of living with CP is not having my voice valued and fully listened to because of my speech impediment. I live in a fast-paced society where we often forget to take the time to listen fully.

Living with a physical disability has caused me to rely on God in more ways than the average person. Like many people with disabilities, I've gained skills and tools to overcome adversity. In addressing life's roadblocks, I've learned to adapt and be open to receiving assistance from others. I've come to realize that vulnerability is a strength.

I've discovered that I work at a slower pace, especially on a physical level. It takes me longer to do things like getting dressed, using the washroom and eating a meal. The fact is, I can't maintain the pace that society demands. Through this I've also learned that God works in his own timing and that he measures time in his unique way.

These pearls of knowledge have helped me become more aware of the roadblocks in my spiritual life. I now continually pray for God's help and wisdom in navigating these barriers.

Even though my physical abilities are limited, my mind and soul are not confined by these limitations. In relying and trusting on God every day, I experience greater freedom and am able to thrive. There is a deeper contentment and an abiding peace within me.



*"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."*

ISAIAH 40:29-31 (NIV)



In conversation with able-bodied friends, I realized they, too, feel impaired or disabled, but in different ways. This book is for everyone, as we all have challenges to overcome, whether they be physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual. The Lord tailors how he communicates with us according to what is most beneficial to our personal listening style and circumstances. My hope is that these introspective reflections will resonate with your soul, igniting a stronger desire and will to discover ways to have holy intimacy. I pray you'll continue to build a deeper relationship with God in which you'll experience greater joy and freedom.

If you are a parent or relative of a child with a disability, I pray that you will find my life story encouraging. In spite of living with a disability, your loved one can triumph, especially with a helping hand from the Lord.

If you, yourself, are living with a disability, my hope is that you won't feel so alone. I pray that this book will give you more assurance that God is with you, especially during the challenging

times. He absolutely adores you and knows your heart intimately. God will always be your cheerleader!

We learn from each other and by listening to stories. Sometimes the most powerful stories are the ones we don't experience but can relate to. They can give us a different perspective and help enlighten our minds and spirits.

I pray as you read these reflections you will find the Lord drawing you in with the warmth of his Holy Spirit.



*"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people ..."*

EPHESIANS 1:18 (NIV)

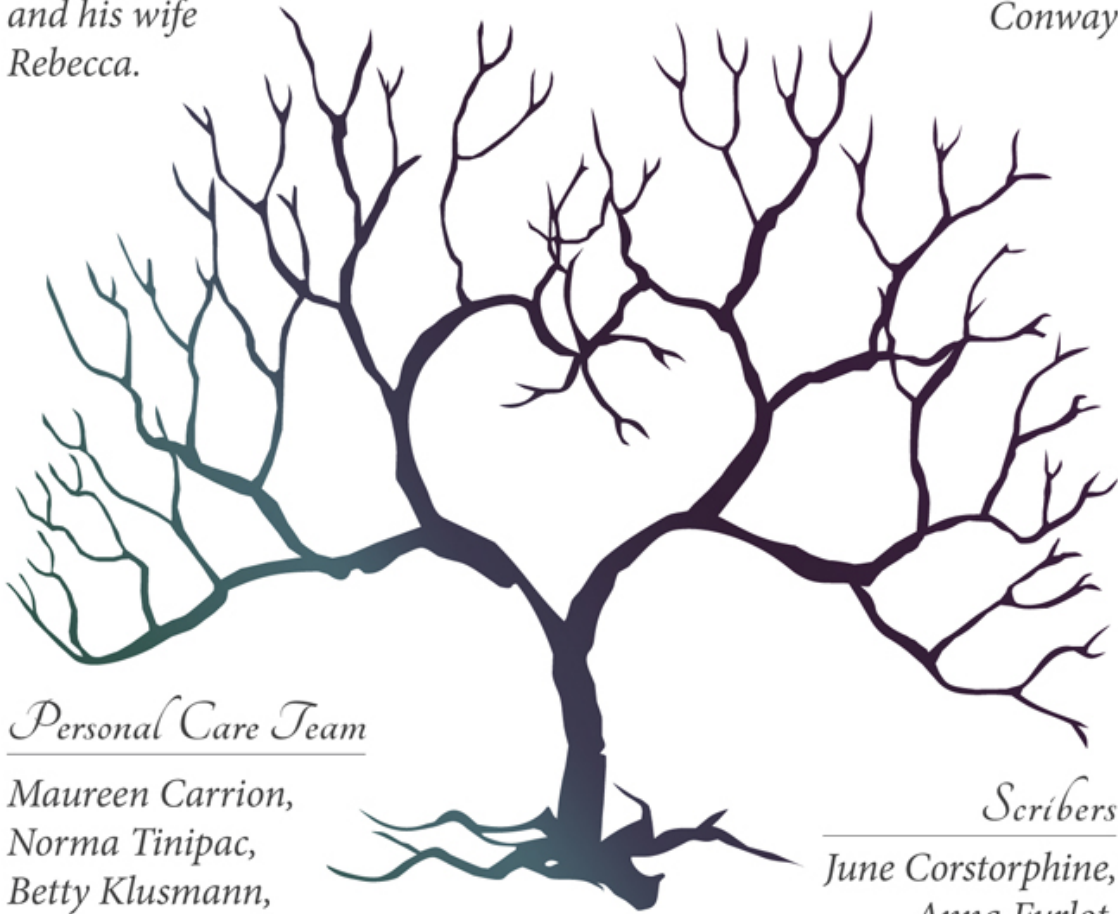


*Friends*

Irene McGuinness, Ginny Jaques,  
Kim Pierrot, Paula & Dave Schulz,  
Suzanne Paterson, Louise & Barry  
Soper, Randene & Roger Hardy,  
David Ducklow, Beba Morales,  
Kathy Fraser, Brenda Loewen,  
Matt & Rosalie  
Conway

*Minha Família*

My mom Laurinda, brothers  
Alfred & Bob, my sister Carmen  
and brother-in-law Bill,  
my niece Daleela &  
nephew Quinton  
and his wife  
Rebecca.



*Personal Care Team*

Maureen Carrion,  
Norma Tinipac,  
Betty Klusmann,  
Francisca Tinao,  
Ross McKenzie

*Scribers*

June Corstorphine,  
Anna Furlot,  
Adrienne Mohr,  
Marilina Musto

# ***Acknowledgements***

**Minha Família:** God has blessed me with a loving family who have learned to embrace the challenges of having a relative with a disability; never mind my adventuresome personality! It is with my utmost gratitude for their unending support and love, I thank them for their encouragement, especially in the midst of writing this book. To my mom Laurinda, thank you for your willingness to help me in any way possible, especially for the last few months, so I can finish the book. My mom makes the best Portuguese food! To my extended family in Portugal, Brazil and United States, your kind thoughts and prayers are deeply appreciated. *Obrigado por tudo!*

**My Hometown:** Blessed to have grown up in the loving, small town of Kitimat. Please know that I haven't forgotten your kindness and I will always cherish my childhood friendships.

**My Faith Communities:** Capilano Christian Community Church, thank you for embracing me in my brokenness when I was so young. You gave me a strong foundation of faith and roots of love. To my present church community, C3 Vancouver, thank you for being so inclusive and for being true disciples, making the house of God accessible to all.

**My Entourage:** Let's face it, if it weren't for you, I'd be still in bed watching soaps. Seriously, thank you for being the extension of my hands and graciously doing all the little chores that are necessary for life to happen. It is because of you, my care attendants, I am able to live a full and productive life.

**My Scribes:** Countless hours of dictation—you were so patient in listening, so steadfast in asking for clarification ensuring that you type exactly what I say. You read my pages out loud and never

judge when I made many revisions. Thank you for respecting my voice and not interfering in my own creative process.

**My Advisors:** A deep appreciation to Irene and Ginny for the editorial feedback and encouragement, as I kept feeding them chapter after chapter for them to review. Thank you for graciously volunteering your time, giving me helpful suggestions and always assuring me that I was going in the right direction. One of my mentors, Pastor Kim Pierrot was the first person to read the book in its' entirety. Thank you for respectfully guiding me, capturing my true intention of inviting the reader to contemplate their own spiritual journey with God.

**My Awesome Loving Friends:** You rock!!!! Thank you for being my prayerful cheerleading squad! You believed in my writing ability when I doubted myself. You stayed with me on this journey, always interested in my progress and celebrating my small milestones. You always look beyond my disability into my heart.

God is good all the time!

# ***Prayer is the Breath of Life for Our Souls***

**A**s a Christian—a child of God—I’m passionate about the value of prayer. Maybe this is because I understand the physical implications of not having enough oxygen. At birth, the umbilical cord wrapped around my neck. For a minute or two, I did not receive any oxygen, which damaged the motor area of my brain, resulting in me having Cerebral Palsy. The type of CP I have mainly affects my speech and body mobility. I have a speech impediment and am not able to walk on my own. However, I believe that the lack of prayer has far more detrimental consequences to my soul than the physical limitations of a disability has to my body.

When we put prayer on the back burner, the oxygen to our souls begins to diminish. This can happen when we are preoccupied with the busyness of life, or when we get overwhelmed with unsettling world events. With access to news 24/7, atrocities around the world seem more daunting and times can feel scary and more discouraging. As Christians, we are in danger of being sidetracked, wondering what we can do to feed the hungry, fight against injustice and advocate for others in need. We put the onus on ourselves instead of first seeking protection and wisdom from God. Sometimes we fall into helplessness and complacency.

It seems to be more acceptable to dwell on what we ought to do to solve the problems of the world than to pray. If we try to live life and fight injustice solely on our own accord, we disconnect from God. Prayer is essential to our well-being and to the goodness of God that we need to access in order to serve humanity. Prayer can give us the “oxygen” we need to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others.



*"Don't grieve God. Don't break his heart. **His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you**, is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself. Don't take such a gift for granted."*

EPHESIANS 4:30 (MSG) (EMPHASIS MY OWN)



Prayer is the breath of life for our souls. When we inhale, we receive God's grace, goodness and wisdom. When we exhale, we share our joys, concerns and other thoughts with God. Prayer is the essential act for us to create an atmosphere, to consciously make space, allowing God's Spirit to be present with us. It's a moment of intimacy where your soul can breathe and God's Spirit can connect with your heart and mind.



*"Those who are motivated by the flesh only pursue what benefits themselves. But those who live by the impulses of the Holy Spirit are motivated to pursue spiritual realities. For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set controlled by the Spirit finds life and peace."*

ROMANS 8:5-6 (TPT)



Through the power of prayer, we can be more receptive to God's anointing, allowing us to be freer as we cope with everyday life and when we do acts of service. In our personal relationship with the Lord, prayer is the substance of the divine connection which propels the real nourishment into our souls.

Although the effects from the lack of prayer in one's life are not as visibly noticeable as the lack of oxygen to me with my disability, they can still wreak havoc on one's emotional and mental state.

Thankfully, with God it is never too late to inhale and allow his Spirit to resuscitate our souls with his goodness.



*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you, Lord, for being a Father who is always present in every circumstance that we face. I'm in awe of your endless capacity for patience, love and grace.*

*You are the living water that quenches my thirsty soul; you are the anchor that keeps me afloat even through the roughest waves. Your Holy Spirit is like a blanket that warms my soul, keeping me secure and enclosed in your divine protection.*

*Lord, I confess, at times I do put our relationship on the back burner, especially when I feel overwhelmed or preoccupied with the demands of life. It's so easy to get lost in the busyness that I forget to take a few moments to be in your presence. Time with you is so precious, so essential for our relationship and my rejuvenation.*

*May I take time to allow your Holy Spirit to breathe into my daily life. When I get overwhelmed by life's worries, may I bring them to you and ask for your discernment.*

*May I be refuelled in the joy of being in your presence, knowing that you are my strength, that I can take comfort in you, and that you will guide me when needed.*

*Help me remember that spending time with you brings you joy, as well. May the souls of my brothers and sisters in Christ also be refreshed as they take time to breathe in your presence.*

*Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being the oxygen for our souls, continuously filling us with your sustenance, and revitalizing our*

*souls and minds.*

*Amen*



Come take a few moments to rest in the Spirit. Let God help you untangle the cord of stress wrapped around your spirit. Breathe in and allow the Lord to resuscitate your soul.

# ***God is Always Accessible***

**L**ack of accessibility is one of the challenges I face living with a disability. In terms of physical accessibility, I use a power chair to navigate around. Even though accessibility in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia has greatly improved over the years, it is still limited for people with disabilities. There have been times when I've attended a meeting or social function where the meeting place was inaccessible. Either there were stairs outside the building or no elevator to get to the correct floor. There have also been times when I've had to motor on the road because there was no curb ramp to access the sidewalk. Furthermore, ninety percent of my friends' homes are not wheelchair accessible, so we meet at my place or in a coffee shop.

Another challenge in terms of accessibility has to do with how others view me. I have a speech impediment, which sometimes makes people hesitant to talk with me. They are afraid they won't understand me, or they don't have the time to listen. For the most part I can be understood and once you are acquainted with my speech patterns it becomes less of a barrier. It just takes a bit of time and patience. This has been an ongoing obstacle for me, especially in my pursuit of employment opportunities.

However, it's a completely different experience with God. He's always fully accessible and an excellent listener. It's a totally different world with him, which I enjoy immensely! I never have to wonder how receptive he will be. I don't have to climb any stairs or prove my intelligence. With him, I am free to be myself. God doesn't put up any barriers.



*"And now, because we are united to Christ, we both have equal and direct access in the realm of the Holy Spirit to come before the Father!"*

EPHESIANS 2:18 (TPT)



Unfortunately, I'm the one who puts up the barriers with my emotions or unwillingness. But the beauty of having a disability is that I have learned to let go—to become more open to the Holy Spirit and rely more on God's strength, as it is far more resilient than mine.

The best part is that we all have equal access to him and to the blessings of his anointed Spirit.



*Dear Father in Heaven,*

*One of the attributes I most admire about you is how accessible you are to everyone. There are no mountains to climb, no bureaucratic regulations to follow or hoops to jump through to reach you, Lord. All we need to do is unlock our hearts and let you in.*

*"We have boldness through him [our Lord Jesus Christ], and free access as kings before the Father because of our complete confidence in Christ's faithfulness."*

EPHESIANS 3:12 (TPT)

*You are ever present, graciously waiting for us to meet you. Thank you for making your Spirit inclusive, accessible to everybody, despite our level of ability, intelligence or emotional well-being.*

*You constantly invite us to come to you as we are, accepting our frailties, and you eagerly wait to show us your healing power and*

*divine wisdom.*

*I pray that we can all embrace the simplicity of being in a relationship with you and not allow your love to be overshadowed by religious complications or humanly manufactured unworthiness. Thank you, Lord, for being a loving Father to all.*

*Amen*



You have free reign to love and be loved by God. What are some of the barriers that you need God to help you remove so you can be more intimate with his Spirit?

# ***Don't Cover Up Your Mess***

**L**iving with a disability gives me a unique perspective that a lot of people may not experience but might be able to relate to. This perspective has helped shape my faith and deepen my intimate relationship with the Lord, and is one of the many reasons that inspired me to write this book. A valuable truth I've gained from having a disability is that I need to accept my circumstances, my appearance and my messy way of doing things. I've learned how to be more authentic and not be concerned so much about exterior appearances or prestige.

With having CP, the messages in the motor area of my brain can be misdirected temporarily, so I often experience involuntary body movements when I engage in concentrated physical activity. As a consequence, when I feed myself, it can get really messy. When my arm wavers sporadically, pieces of food can slide off the spoon, onto the table or even land on the floor. Imagine a toddler feeding herself and you get the picture, minus the temper tantrums, of course.

I remember once when I was in a café eating a piece of chocolate cake, an acquaintance stopped by to say hello. I had remnants of cake on my face and cheeks, so I automatically pulled my arm up to cover my mouth because I felt embarrassed and ashamed. I didn't want to gross them out.

What does this have to do with our relationship with God? In some respects, we all hide parts of ourselves from God: our weaknesses, our imperfections, our sins and our sorrows. The issue here is that we build up walls, blocking out areas of our hearts, making it harder for God to come in.



*"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.*

*You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.*

*You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought."*

MATTHEW 5:3-5 (MSG)



I learned at a young age—and am still reminding myself to accept—that my appearance might not always be appealing to others. For me, prestige is not so significant that it would prevent me from going out to have a bite to eat, socializing at a party or just enjoying a scrumptious piece of cake. Hunger and companionship prevail over beauty.

That is also what is required with God in order to have deeper intimacy with him. Sometimes we wonder why we can't hear God, feel his Holy Spirit or enjoy his presence. We tend to keep up walls of shame and live by our pretences, which makes it harder to let the Spirit in and allow God to bless us. By accepting our imperfections and releasing the negative thoughts, we free up space so that the Lord can come in and be the sanctuary to quiet our souls.



*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*It will take my lifetime to completely accept my frailties and imperfections, especially the ones that I can't change. Continuing to be upset or discouraged over them is rather pointless and can distract me from opportunities and blessings that you may put forth.*

*Lord, I confess that I have a habit of straying away from you when I am emotionally distraught. Especially in times when I'm discouraged, I often feel unworthy of your love, and that I need to be in better spirits and grateful for what I have. In times like these, I realize I need to lean on you more as you always have a way of changing my perspective or providing a piece of wisdom that I need in that moment.*

*Lord we are blessed with the ability to accept what we can't change and the knowledge that you, Oh Lord, accept us where we are. You can take our weaknesses and use them to your advantage.*

*How wonderful to understand that you are the master creator who can tweak, remold and adapt to our quirks.*

*Amen*



Look at your reflection in the mirror. Imagine God behind you, lovingly gazing over your shoulder. What can you do to release shame and accept God's grace?

One of the greatest challenges we all have in our faith is listening. We get used to listening to God in a certain way, following certain cues we have come to depend on. When we are not able to pick up on these familiar indicators, we grow impatient, give up in defeat and stop praying as we think God is silent or not speaking at all.

But what's so magnificent about God is that he uses various communication styles and techniques to draw us to him. We forget that we have different senses that we can utilize.

Perhaps the next time we think we can't hear God, or that he isn't listening, maybe we need to change our perspective and go beyond our usual indicators. Let's open our minds to other ways God communicates and exercise all of our senses so we can truly comprehend his message and receive his blessing to the full extent.



*"Teach me more about you, how you work and how you move, so that I can walk onward in your truth until everything within me brings honor to your name."*

PSALM 86:11 (TPT)



*Dear Father in Heaven,*

*How easy it is to get caught up in the routine of life. I can get into a rut of doing things in the same manner and forget to look beyond my usual ways, especially in the area of listening to you and seeking your wisdom.*

*I confess that I get frustrated when I don't find you answering my prayers in ways that I'm accustomed. It's hypocritical of me,*

*especially when I ask you to refresh my mind or renew my soul. Sometimes I forget what I'm really asking for and what that entails.*

*Forgive me for my absentmindedness and my selfish ways, as I can get blindsided by my own expectations of how you will answer me. Teach me to be more adaptable in listening to your Holy Spirit. May I also be more receptive when listening to others and respectful of their style of communication.*

*Thank you, Lord, for always responding to my prayers in ways that are more beneficial to my soul than what I believe I need.*

*Amen*



God enjoys romancing your soul. He knows your love language and delights in surprising you in dynamic ways. Close your eyes, clear your mind and enjoy the courtship of the Lord.

I arrived at the concert hall without any further drama or pitfalls and enjoyed a lovely evening with my handsome young man.

It's been over twenty years since this adventure occurred. I still marvel at God's grace over me. It's awesome that God's protection allows us to embrace the unexpected—especially the angels.



*Dear Father in Heaven,*

*As I reminisce about the countless ways that you have come to my rescue I get overwhelmed with a sense of freedom.*

*You are my saving grace. You allow me to walk fearlessly and to embrace life to the fullest. Your love for me has blessed me with unbounded security, knowing that when I fall, I can trust you to give me a helping hand.*

*Lord, let us be courageous in our obedience to do your will, to stand up for injustice in the face of oppression and to be compassionate in place of judgement. Whenever we fail, let us not be ruled by shame but lean into your everlasting grace.*

*Amen*



God has a safety net around you. What is your holy 911 story?