

God is Speaking 7-14-02

Monday morning I was sitting on my deck praying about what to bring this Sunday morning. I was considering the topic of God speaking to us, but there were several other possibilities on my heart. I asked the Lord to make it plain to me, or bring something else to mind if what He desired was something that I had not yet thought of. About that time my sister drove up. She came in and shared a testimony. She had been looking for a verse in the Bible that she had forgotten the reference to. That particular evening she noticed the wind blowing the pages of her Bible. The next morning she began to wonder if the LORD had something for her in the place the wind had left her pages. There was that verse she had been looking for. She said to me, "I wonder how often God wants to speak to us or show us something and we are not paying attention?" Well, I was paying attention at that moment because God had just answered my prayer on what to preach. I just asked and it didn't take Him long to answer. I call that a God-incident. I don't believe events merely coincide. Coincidence just means events coincide but does not give the reason why they do.

From the day that God made man to the days of The Great Tribulation the Bible is a record of God speaking to man. To think that for some reason God has quit speaking is to think that we are unlike the people throughout Scripture. Man was made for the glory of God and a part of that process is communion with God. Communion is not only our speaking to Him but of God also speaking to us.

Right from the beginning in Garden of Eden we see God speaking. If fact, it was the voice of God that walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. Gen 3:8a (KJV) ⁸ *And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day:* This certainly makes sense since we know Jesus is the Word of God. (Jn 1:14) Though they lost the privilege of walking and talking with the manifest presence of God, the voice of the LORD never stopped visiting man. The author of Hebrews sums up the whole Old Testament period of God's speaking to man in a very lyrical expression in Greek. Heb 1:1 (NIV)¹ *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways...*

"Many times and various ways", that covers a lot of territory. There is time to name only a few: the audible voice of God, angelic messengers, signs and miracles, prophetic utterances, visions, climate, defeat by enemies, skits, writing on the wall, big fish, coinciding events, writings of prophets, dreams, a still small voice... We could go on and on. Those are just some of the many times and various ways.

Heb 1:2 (NIV)² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

The revelation of God to mankind is complete in Jesus. He has spoken one last great message in the life of His Son, but He continues to speak to us all on a personal basis just as any couple communicates to know and share each other's heart. When something exciting happens in your life you grab the phone and call the person or persons you are closest to so that you can share the experience. We should be the same way with the LORD and allow Him to share His heart with us.

Commented [Q1]: And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

He spoke to Peter and Paul in some of the same ways He spoke to those in the Old Testament. He used prophets, dreams, visions, angels, etc. He did not stop communing with man even though the main message was given. The main message will always remain the same and it will forever be the yardstick for every personal message from God. Everything God speaks to us is demonstrated in the life of Christ. Everything we hear from God should line up with the life, character, and teachings of Jesus. If He got alone to hear from His Father on a regular basis, how much more then should we? If He needed that, then we certainly do also. Jesus only spoke what the Father had shown Him. That was a lot of communing with God.

If prayer is, indeed, a two-way-street, to 'pray without ceasing' would imply we are to be constantly in communion with God. How is that possible and what would it look like? Jesus' life is a demonstration of a man in constant communion with God. I find it interesting that we rarely if ever hear of the traditional ways of hearing from God in the life of Jesus, that is ways like angels, dreams, visions, etc. Instead Jesus was saturated with the Holy Spirit. His human soul communed with the Spirit of God continually. Why then did the Apostles need the visions and dreams and other means? The same reason you and I do. We are hard of hearing. If we walk in the Spirit as Jesus did, communing with the Father, we don't have need of the more dramatic types of communication. Jesus was open and receptive to the voice of the Spirit and so He heard constantly and clearly.

Our greatest hindrance to hearing from God is a distracted heart, a heart that does not desire to hear. Jesus never had that problem. The closest He came to that was the Garden of Gethsemane. Even there He was willing to hear what was completely contrary to His own desire. A heart that is willing to do that will hear His voice continuously. "*My sheep hear my voice.*" Nevertheless, just like babies learn to hear and discern the language and inflection of their parents' language, we need to learn to discern the voice of God in our lives. When the shepherd calls his sheep, they look up and follow, but the new lambs just follow the sheep. They need time to learn the shepherd's voice. As lambs they are more attuned to the other sheep. We have the same problem, following one another, man's ideas, instead of personally hearing from and following the Great Shepherd's voice ourselves. We need to tune in to His voice, not all the voices and noise around us. The world is constantly grabbing for our attention. A maturing child of God learns to tune the world out and tune the Father in.

Many people who have heard or experienced abuses and misuses of hearing from God balk at this subject. We have all heard someone say, "God told me..." and what they go on telling you sounds nothing like God and His word. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Just because someone uses a car as a weapon doesn't mean a car can't be used for good. Just because something is misused doesn't mean there is a no valid use. Man today, does not hold the office of Old Testament prophet. There is a gift of prophecy but that is different from the office of the Old Testament prophet. (Luke 16:16) In that day, the prophet was God's messenger to man, a mediator. He spoke the words of God and all had to pay

Commented [P2]: ¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.
Luke 16:16 (NIV)

attention. If He was in error, he was to be stoned. Today the Spirit of God has been poured out and we can and should consult Him for discernment as to the validity what another says. We have the printed Word of God with which to judge a prophecy. That is our litmus test. We must, however, know the Word to apply the Word.

I remember a Bible study group I attended once becoming very excited about a "prophecy" that God was about to rend the veil of evil from off the earth. I could not understand their excitement because it did not line up with the Word of God – our measure for all truth. I rarely find God speaking to me something to pass on to another individual. The vast majority of the time it is a word for me to learn and grow and change, or something for teaching and explaining the Word of God.

Let's look at some of the many ways in which God does speak to us. One of the most common is through His written word. As you are reading the Bible a passage suddenly speaks to your situation. It is as if God took His finger and wrote a story just for you. Suddenly it is clear what you need to do. That is no less relevant than if you heard the audible voice of God! How many times did Jesus say, "It is written"? The Spirit of God brought an applicable verse to the mind of Christ that showed God's heart toward a situation. I heard several stories just this week about God's call on lives through this very method. In my testimony I shared how several verses of Scripture seemed like they came straight from God's heart to mine. They did! His word is alive! It discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts and it is eternal, forever settled in the heavens. Just because it was uttered 2000 years ago does not age it one bit. It is as alive and fresh today as the day it was spoken.

When I have really needed to hear God's heart and direction I go to the Word first. You've probably heard the expression, "Read it like it was a love letter written to you". It is just that! Read it like that.

Jim Beck's father, Dr. Harry S. Beck wrote the book, God Is Speaking to You. In that book he shared a survey of 165 people from all walks of life. The survey showed the quickening of Scripture to be #3 in frequency in their experience. They listed the number one way as revelation. That is that "Ah-ha" experience. Suddenly the solution or answer or direction is clear. Where did it come from? They weren't necessarily thinking it through. It came from another source than their brain. It is hard to describe this type hearing from God. It happened to the two on the road to Emmaus. When Jesus served the bread, ah-ha! Suddenly they recognized Him. He opened their eyes. You have probably had numerous experiences like that if you think about it. You just need to recognize that it is from God.

Granted, this method can have a wide interpretation and overlap with other methods. When Peter saw the rooftop vision of the sheet coming down with the unclean animals, God was speaking to him through a vision. The understanding of the vision was a revelation. When he coupled the vision with the Gentiles receiving the word and the Holy Spirit he could say, "Now I know for sure God accepts anyone who comes to Him". (Acts 10:34,35) He combined the vision with the experience and circumstance and had a revelation of what God was showing him.

Commented [P3]: ³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism
³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.
Acts 10:34-35 (NIV)

I have experienced this type of revelation many times. One of the clearest was the need for elders. I combined my experiences with a cult and self seeking leaders with the written word of God in both Timothy and Titus and the history of the early church and saw clearly that God's plan is to place an equal and accountable group of godly men over a flock.

You've probably had revelations without realizing it. Add situations in life with a message preached and suddenly you have greater sense of one of the attributes of God. I heard testimonies from this congregation as we went through that series of sermons how God confirmed those things in your life's experiences. You had a revelation that God was truly consistent with the declaration of Scripture.

The second in terms of frequency was an idea popping into your mind. We just need to discern if it is our own idea or His. We can take it to God's word or wait for a confirmation from some other source as I did in the example with which I opened the sermon. I had an idea of what to preach on. Barbara confirmed it with her story. If we are asking God to speak or direct, expect that what happens next is part of His answer. ([Jeremiah 33:3](#)) Faith believes that He is in control of the events of our lives and always ready to speak to us. He tells us to ask and promises if we do we will receive. ([Matthew 7:7,8](#)) Expect God to respond! Sometimes I will tell the Lord, "I'm not getting any direction, and so I'm going with what You've allowed to be in my mind at this time. If You have another plan, interrupt me and make it clear." I check my heart to be sure I am willing and not just going with my personal preference.

Let me give you an example. When I returned from vacation I had planned to show a video for Sunday morning Bible study. Since I had been gone I didn't have time to prepare. I had talked about this video so it would be good for people to see it. Yet, I was open to God changing the plan. Saturday evening came and I could not find the video anywhere. Does anyone out there have [Transformations](#) video? I knew in my heart that God is over all the affairs of men. I knew deep down that God wanted me to write the next class on [Jesus Interpretation of Scripture](#), but it was so late Saturday evening. When I finally said "yes" and quit looking for the video I found that I had already written half of it before I left. The rest came to me in a flash and before I knew it I was done. I had something pop into my mind but that was not God's plan. He closed the door and then I knew what it was He wanted. Though I resisted at first, once I gave in He helped me through the circumstances. What an awesome God! Those of you who were there at that Sunday school class will remember how God spoke to our hearts that morning.

Number four on that survey in frequency was the "still small voice". We can hear in our heart the voice of the Holy Spirit. I think this may have been number one on Jesus' list. His heart was tuned and ready to hear. We must always discern and interpret these subjective ways of hearing with the objective truth of the Word. Number five was a sudden impulse. Number six was Scripture coming to mind. A sermon or words in a musical piece was number 11, right after the audible voice of God number 10. That's encouraging for us preachers! More people in that group

Commented [P4]: ³ 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'
Jer 33:3 (NIV)

Commented [P5]: ⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matt 7:7-8 (NIV)

heard God speak directly to them than they did through a sermon. Just goes to show you God doesn't really need us. It is His grace that He uses us at all.

Of course we can't limit how God can speak to us. There are so many ways in which He speaks. What I want you to take from the message this morning is He does! We just need to tune in to the fact that He wants to. If we will listen and expect to hear, we will hear a lot more. What a difference that would make in our lives. If you had a friend that was a genius, never gave bad advice, loved you like their own child, wouldn't you ask them for advice and direction? You've got Someone that is a million times better than that imaginary friend. He's just waiting to help direct your life for your good and His glory, but you need to tune in to what He is speaking to you. He is a Gentleman and will not shout you down. He waits until you are willing to hear, desiring to hear, looking to Him.

There are times when He will not speak. If you are knowingly out of His will you will find your own ears plugged. If you are unforgiving and harsh toward someone, you will have a hard time hearing. The first thing you will hear is to get your life in order. Straighten out what you know is wrong and then you will enable yourself to hear. If we are an obedient congregation, we will be a hearing congregation. We will hear of His love for us and it will cause us to love Him more. We will hear of His love for one another and cause us to reach out in sacrificial love. We will be directed in ways that will bring God glory and see His will done in our church and in Sedona. When we say, "Let's pray about it", we'll know it means we are going to hear from God and get His instruction. We'll actually pray and hear from God's heart.

The reason God wants to speak to you is because He loves you. Just like you would want to speak to your children to guide them in loving and right ways, God desires to guide us continually. He desires to let us know He cares and wants to be involved in all of our life. Children tune their parents out at times, but most of the time they have a healthy desire to hear from them. They value their time and instruction. Father God wants to give you His time. What an honor and privilege! He wants to speak words of instruction to your life to bless and prosper you. Will you take time to listen? Will you value the counsel and words of love from the Almighty? The real answer of your heart is demonstrated in the time and attention you devote to Him. The more you value Him the more you will walk with spiritual ears attentive to His words and direction. Remember the hymn Take Time to be Holy? Look with me at hymn #457. Speak often with the LORD, not to the LORD, but with Him. Notice both the capital W word in verse one and small w in the last word.

Friends commune with each other. I hope you desire a deepening relationship with the LORD. That comes from communicating with Him through the years. The more you share your heart with Him and hear His the deeper your relationship will grow. I hope and pray that the Holy Spirit has awakened in you this morning a desire to let Him speak to you. Be watching and waiting tuned toward our loving Father who desires to speak with you. God is speaking. Are you listening?