

A Small Still Voice?

Selected Scripture

I. The Holy Spirit:

- A. Convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).
- B. He will guide in all truth. He speaks (John 16:13).
- C. He will teach all things (John 14:26).
- D. He seals believers as God's own, assuring them of eternal security (Rom. 8:23).
- E. Produces the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- F. Sanctifies, transforming believers into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).
- G. Equips us with spiritual gifts for the edification of the Church (1 Cor. 12:7–11).
- H. Fosters unity, directs worship, and cultivates mutual care among believers (Eph. 4:3; Acts 2:42–47).

II. The Holy Spirit speaks?

- A. Extreme cessationism—The Holy Spirit speaks only through the written Word of God.
- B. Extreme continuationism—The Holy Spirit speaks in many ways including audibly.

III. Misconceptions regarding the Holy Spirit Speaking.

- A. “If God speaks to me, I’ll hear an audible voice.”
- B. “God’s voice will always feel unmistakable.”
- C. “Every thought I have could be God speaking.”
- D. “If I’m close to God, I should constantly hear Him.”
- E. “God will tell me exactly what decision to make.”
- F. “If something feels peaceful, it must be from God.”
- G. “God only speaks through extraordinary experiences.”
- H. “If I don’t hear God, something must be wrong with my faith.”
- I. “Once I believe God tells me something, I shouldn’t question it.”

IV. 1st Samuel 3—Young Samuel and Eli.

- A. When God speaks to you, you may not know He's speaking to you.
 - B. Samuel did not recognize who was speaking to him.
 - C. Samuel did not know the Lord's voice because he didn't know the Lord.
 - 1. You must be in the process of learning who God is so you know when God speaks.
 - D. Often in discerning God's voice, we need other mature godly people who can help us understand.
 - E. When God speaks it is for His glory and His good, for His purposes.
 - F. This story is not the norm.
- V. The Holy Spirit and the written Word of God.
- A. The more you understand His words, you will begin to have His thoughts!
 - B. "Silent Communication"—knowing someone so well you know their thoughts.

"The goal isn't primarily to get instructions from God; it is to become the kind of person who lives in an intimate conversational relationship with God."

-- Dallas Willard: *Hearing God*

- VI. A still small voice—1 Kings 19
- A. Elijah flees Jezabel, hides in a cave, hears the still small voice (1 Kings 19:9-12).
 - 1. Sometimes the voice of the Holy Spirit is so soft, almost undetectable.
 - 2. God, the Holy Spirit is present even when we feel alone.
 - 3. God doesn't always (rarely) speak through the dramatic.
 - 4. We need to become quiet enough to listen.
 - 5. The "still, small voice" isn't about chasing a feeling.
 - 6. Elijah's story is also not the norm.
- VII. Two takeaways.
- A. Any successful attempt on our part to hear God's voice is determined by our relationship of our personal experience and the contents of this book, the Bible.
 - B. Our communion with God provides the context of our communications between us and Him.

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Selected Scripture

We have been taking a look at the practical side of the Holy Spirit... that is...rather than a deep philosophical, doctrinal dive into the theology of the Holy Spirit...not to discount the importance of that... but rather we have been wanting to understand the Holy Spirit in terms of His impact in our lives...

And we're doing this looking at specific passages in the Bible rather than opinions or experiences from people...

Some key things we've seen so far:

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer is a continuous, personal work of God's Spirit who indwells every Christian from the moment of salvation.... guiding, teaching, and empowering us to *live in Christ*.

These are some of the main things the Spirit does:

The Spirit(John 16:8)... **when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;**

(John 16:13)... **But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.** Want to know the future?... Holy Spirit...notice two times mentions the Holy Spirit speaks... and notice He speaks not from Himself but I take it... what He hears from the Father and Son...

(John 14:26)... **But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**

He seals believers as God's own, assuring them of eternal security (Rom. 8:23)...**we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.**

And **produces the fruit of the Spirit**—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23).... We haven't gotten to this yet...

The Spirit also **sanctifies, transforming believers into the image of Christ** (2 Cor. 3:18) **But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**

and **equips us with spiritual gifts for the edification of the Church** (1 Cor. 12:7–11)... **But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.⁸ For to one is given**

the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;⁹ to someone else faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,¹⁰ and to another the workings of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to someone else *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the translation of tongues.¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

In community, the Spirit fosters unity, directs worship, and cultivates mutual care among believers (Eph. 4:3; Acts 2:42–47). Ultimately, His ministry is to glorify Christ, help believers live out His will, and prepare them for eternal life.

100% God...equal to the Father and the Son... is not just important ...He is essential for the Christian life... you can't do it without Him...

Yet... The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious, misunderstood, often overlooked person of the Trinity... the average Christian doesn't come close to tapping in to all the benefits of the Spirit that is readily available 24/7....most Christians seldom think of the Holy Spirit at all.

It's like our brain...you've heard it said that we only use 10% of our brain... think of the possibilities if we used 20%!!!... how much of our life is empowered by... directed by... overseen by... cared for by... the Holy Spirit?... 10%?...5%?

In that we as humans live in a visible world and can't see the invisible world...yet our faith is placed on the invisible God... even though we believe in Christ... have made a commitment to follow Him... have our hope in Him... there still exists within most of us what one philosopher said *the seeming unreality of the spiritual life*... it's hard for us to grasp.

There exists a great chasm between the physical world we live in and the spiritual world... as Henry Churchill King said *There is an overwhelming presence of the visible...we live in the intersection of two landscapes*... so we don't think about this Spirit...God... living invisibly within us...

As we saw a few weeks ago to make things worse... we have a war raging within us... again, it is the physical visible against the spiritual invisible... a war against our flesh and the Spirit that rages in us...

So we do what Paul said he did... ***we do the very things we do not want to do***... we want to live for and please Christ... but we still want to sin... that's how we get along... a young girl was asked what Lying is...

She answered... ***lying is an abomination to God and an ever-present help in times of trouble***

This is the visible yet spiritual world we live in... ... and this is exactly why God gave us His Spirit to help us live through it...that list of verses I began with tells us that the Spirit is very

active in the Christian life... or can be... they said He guides, teaches, directs, assures us... and yes... speaks.

How does He do that?... we really want to know don't we?... it seems to me that most of what the Spirit does in our lives in some way hinges on His communicating with us... and tell me there's no confusion over that in the Christian world....

We have many camps of thought... the two main ones have the names "cessationist" and "continuationist"... the when it comes to God speaking to us.... The Holy Spirit speaking to us... the far right cessationist says *He no longer speaks to us today... we have God's Word, the Bible... we get all that we need for life and salvation in the written word of God, there is no need for the Holy Spirit to personally speak to the Christian...*

They hold that the "sign gifts" — such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing — were unique to the apostolic era and ceased when the apostolic foundation was completed

Support?... Hebrews 1:1-2 **God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways** dreams, audible voices, visions, through angels, prophets...., **2 in these last days spoke to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds,** The Gospel... the Word... the Bible.

The far extreme continuationist *believe that the Holy Spirit still speaks through miraculous gifts such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and healing today, just as in the early church, and that these gifts remain available to believers for the building up of the church.*

A sign of your being a spiritual, born again Christian is if you exercise these gifts...

So we end up with some confusion...it is true... The Holy Spirit speaks through His Word... it is also true that there is no biblical reason why God could not speak to a person audibly today...what do you think?... What do we do with hymns like "In the Garden"?

I grew up with this song... Tennessee Erny Ford

*I I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.*

Refrain:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

*2 He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;*

*And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing. [Refrain]*

*3 I'd stay in the garden with Him
Tho' the night around me be falling;
But He bids me go; thro' the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling. [Refrain]*

The cessationist is in agony...the continuationist is ecstatic!....All right out of the Baptist Hymnal...what do we do with that?...

Common misconceptions

- **“If God speaks to me, I’ll hear an audible voice.”**
Maybe?????????....never been my experience...An audible voice would be unusual, not the standard expectation....so many spend time seeking the Holy Spirit’s audible voice... as we shall see... that is NOT what we are to be seeking.
- **“God’s voice will always feel unmistakable.”**
Sometimes people expect an overwhelming sense of certainty. In reality...we have to use discernment... there are many “voices” out there!... discernment can involve patience, uncertainty, and testing what you think you’re hearing.
- **“Every thought I have could be God speaking.”**
I know that isn’t the case in my life... God would never say some of the things I’ve been thinking!...This can become confusing and even unhealthy. Not every thought, feeling, impulse, or coincidence is a message from God. Christian discernment involves testing our thoughts... our impressions we have... even voices.
- **“If I’m close to God, I should constantly hear Him.”**
This is so prevalent today... seminars, retreats, a gazillion books telling how to get yourself into a position...or a state of mind to constantly hear God’s audible voice... Spiritual maturity isn't measured by how many supernatural experiences someone has....
It is measured by how Christ-like you are becoming.
- **“God will tell me exactly what decision to make.”**
Really?... Knowing God’s will and understanding how He speaks to us are very related subjects...many Christians expect God to give a specific answer about a job, relationship, move, or other decision. **But most often the biblical pattern is developing wisdom and character is from being in the Word...** rather than receiving a step-by-step blueprint.
- **“If something feels peaceful, it must be from God.”**
Ever have peace about a decision that turned out to be stupid?... but it is true... the Holy Spirit can and often does give one peace in a decision or some circumstance... but peace alone does not mean it is always from God...

- **“God only speaks through extraordinary experiences.”**
A burning bush or prophetic experience...He has spoken sensationally... but that is not His preferred method of communication...
- **“If I don’t hear God, something must be wrong with my faith.”**
This can create a lot of unnecessary guilt. Silence doesn't automatically mean you've failed spiritually or that God has abandoned you.
- **“Once I believe God tells me something, I shouldn’t question it.”**
Actually, testing and discernment are essential. The New Testament explicitly encourages believers to **“test everything”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). A claim that *“God told me”* shouldn't make an idea immune from examination.

God through the Holy Spirit speaks today...

How does the Word of God come to us individually...let’s not be a hurry... this may take a couple weeks...we will touch the surface this morning... let’s look at a few instances in the Bible that might help us...

When God speaks to you, you may not know He’s speaking to you...turn to 1 Samuel 3... Samuel in 1st Samuel 3... a great story... familiar story...this a young Samuel... probably a young teenager...

Now... we are told that God speaks to Samuel... Jehovah...we’re talking here about the Holy Spirit... In the Bible, **God’s voice is both His written Word and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit**. Scripture shows that God communicates in multiple ways, and **the Holy Spirit is central to how that communication is received and understood**. The Trinity communicates together...

This is during the time of the judges... Following the death of Joshua, the Israelites found themselves without a central leader... The tribes of Israel were loosely organized and often faced threats from surrounding nations. During this time, God raised up judges to deliver Israel from oppression and to lead them in times of crisis.

verse 1... Now the young boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days; visions were infrequent. Remember earlier... just because God is silent doesn’t mean there’s something wrong with you... God was not speaking much... He wasn’t giving out many visions... I take that to mean nobody was expecting God to speak to them...

verse 2... And it happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to fade, and he could not see well),... Eli was an old man...a priest...**verse 3...and the lamp of God had not yet gone out...**

Samuel and Eli are in the tabernacle... in the Holy place where the Ark of the Covenant was... *the lamp of God* was kept burning from evening until morning...so it's still burning so it is probably just before dawn...

Verses 3,4... and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was,⁴ that the Lord called Samuel; and he Samuel said, "Here I am."

He hears a voice... it is God... but Samuel doesn't know it is God... he thinks it's Eli...

Verse 5... Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; go back, lie down." So he went and lay down.

- **Samuel did not recognize who was speaking to him.** That is something we want to keep in our minds... you may not immediately recognize when God speaks to you... God speaks again to Samuel...

There's a reason Samuel didn't recognize His voice...most likely our reason as well...

Verse 6... Then the Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son; go back, lie down."

- Samuel doesn't know God's voice... why?... **he did not know the Lord...**

Verse 7... Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him.

He knows about the Lord... He believes in God... He had never encountered the Lord in a personal way...so he had no expectation of the Lord speaking to him nor the ability to recognize Him if He was...see how important the Word is to hear God!...

nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him.

He had never heard His words...

You have to be in the process of learning who God is so you know when God speaks.

It happens a third time! **Verse 8... So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."** It hit Eli, he finally figured out what has been going on...**Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the young boy....**Eli knew God... Knew His voice... Knew how He operates.

- Often in discerning God's voice, **we need other mature godly people who can help us understand**

That doesn't mean we listen to other people who claim that God told them to tell us something... *God told me to tell you to jump off the cliff...* But mature godly people can often help us in discerning what has been said to us from God or even if it is from God...

Verse 9... And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your slave is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Through his guidance, Eli transforms Samuel from a naïve boy into a prophet capable of receiving and delivering God's word... His mentorship highlights the importance of spiritual discernment, obedience, and the careful transmission of divine instruction, setting the stage for Samuel's future role as Israel's last judge and a key prophetic figure...

- One more point here... **when God speaks it is for His glory and His good...For His purposes...**

People going around wanting to hear God's voice for an experience... to get a tingling spiritual experience... or to get something from God... some answer and advice... *Should I buy that new car Lord?... Is that your will?...* when God speaks it is for His glory and His good...For His purposes...

- Ok... one more point... **this story is not the norm...** this is a special situation, a rare occurrence... but from it we can learn some things...

Before we go any further... what is important to see is that the primary way that God speaks to us is through His Word...the written Word...

If you want to "hear" the Holy Spirit... if you want to hear God... consume this book!

The more you familiarize yourselves with the word of God, the more you will know Him, know his mind... His desires... His plan for you... **the more you understand His words... you will begin to have His thoughts!**

I've been with my wife for about 40 years... I'm starting to know something about her... after 40 years you have the gift of **silent communication**... we know each other so well we know the answer before we pose the question.

We can drive in the same car next to each other for hours in silence yet know what each other is thinking... how's that happen?... time spent together... paying attention... having an interest in each other... desiring to know each other better... put all that together and you have silent communication....**silent words spoken.**

Your goal shouldn't be to hear a message from God... it should be to get to know Him better in His Word... spend time with Him... the communication will take care of itself... the theses in Dallas Willards book "Hearing God" is

"The goal isn't primarily to get instructions from God; it is to become the kind of person who lives in an intimate conversational relationship with God."

We consume God's word... we begin to hear God's word in our thoughts... and from our thoughts we walk through life in tandem with God... we live in His will.... All people claim to have inner promptings... all people claim to have some amount of intuition... all people have at least a little conscience...

But only the Christian has the Holy Spirit working in them...

Now God speaks to us in various ways...as revealed by Scripture in dreams, visions, and voices...but those are not the norm,,, but His primary way is through His Word... personally speaking to us through His written word... through the life of Jesus Christ, the living Word... usually He's not yelling at us... He doesn't scold... He doesn't shock us... He speaks to us more with His **"still small voice"**...

Elijah is one of the most interesting and colorful people in the Bible... God used him during an important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and bring revival to the land.

Elijah's ministry marked the beginning of the end of Baal worship in Israel... Elijah's life was filled with turmoil.... Elijah knew both the power of God and the depths of depression... he was a mighty man...

But when he was not doing his mighty things...he was rather weak... He called down fire from heaven and wiped out a bunch of false prophets...but then a little woman says to him "Elijah, *I'm going to get ya*...and Elijah takes off like a rocket!...He runs...

He ends up at Mount Horeb...the mountain of God... Mt. Sinai...

1 Kings 19:9-11

⁹ Then he came there to a cave and spent the night there; and behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they have sought to take my life."

¹¹ So He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains

and breaking the rocks in pieces before the Lord; *but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.*

And then a difficult verse to interpret... Old King James says **after the fire there was a still small voice...** New King James adds a footnote that says...*a delicate whispering voice...* The NIV says **after the fire came a gentle whisper...**NASB says **a sound of a gentle blowing...**Legacy Standard **after the fire the sound of a thin gentle whisper...** it may be even more accurate to translate it as "*a murmur*"... [Jewish Rabbis]

Isn't it interesting that God doesn't connect with Elijah through a strong wind that was so strong it tore up the mountain... or in an earthquake... no... it was a soft, gentle rustling that HE reveals Himself to Elijah.... A soft murmur...I see it that there were most likely no actual words being spoken... no audible words anyway... *silent communication?*

These cataclysmic, loud , violent natural disasters crashing all around him... doesn't see God in any of it... then hears a murmur...it's almost as if it were saying *I have everything under control...trust Me...depend on Me...wait patiently for Me to work.*

After Elijah hears this soft voice...he recognized the voice of God... it says *he wrapped himself in his mantle and went out of the cave toward the voice... God....* Some things for us...

- **Sometimes the voice of the Holy Spirit is so soft... so almost undetectable...** but you hear it... and it propels you on...inner voice....you're quietly reading a passage in Scripture...one you've read a hundred times, but this time... he spoke to you...He spoke to you through His words, giving you thoughts...right from God... they were spot on... it was as if the writer who died 2000 years ago knew exactly what you needed....
- **God, the Holy Spirit is present even when we feel alone.** Elijah is hiding in a cave, but God comes to him and asks, "*What are you doing here?*" God has not abandoned him in his fear or exhaustion.
- **God doesn't always speak through the dramatic.** A powerful wind, earthquake, and fire occur—but the passage emphasizes that the LORD was not revealed through those phenomena. Then comes "a still small voice" (KJV) or "a gentle whisper" (NIV). The point isn't necessarily that God *never* speaks dramatically, but that **His presence and guidance can come quietly.**
- **We need to become quiet enough to listen.** Elijah had just witnessed spectacular displays of God's power. Yet his next encounter with God required him to pay attention to something subtle. Sometimes God's direction comes through **quiet conviction, Scripture, prayer, wisdom, or a gentle prompting** rather than something spectacular.
- **The "still, small voice" isn't about chasing a feeling.** The larger message is that God is **personal and attentive.** Elijah discovers that God's work isn't dependent on noise,

spectacle, or Elijah's own strength.

- As was Samuel's story...Elijah's story is also not the norm... they are both rare occasions and ways that God speaks... Today He primarily speaks through His word

Two key takeaways this morning...

1. When it comes to hearing God... or let me put it this way... *any successful attempt on our part to hear God's voice is determined by our relationship of our personal experience and the contents of this book...the Bible.* The Bible is God's words... we read His words, we gain His thoughts, our lives are changed.
2. *Our communion with God provides the context of our communications between us and Him...* the closer you are to God, the more you will understand Him... you will "hear" him.