

# How God Speaks to Believers

When God speaks, we should Listen.

Direct Revelation: two-way communication with God. What If you don't hear it?

The case for Direct Revelation: to sheep. (John Chapter 10)

The case for Direct Revelation: Led by the Spirit. (Romans 8:12-14 and Galatians 5:16-26)

The case for Direct Revelation: Imitating Christ.

God speaks in Acts. What happened in the early church?

The Bugle: an uncertain sound could lead to disaster!

Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel chapter 3)


Does God try? Don't answer too quickly. (Isaiah 55:11 and Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

God communicates as He chooses.

What I am saying to you. (my point)

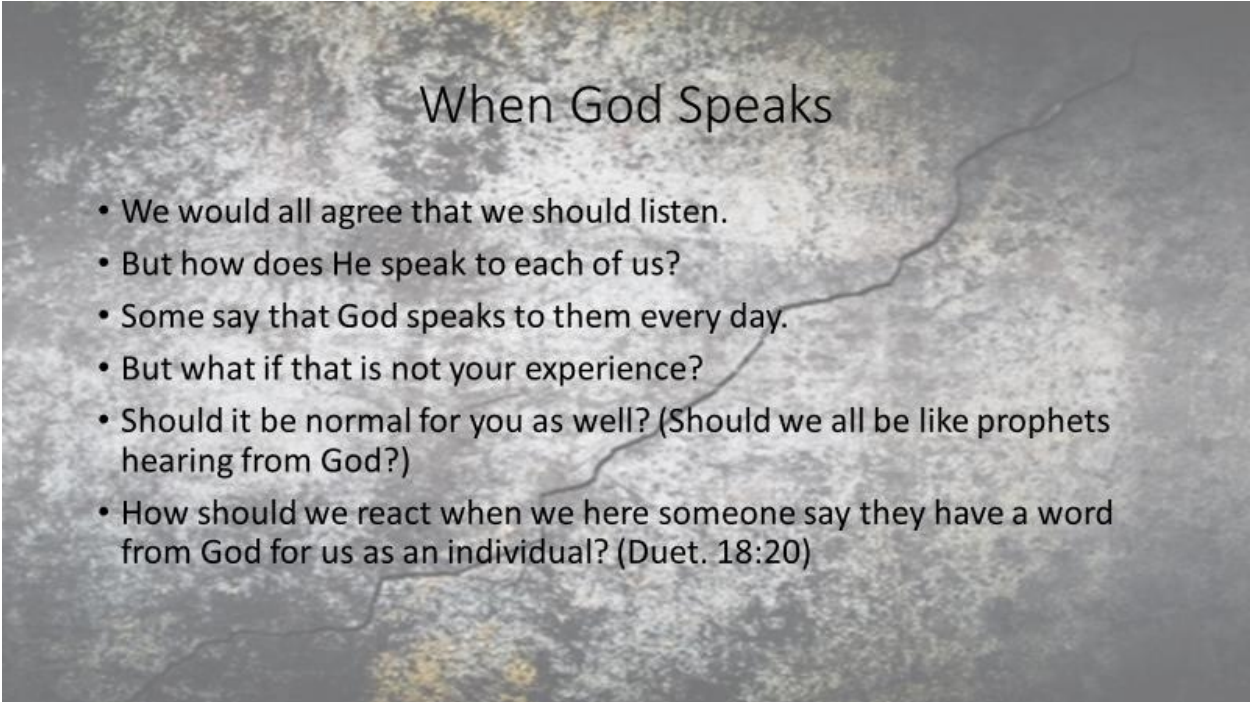
Application: Knowing the will of God and becoming mature in our faith.

Always be gracious. How? Ask questions!



# How God Speaks to Believers

Does He speak the same way to everyone?



## When God Speaks

- We would all agree that we should listen.
- But how does He speak to each of us?
- Some say that God speaks to them every day.
- But what if that is not your experience?
- Should it be normal for you as well? (Should we all be like prophets hearing from God?)
- How should we react when we here someone say they have a word from God for us as an individual? (Duet. 18:20)

## Who's Afraid of Controversy?

- Me most of the time.
- Some very famous teachers say that praying is a two-way conversation with God. In order to be mature, we all must do it.
- Gregory Koukl's booklet, "The voice of god", started the process of developing this class. I will quote him frequently.
- We will look to the Bible for answers.
- When we look to the Bible for answers, we need to remember three words. Do you know them?
- They are – Context, Context and Context.

## How Do We Know the Will of God?

- This may seem like a strange question to be included in this topic. It is actually central to the discussion.
- We all want to know what God desires for our lives. We will start our discussion of this question in the Bible.

## Two Way Communication with God.

- “Have you ever needed to make a decision, but had no idea what God wanted you to do? You wanted to do what was best, but you were not sure what that was....God always has a plan in mind. The challenge for most of us is how to discover it....He is willing to speak to us, but we must be in a position where we can hear His voice.” { Charles Stanley, How to Let God Solve Your Problems—12 Keys to Finding Clear Guidance in Life’s Trials (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2008), 103-104}
- Is it the right of every believer in Christ to have two-way conversations with God everyday? Again, We will look for the answer in the Bible.

## My Sheep Hear My Voice

- Many people seem to be hearing from God on a regular basis. They say we can hear Him also if we learn to listen. We need to wait for instructions. Some authors say they can teach us to listen.
- We pray, then listen for Him to whisper to us. That is the way He communicates His will to us.
- “If the Christian does not know when God is speaking, he is in trouble at the heart of his Christian life.” {Henry Blackaby and Claude King, Experiencing God (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 1994), 141.}

## What if God's Whispers Don't Come?

- We are in trouble if we don't know how God speaks to us. We are flying blind.
- "To claim to have received direct revelation of some sort from God is a weighty matter." {Gregory Koukl, The Voice of God, 2014, (Stand to Reason), page 4.} (Duet. 18:20)
- God does speak directly to men. The Bible is proof of that. It is God's revelation to all humanity.
- The question is, "Do all men get direct revelation from God?" Is His speaking to us in a two-way conversation the true sign of spiritual maturity? Those who believe so use Bible verses to support their position. We will look at those verses.

## What I am not saying.

- God communicates with us everyday. I am not saying that He doesn't show Himself real to us in so many ways by speaking to us through the study of the Bible (with proper Interpretation), answered prayer, thoughts, insights (with qualifications), plans, or other people's gifts like counseling.
- I believe it is possible to have an intimate relationship with God that includes our emotions and that we should be led by the Holy Spirit. (We will talk more about that later.)

## The Case for Direct Revelation-to Sheep

- “My sheep here My voice.” (John 10) This means that Jesus will speak directly to us and that if we don’t hear Him, we are not His sheep, right? (Context)
- In the context of chapter 10, who is Jesus speaking about and when do they hear His voice?
- Verse 6 tells us that Jesus used these examples as illustrations. The sheep were hearing the call of God (John 6:40 and 44) through the Holy Spirit to salvation. If you are saved, you have heard that call. You don’t have to worry about missing the voice of the Good Shepherd and not being one of His sheep.

## Direct Revelation- Led by the Spirit

- We are to be led by the Spirit. (Romans 8:12-14 and Galatians 5:16-26) What does that mean?
- In Romans 8:12-14 Paul says if we live by the flesh, we will die. If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. Those being led by the Spirit are the sons of God.
- In Galatians 5:16 Paul says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh”.(NKJV) Verse 18 says that if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law. Galatians 3:13-14 says Christ became a curse for us that we might receive the promise of the Spirit and not be under the curse of the law. Galatians 5:24 says, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”. (NKJV) The Holy Spirit enables us to crucify the flesh and walk in the fruit of the Spirit. The text is not speaking about prompting by the Spirit. It is speaking about the indwelling Holy Spirit’s ability to free us from sin.

## Direct Revelation-Imitating Christ

- Christ had direct revelation from God. God spoke directly to Him. Aren't we supposed to be like Him?
- Look at John 5:17, 19+20. We are to imitate Jesus. The Father shows the Son. Isn't He supposed to show us?
- Now look at John 5:17-23, 26+27 (context). We are to imitate Jesus in His human perfection. We cannot imitate His divine office. He is unique. (Deuteronomy 18:18)
- Some people in the Bible are unique like Moses and Paul. We should imitate the good qualities of their life, but we can't imitate their office and special revelation.

## God Speaks in Acts.

- The bible records God speaking directly to people in Acts. One account is Jesus speaking to Paul on the road to Damascus. The total is 14 times according to Greg Koukl. That seems like a lot.
- Greg Koukl found 70 instances where individuals and groups made decisions as they weighed the options of what to do. I am sure that included prayer. It says nothing about them having an "inner sense". God worked in supernatural ways or they made their own decisions. There is nothing in between.



## The Bugle

- The lesson of the bugle needs to be taken seriously. (1 Cor. 14:7-9) The bugle was used to lead soldiers in battle. An uncertain sound could lead to disaster.
- Pray and listen has traditionally meant to pray and study the Bible (the bugle for battle) to understand what God is saying to us. (Col. 4:2, Phil. 4:6, Eph. 6:18, 1 Thes. 5:17 and 2 Timothy 2:15) This is two way communication. It never mentions listening!
- "Be still." (Ps. 46:10, KJV) Today, for many, as Greg Koukl says, "the basic sequence is: pray, be still, get impressions (the small voice), then interpret". (The Voice of god, page 29) The supporting verses that are used include Psalm 46:10 and 1 Kings 19: 11-13 where God speaks with Elijah. In Psalm 46, God is being magnified. We are to be still in awe of God. Elijah heard the voice of God before and after the still small voice!
- Remember: context, context, context! The meaning of a verse is determined in the context of the verses around it.

## Eli and Samuel

- Those who teach two-way prayer use God's first speaking to Samuel in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, chapter 3 as an example of learning how to listen to God. In fact, it is said that Eli, a godly mentor, taught Samuel how to listen to God.
- This chapter (3) tells a different story. Eli was not a godly priest. In fact, In chapter 2:27-36, a prophet pronounces a curse to Eli on his family because of their ungodly actions. That is his only recorded direct communication from God.
- Also 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 3:1 says that the word of God was rare in those days.
- God spoke to Samuel audibly in a vision (3:10a,15).
- Samuel 3:7 says that Samuel did not yet know God. God was calling Samuel into a relationship with Him. Remember John 10.

## Does God Try?

- Greg Koukl says, "Trying suggests the possibility of failure". (ibid, page 34) God just does. His word accomplishes what He desires. (Isaiah 55:11) If He wants to communicate something to us, it happens. He communicated His inerrant word through frail humanity.
- The Bible in no place speaks of us learning how to listen to God's voice. A prophet had to get it right the first time. (Duet. 18:20-22)
- It puts us in a precarious position if we say we have heard from God and we tell others, "Thus says the LORD". We do not want to become false prophets. In the Word Faith Movement, this does happen. One example is Benny Hinn.

## God Communicates as He Chooses.

- God shows us His care for us in His word. We are told to desire His word (1 Peter 2:2). It is a source of help in every situation (2 Timothy 3:16 and 17)
- He helps us everyday in countless ways. He answers proper prayer, gives wisdom (proverb 3:5 and 6), creatively inspires or gives insight, works through spiritual gifts and other ways. We must distinguish this from individual personal revelation which is not common ("God told me").
- I sincerely believe He helped me through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to write this class.
- Examples include verses that jumped out at me as I am reading the word and a real desire to watch David Jeremiah one Sunday morning. I heard something that was helpful for the class.
- I believe God communicates with us all in the way He chooses for us individually as His children.

## What I am Saying.

- God can speak to us in any way He chooses. J.I. Packer says: God may reveal Himself and give guidance to His servants any way He pleases. It is not for us to set limits on Him. But it remains a question as to whether or not we are entitled to expect “hotline” disclosures on a regular basis. The correct answer is no. All the biblical narratives of God’s direct communication with men are exceptional on their face, and the biblical model of personal guidance is quite different. {quoted in the voice of god- J.I. Packer, Hot Tub Religion (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987),117}
- If He doesn’t speak to us in an audible or inner voice, that does not mean that we are any less of a Christian than anyone else. THIS IS MY POINT!
- The measure of maturity is not two-way prayer.

## How Do We Know The Will of God?

- Read the Bible, God’s Revealed Word. You don’t have to depend on a subjective inner voice.
- Start with John 6:40 and John 3:16. Follow with Ephesians 2:8-10.
- What do those good works look like? Start Romans 12:1+2
- Look at the Ten Commandments. Matthew 22:37-40 sums up the Law in three verses.
- How do we begin to love God? Find out what He has revealed to us about Himself in the Bible.
- How do we love our neighbor? Do the one anothers of the New Testament. One example is to serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)
- Philippians 2:12-13. It is God who works in us to do His will and good pleasure. He helps us.
- The more that we understand God’s revealed word, the Bible, the more we will be able to discern the unwritten plans God has for our life. It will never go against God’s written word.
- God’s ultimate goal for us in this life is holiness because He is Holy. (Psalm 99:1-3 and 1 Peter 1:13-16)

## Becoming Mature

- Koukl says on page 40 of *The Voice of God*: Spiritual maturity is not the ability to hear God's voice. It is the ability to know, understand, and apply Scripture in every circumstance.
- This starts by walking in the Spirit or being led by the Spirit. Romans 8 and Galatians 5:16-26 show us that this is the process God uses to help us overcome the deeds of the flesh. It is through grace that He teaches us how to do this. It is not through our own strength. (Titus 2:11-14)
- We are to grow in our knowledge of the Word (Hebrews 5:11-14) and be able to use it and teach others correctly. (1 Timothy 4:16) In fact, it is the truth of His word that sets us apart for God's service. (John 17:17)
- The goal is Christ (Philippians 1:21) and to know Him and what He has for us. To grow into the full stature of Christ. (Philippians 3:7-15 and Ephesians 4:13-15) Then we will know how to use scripture correctly in every circumstance.

## Grace in all We Say (Col. 4:6)

- I mentioned one author whose book on eternal security meant a lot to me as I searched for assurance of my salvation. I disagree with his conclusion on this topic, but I want to be careful not to attack him in any way. I can pray for grace in the way I speak and think and still speak truth.
- You can ask those who would present this doctrine to you to show you the scripture to back up their doctrine. (Do not build a straw man by assuming every person who might believe this way believes all we talked about.) Ask them about the context. Remember the questions that I asked on the slides to understand their position. Our two standard questions are always, what do you mean by that and how did you come to that conclusion?
- A person only has one chance to be a true prophet.

