

## God Speaks Series – Part 2

### Ways God Speaks

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We are in the midst of the advent season and for our Christmas series we are looking at the ways God has spoken to humanity through the ages, how he spoke to the various people during the birth of His son **and how he still speaks to us today.**

**Last week** Pastor Brian shared some of the **things that hinder** us from hearing God's voice.

He said when we depend on circumstances, on our feelings, on what other people may think, pop culture or even occultic things such as our horoscope for guidance we shut out the voice of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**So how do we hear God's voice today? Can every Christian hear God speaking to them? YES, WE CAN!**

We just need to understand the ways God speaks. Hearing God speak is not complicated or hard.

From the beginning of time until this present day we see God speaking. He spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden, to the prophets, to kings and judges, the young and old, the rich and the poor, those in high social status and those of the lowest.

Throughout the Bible we see God speaking in various ways to his people. And God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever continues to speak. **Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God stopped speaking once the Bible was completed.**

The bridegroom continues to speak to his bride through that inner voice of the Holy Spirit.

God is speaking to us constantly. **The key is learning to perceive God's voice by learning the ways in which God speaks.**

Let's dive into this fascinating and very important subject of how to hear God's voice.

## **1. We all have the ability to hear God speak to us.**

When God created us, he gave us a spirit. **It is what distinguishes us from the animal kingdom.** We have a body, a soul (mind, will and emotions) and we have a spirit which enables us to commune and communicate with God.

**Our spirit is a build in receiver that is tuned to hear God's voice.** That is how we are created. **We are created to hear God speak – to know and hear his voice.** That's why Jesus says we can hear his voice.

**John 10:3-4 He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. (NIV)**

**John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (NIV)**

If you are one of his sheep, a Christian, you can hear his voice and be led through life by his voice.

When you became a Christian, the **Holy Spirit** took up residence in your body. He moved in. He lives in you and goes wherever you go. This is the voice of God in you.

**1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? (NIV)**

The Holy Spirit now communicates with our spirit what God wants us to know. He now leads us by his inner voice into all truth.

**Romans 8:16 For the Holy Spirit speaks to us and tells our spirit that we are children of God. (NLV)**

So, when someone says "*God told me*" or "*God spoke to me while I was praying*" they mean they had this **inner awareness or sense of what the Holy Spirit in them was saying.** It doesn't mean they heard an actual voice.

So, how then do we hear God speak to us?

## **2. God will use various ways to speak to us if we are in a listening mode.**

We are to remain alert in our spirit because God can speak at any time.

**Rev 2: 7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

Did your spouse or friend ever say to you, *“I’m talking but I don’t feel like you are listening to me.” You have ears but they seemed to be turned off.*

God is speaking but are we tuned into his voice? **If we are not expecting God to speak it is hard to discern his voice when he does speak.** Let’s tune our spiritual ears to what the Spirit is saying.

Here are some ways God speaks – How we can hear his voice.....

First, I need to say that God can speak to us and get our attention in any way he wants. – Balaam and his donkey or the moving star and the wisemen. But for this teaching let’s look at the more common ways we see repeated in the scripture.

- **The primary way God speaks is through the scriptures He inspired and gave to us.**

There are two Greek words that refer to the word of God. **Logos and Rhema.**

**Logos** refers to the words you read on the pages of your bible. It is the recorded written word of scripture. Things God wants us to know.

**Rhema** is when the Holy Spirit quicken a passage of scripture to you as you are reading it. It comes alive. It as if God is speaking directly to you - and he is.

**Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

The Holy Spirit will often use the scripture to give us direction and words of encouragement to keep us strong. **So, if you want to hear God speaking to you, it is important to be reading the bible regularly.**

Rhema can also refer to the prophetic word or a fresh word from God.

- **Often the Holy Spirit stirs or impresses something in our spirit.**

Sometimes we feel this strong inner impression about something. It is this deep knowing in our spirit. We just know that we know and can't really explain how we know. Sometimes we just know something isn't right or something we need to do. ....**This is God's still small voice speaking to us.**

**Mark 2:8** Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

Sometimes there is a check in our spirit or a deep peace in our spirit that he uses to speak to us and guide us.

- **God has at times spoken through an audible voice or through an angel, but this is rare.**

We see God speaking in an audible voice to Samuel and to the Apostle Paul and to Jesus at his baptism. But this is very rare.

**Sometimes God speaks through angels.** There was a lot of angelic activity preparing the world for the birth of Jesus. God was coming to earth as a baby. It was important that this infant king be received and welcomed. .... **We see an angel coming with a message to Mary.**

**Luke 1: 28-31** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

Angels also brought messages to the Shepherds and then also to Joseph in a dream.

- **At times God speaks through dreams and visions.**

Not every dream is God speaking but some are. In the bible we see that God often speaks through dreams. When our mind calms down as we sleep God interjects dreams at times to get our attention.

----- If it is a God dream it will seem unusually vivid and real and it usually stays with you and encourages you. If you have such a dream, **ask God what it means.**

We see God **speaking to Joseph in a dream** about Mary's pregnancy.

**Matthew 1: 20- 24** But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ... When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

I also find that sometimes God speaks to us just as we are drifting off to sleep or just beginning to wake up.

Sometimes you go to bed pondering a certain problem and wake up with the answer. During the night God gave you direction.

**I keep a notebook** in my nightstand because at times I wake up in the middle of the night and all these ideas are coming to me. I have received direction for my sermons many of times this way.

-----I also learned if I don't write it down, I sometimes forget it by morning.

**Visions are different then dreams** in that you are fully awake and in your mind's eye you are seeing something unfolding in front of you. Like a movie playing in your mind and then it is gone.

**This happened to me when I was asked to help start this church.** I had a vision unfold in front of me of many barns and when I asked God to explain what I was seeing he said the barns are churches for the harvest and he wanted me to build another barn for the coming harvest that is coming in this region. It wasn't an audible voice to my ears, but it was very audible in my spirit.

- **God speaks to us through other people.**

Sometimes it is through a Sunday morning message. Sometimes God stirs people's hearts to share a word with you. It could be a friend, a counselor or even a stranger.

It may be a verse they share, a prayer they pray, an inspired word of encouragement, a word of wisdom or a prophetic word. All these can be inspired of God as a way of speaking to you.

**2 Peter 1:21 No true prophecy comes from human initiative but is inspired by the moving of the Holy Spirit upon those who spoke the message that came from God. (TPT)**

When people share a prophetic word, we are to test that word to make sure it is from God.

### **3. We need to test and discern what we are hearing.**

No one has the full word of the Lord or full understanding when they speak. Sometimes we speak out of our own hurts or agenda or desires.

**1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, (NIV)**

#### **Seven tests to discern if something is the voice of God:**

- **THE BIBLE** - We test everything by the standard of the scriptures. Does it agree with God's written word? God will never speak a word to you that contradicts what is in the Bible.
- **COUNSEL** - Do spiritual advisors in my life affirm the word? The Word of God and counsel of those over you in the Lord are important safeguards in discerning God's voice.
- **JESUS** - Does it exalt Jesus or is it self-serving? Reflect the spirit of Jesus?
- **LIFE GIVING** - Does it build up and encourage the listener, even when there is a corrective element to it. In other words, is it life giving?
- **INNER WITNESS** - Does it witness to my spirit – Set right in my spirit.
- **ACCURATE** - If there are predictions, do they come true.
- **FRUIT** - Is the person giving the word bearing good fruit in their life? Do they have healthy relationships? Are they committed to a local church and walking under authority?

### **4. It is helpful to set aside quiet time to hear God.**

Sometimes we are just so busy and so many things occupy our minds that we are not hearing what God would like to say to us.

Jesus would shut out the noise of people and busyness in order to hear the father's voice.

***Matt 14:23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.***

When you create solitude times with God, you can ask him questions and then wait for him to speak to your spirit. **It's good to journal what you are hearing.**

- Praying in the spirit is also helpful.

**God wants to speak to us. He wants to guide us. He wants to show us things about himself, but we need to take time to listen.**

- Jesus said his sheep hear his voice. God wants to train you to hear his voice. He wants to commune with you. It is an exciting adventure!

### **Prayer Blessing: (STAND)**

Father thank you for giving us the ability to hear your precious voice. The voice of a loving, compassionate father.

I ask that you awaken our spirit with an alertness to your voice. Quiet the noise of our soul that tends to drown out your still small voice.

I ask that your word would become Rhema to us. Alive and fresh. Speak to us through your word.

Speak to us in the night hours. Through quiet meditations, through dreams and visions. Speak a fresh word to us in the morning. Teach us to stop talking so much and do more listening in our quiet times with you.

Help us to have our ears tuned to you throughout our day. We say, "Speak Lord for your servant is listening".