

Aware Part II: Hearing God's Voice
Hearing God through the Bible
July 24, 2011

I'd like to introduce some special folks to you this morning. This is Nathan Reeves, his wife, Maggie, and their son, Jude, and the little baby that is on the way, Jade. Nathan, in case you're not aware, is our new Director of Creative Arts. We're excited to have him. We found Nathan just wandering around the hills out there, no, I'm kidding. We think God led Nathan to us and vice versa. He started with us last week, and his role is a little different from what we've had in the recent past. Nathan will be overseeing the music, the drama, and the tech. His job is to work with the leaders of those ministries and the volunteers in those ministries to create wonderfully memorable experiences in this hour that we have together that will draw people closer to Christ. You'll see him

sometimes onstage, playing and singing, other times you won't see him, but he is the guy behind it who is helping us pull this off. We are really excited to have you here as well as having you too, Maggie, Jude and Jade. God bless you. Yay God!

Let's pray together.

God, as we hear the words of that song, I am amazed once again that You even desire to speak to us ... and I am amazed that we can actually hear You ... if we have ears to hear. Help us this morning to understand even more about how we can hear you through your word, the Bible. We know that Jesus wants this for us, so we confidently ask for this gift in His name, Amen.

As Shannon said, we are talking in this series about hearing God's voice. And we began last week by looking at the one condition – the one quality – that *absolutely must exist in our lives* if we're going to be able to hear from God. The Old Testament prophets talked about it; the Book of Revelation at the end of the Bible mentions it ... but no one said it more clearly and more often than Jesus himself.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

He who has ears to hear – he, or she, who is truly open to hearing – that's the one who gets to hear.

And last week, if you remember, we saw how the movie *The King's Speech* provided such an excellent illustration of what it means to be open to hear. It means that we're willing

...

- To admit this is “God's game, God's turf, God's rules – not ours.”
- To engage in a relationship with God as a person (not “God the fix-it-genie”)
- To lay aside our preconceived notions of what God *ought* to say or do.
- To allow God to address the real issues in our lives (even if it's painful or wounds our pride in the process).
- To accept God's assessment of our worth and capability and not what others say or even what we even think ourselves.
- To let go of the false gods we're trusting.

That's what “ears to hear,” that's what “openness to hearing” looks like.

And I'm reviewing this real quickly because

it is so important to understand this because I think what a lot of people *really* want when they say "I want to hear from God," what they really want is *confirmation*. They're already convinced *they* know what is best and they really just want God to approve the plan; to sign off on it. They want God to be, as Pastor Larry Osborne puts it, a "cosmic consultant."

"A consultant," Osborne writes, "is someone whose wisdom we highly value and listen to, but at the end of the day, we make the final decision. ... Here's the problem: God doesn't do consulting. ... When we treat him as a consultant, he simply stops showing up to the meetings."ⁱ

Now, let's assume for the sake of this message and the ones to follow that we really do have "ears to hear" – that we really are open to hearing what God says even if it

doesn't affirm what we already think ... and we're willing to change what we think about things if necessary. So, given that assumption, given that condition existing in our lives, how can we expect to hear from God? Is God going to speak to us in an audible voice?

Well, I know some people who say they have experienced that and I have no reason to doubt them. They're normal, rational, sane people. But while it may happen occasionally, I don't think that's typical. In fact, when you read the story of Jesus in the New Testament, there are only three times when a voice speaks from Heaven. See, it wasn't typical *even for Jesus* to hear his Father speak audibly so, if that's what you or I are expecting, we're probably going to be pretty disappointed.

So, how do we hear God's voice if He

doesn't speak audibly? Well, there are several ways mentioned in the scripture, but there are three we're going to focus on over the next few weeks. Three that I am certain of based on the scripture and based on the experience of millions of Christ-followers across the centuries (including my own experience).

God speaks through the Bible ... through the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit ... and through Wisdom.

This morning, as Shannon said, we're going to focus on hearing God through the Bible and in the next two weeks we'll talk about the other two ways God speaks to us.

What Exactly Is This Book?

Of course, in order to talk about hearing God through the Bible, I think we first have to talk about what the Bible really *is* ... which is

a pretty hefty subject in and of itself. In fact, over the years I've done series that are four and five weeks long on that question alone. But let's try and boil it down just for our purposes this morning: *what exactly is this book?*

1. For starters, it's not even one book! It's a *collection* of books that were written in three languages, on three continents by more than 40 authors over the course of about 1,500 years.
2. In addition, many of the individual books don't even follow the form that we would describe as a "book." For instance, there are letters in the Bible, there are collections of wisdom sayings, there are lists of laws and regulations in the Bible that are almost incomprehensible to the modern mind. And within each of those forms there

are different types of literature ranging from historical accounts to poetry, parable, prayer and even prophecy.

3. The books of the Bible we call the Old Testament contain the history of the Jewish people up until the time of Jesus. The earliest parts were written about 3,500 years ago, most likely by Moses who had been educated in the courts of Egypt around 1500 BC. The latest part of the Old Testament, which would be the book of Malachi, was written 1,100 years later – about 400 years before the time of Jesus.
4. And those books we call the New Testament contain the history of Jesus and his earliest followers. The earliest of those writings date to around 50 A.D. (about two decades after his death, burial and resurrection) and the latest

of those to maybe as late as 95 A.D.

So what exactly is the Bible, based on all of the things I just told you? It's an incredible hodgepodge, it really is. It's no exaggeration to say that there's no other book like this one in the whole world.

But that's not the only way to answer the question "what exactly is the Bible?" Another way is to talk about its significance (or lack thereof, depending on your point of view).

1. Some people would say the Bible has no significance. They would say it is a book of ancient myths and outdated rules best left to gather dust in a museum somewhere.
2. Others would say it's a book full of spiritual wisdom and practical advice useful to people looking for such things

(just as every sacred text of every religion is useful to people in that way). It's valuable but not necessarily unique.

3. Other people believe the Bible to be much more – maybe even more than the Bible claims for itself. Some people think of the Bible as a divine “Magic 8-Ball.”

You know what the magic 8-ball is, right?

You ask a yes/no question and then shake the window and an answer pops up, and I think there are about 18 different answers that could pop up.

Well, a lot of people treat the Bible the same way. They say, “I have a question. I need some spiritual guidance; I need direction. So I’m going to flip open the Bible, put my finger down and see what it says.” And I’ve done

that and I'm sure some of you have, too.

4. Some people think of the Bible as a theological textbook or a divine game plan for how to live your best life now.

But none of those answers do justice to the true significance of the Bible. That's because, in reality, the Bible is a story. But it's not like any other story.

That's because the Bible is primarily the story of a loving God and his actions to redeem His creation from the destruction of sin.

Obviously, it contains the story of that creation as well (specifically those creatures created to reflect his image – human beings, you and me) but, primarily, the Bible is the story of God. In fact, N.T. Wright, one of the greatest theologians in the world today, likens the Bible to a five-act play in which

God is the main actor.

Now, here's what's fascinating about this story:

Because it tells us what God has done and said in the past (as well as some of what He will do and say in the future), we can know what He is *currently* doing and *currently* saying.

Let me say that again: because it tells us what God has done and said in the past, we can know what He is doing and saying right now.

"Why would you say that, Rick?" Well, in the Letter to the Hebrews (a NT book) it says ...

The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our

*innermost thoughts and
desires. Hebrews 4:11
(NIV)*

Do you see what the writer is saying here? He is saying even though this book we call the Bible is the story of God's activity in the past, *it is alive right now in the present*. This is why theologians are fond of saying that the Bible is both the *record* of God's revelation of Himself as well as *the revelation itself*. God speaks in the present through the story of the past.

And this is why we can hear God through the Bible.

The Apostle Paul uses a slightly different metaphor to communicate the same idea ...

... when he writes ...

All Scripture is God-breathed

*and is useful for teaching,
rebuking, correcting and
training in righteousness, so
that the man of God may be
thoroughly equipped for
every good work. 2*
Timothy 3:15-17 (NIV)

All scripture is God-breathed, Paul says. Now, I want to show you what that means. You've got to hang with me here – this is a group exercise. Everybody pay attention, we're going to do this together. I'm going to explain what God-breathed is – okay, here's what I want you to do: we're all going to take a really deep breath right now and then let it out. Ready, set, go! Did that feel good? Let's do that again.

Here's the deal, when you did that, that breath came from the deepest part of you. So, what Paul is saying is that the Scripture comes from the deepest part of God; it

carries with it the essence of His being. Practically speaking, it means it's an incredibly deep revelation of His person and His thinking.

That's why Christians call the Bible the Word of God. It's both what God *has* said and *continues* to say to this world, including speaking to you and to me. God is speaking through that book, even today.

How God Speaks

So ... the question is ... how does God actually do it? How does He actually speak to a person through the Bible? To make it more personal, how do you know that God is speaking to you through the Bible?

It's pretty simple really and I could explain it right now ... but I think it will make even more sense after we do one little thing first. I

want to look at a few of the *venues* in which God speaks through the Bible. And I think this is important because a lot of people – serious, God-loving, Jesus-following, committed Christians – a lot of people, when they hear the phrase, “hearing God through the Bible” tend to think of only *one* venue (or setting) and overlook the fact that God is actually speaking in several other venues or settings.

The venue or setting I’m talking about is ...

Venue #1. Personal Bible study – where it’s just you and the Bible one-on-one.

Here’s how it works. You find a quiet spot, you have a Bible and a notebook of some sort – paper or electronic – and you read some part of the scripture and you think about it, pray about it, meditate on it, and then you write down what you think God might be saying to you through that

scripture.

Personally, I've had many wonderful experiences in this kind of setting where I felt like God spoke to me – I felt like God was teaching me, or rebuking me, correcting me and training me. And I'm sure that more than a few of you have experienced that, too. If you've never tried it, I highly recommend it.

However, as I said, when many people think of hearing God through the Bible, this is the *only* setting or venue that comes to mind. And that's a real problem, I think, because not everyone thrives in this particular venue *nor is it necessary that they do so*. Unfortunately, I think we pastors are sometimes guilty of communicating that it is; that if you don't spend time every day reading the Bible on your own, then you must not be a serious Christian, you must not love Jesus, you must not be interested in

following Jesus, and you certainly aren't interested in spiritual growth and you certainly are not going to grow spiritually.

The problem with that thinking is this: for almost 1500 years after the birth of Christianity and the church, *individual men and women did not have access to the Bible* like we do, because ...

- a. There were no printing presses or publishers and ...
- b. Most "common people" were illiterate.

So, if the primary venue in which God speaks through the Bible is personal Bible study, then what did all those poor Christians do for all those centuries? Did God just leave everyone lost until Guttenberg came along and decided to invent a printing press in the 16th century? Obviously not. Otherwise, Christianity would

not have survived.

Now, please don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that the ability to read and study the Bible on your own isn't a great and wonderful blessing and that you shouldn't try to take advantage of the fact that you are able to do so. *You should*. I'm just saying that *this isn't the only venue* or necessarily even the *best* venue. It depends on how you're wired up as a person. Some people don't excel in that kind of environment. Some people are not at that place in their spiritual journey.

See, for some people, there's another venue that's even more effective and was effective for 1,600 years until Guttenberg came along. And that is ...

Venue #2. Public proclamation – where a spiritually-gifted communicator teaches scripture and biblical principles in a clear

and compelling manner.

In the 10th chapter of his letter to the Church at Rome Paul describes this venue when he writes ...

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in (speaking of Jesus)? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Romans 10:14,17 (NIV)

God speaks through the Bible whenever a spiritually-gifted preacher or teacher stands up and uses it to communicate what God says and how it applies to our lives and you feel like ... "wow, has this guy or gal been following me around? Because that's exactly where I'm at ... that is exactly what I needed to hear."

I'll never forget the first time that I was overwhelmed and realized that God was speaking to me in that particular venue.

It was in the late 80's when I was the Associate Pastor over at Park Hill Baptist. We had taken a small group of us up to Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, the church which is kind of the model for the ministry style that we have. And I remember reading and hearing about this church and supposedly there were 8,000 to 10,000 people showing up at this church on weekends so they had this huge campus. And the people who were showing up, most of them, had not been involved in church before. They were like skeptics of Christianity - but thousands of people were coming to this every weekend. And my thought was, "it must all be smoke and mirrors. They've got to be putting on the

greatest show and it's all just entertainment. And that Pastor, Bill Hybels guy, whatever he's doing, he has got to be watering down the gospel. He has got to be compromising the Bible. Every bad thing you've ever heard about "seeker-targeted church," that is what I was thinking.

So, we went up there, and I was skeptical, sitting in this auditorium. And Bill Hybels, Founder and Senior Pastor of this church, stood up and started teaching out of Luke 15. He said in Luke 15 there are three stories that Jesus tells. He tells a story about a lost coin; he tells a story about a lost sheep; and he tells a story about a lost son. He said, Jesus tells this story because the religious people were just chapping his hide because he was always hanging out with the tax collectors and the sinners, and the religious people said, "how can you, a good church person, hang out with these immoral

people? Why are you spending so much time trying to reach them?" And Jesus told those three stories because what he wanted to say was, *lost people matter to God*. People who are far from God matter to God as much as people who are close to God. God is concerned about them and the church ought to be concerned about them, and *somebody ought to do something*. And I remember ... my heart was in my throat. The light went on in my mind in a way it had never done in personal Bible study. And God said, "Rick, that's what I want you to do. That's the kind of church I want you to give your life to," in that setting, hearing Bill Hybels talking out of Luke 15.

Now, God didn't tell me at the time I would start a church like that and be the pastor, He just said that's kind of what I want you in. And I'm kind of glad He didn't because I probably would have freaked out if He had. I

would have gone running into the street. But God clearly spoke through the venue of public proclamation. And God will do that for you too, as well.

OK, one more venue and then I'll tell you how you can know that God has spoken to you regardless of which venue.

Venue #3. Small group – where like-minded followers of Jesus get together and discuss how scripture and biblical principles apply to their lives.

This is kind of a blend of the first two venues. The setting is more intimate and personal than that of public proclamation but it's not private, because there are other people involved. Sometimes in those settings when a scripture or a biblical principle is discussed, God will speak.

So, those are the venues in which God speaks through the Bible ... and I suppose there might be others, too. But the real question at this point is ... when you are in one of those settings, how do you know that God has actually said something to you? And again, this is important to know because we're probably not going to hear an audible voice.

To answer that question, let's take a look at a very familiar story that I think illustrates it. I know I've taught on this story many, many times, but never in this way. It's from Matthew chapter 16. Matthew writes:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is (a term that Jesus used to refer to himself)?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."

Matthew 16:13-17 (NIV)

What is Jesus saying here? He's saying, "Peter, you are a smart guy, but you didn't figure that out on your own. And nobody else clued you in on it. You know this only because my Father told you."

Somehow, God had spoken to Peter and he had knowledge of a spiritual reality that he had not been aware of before. The light had come on, so to speak, and that was the indication that God had spoken to him.

And that's how it works with you and me.

Whenever we become aware of God's truth, that means He has spoken to us.

In fact, the Bible is very clear that the *only* way you and I can ever become aware of God's truth is if He speaks to us. Once, Jesus was praying and he said ...

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these (spiritual) things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." *Luke*

10:21(NIV)

And he wasn't talking about little babies or toddlers, he was talking about people who are child-like in their faith, who say "I don't really have this all figured out, would you show me?" People who have ears to hear.

Henry Blackaby, author of the study *Experiencing God* writes ...

"Without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, one cannot grasp spiritual truth. The Spirit reveals God, His purposes, and His ways as you read and meditate on the verses within scripture. When you understand a spiritual truth from the Bible, this is an encounter with God."

Now, obviously, if you're paying attention to what he said, you realize that he is applying this truth to venue number one – personal

Bible study. When you read and meditate on verses from the scripture, he's applying it to that venue, but it applies to all of them.

For example, let's say you're sitting in a service and I or one of the other pastors is speaking (or maybe you're listening to a speaker on the radio or a podcast) and as that speaker is communicating out of the scripture or biblical principles, something new comes to you about God or His ways; maybe a new way of looking at who He is as a person or thinking about a passage of scripture or a biblical principle; maybe an insight about your own spiritual condition.

Since truth is revealed by God and we know nothing about God or his ways unless he reveals it to us, when that "aha" hits you - listen to me - when that "aha" hits you, that is God speaking to you. That is not just a cool new thought you came up with on your own.

And it's not something manufactured by the talent or giftedness of the speaker. It is your Creator trying to share his truth with you so you will know something about Him, and about spiritual reality, and about yourself; so you will adjust your life to that truth.

Same idea applies to a small group where several followers of Christ are talking about the scripture or a biblical principle. Whenever the light comes on in that group, whenever there is an "aha," that's not just the collective wisdom of the group or any particular individual. That's God speaking through His Word.

Now, here's what's really cool. Right now, as I'm explaining this concept – this biblical principle – some of you are thinking, "oh ... I get it! I've had that experience! It happened when ..."

And that “aha” that you’re having right now ... that’s God speaking to you through the Bible! Be encouraged. In the words of Jesus, “blessed are you, for this was not revealed to you by some really good speaker, or by some adequate speaker, but this was revealed to you by your Father in heaven. You’re blessed.”

Special Challenges

Now, I told you this was a pretty simple concept. However, even though it’s simple (not everybody gets it because it takes God to illuminate that for us), there are a few things I think we need to beware of and, as I bring this message to a close, I want to share them with you because I want you to be able to have this “hearing God through the Bible” experience over and over, as much as you can. But there are some things that can inhibit this experience – some

special challenges, so to speak – that you should know about.

1. We all need to be aware that sometimes when God speaks it may not be totally clear at first what He is saying.

For example, when I was younger, about 20 years ago, I would hear the Bible taught, or I would read the Bible on my own, and there were insights that came to me and I would think that was God speaking to me. But over time, I would hear that same scripture again or I would hear someone discuss that principle again and I would have more clarity on that, or I thought, “oh, I didn’t have that quite right before,” or, “oh, that’s what that is really talking about. Now I get it even more than I did.” Here’s the deal – God was speaking in the first place. It’s not like God didn’t speak the first time and I didn’t hear him but now I really am. No, the problem is, and Paul describes this perfectly in 1

Corinthians 13:12, he says,

Now [while we're on this side of eternity] we see things [speaking of spiritual reality] imperfectly as in a dull mirror [when you look into a dull mirror, you can see an image, but it's not very clear], but then [when eternity and this life come together] we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NLT)

I think that we've got to remember that there's this dull mirror principle, that even though God is speaking, because we're on this side of eternity, it's not always going to be totally clear at first. And the point of that

really is, avoid becoming dogmatic about what you think God is saying to you at any given point, especially on things that are not essential to the faith. Don't become dogmatic because it could be that you're not totally hearing everything you need to hear. Okay, that's the first thing to be aware of.

The second thing is,

2. Be aware that sometimes what God tells you through the Bible is just for you and not for anyone else.

For example, something that Christians have debated for years and years is the use of alcohol. Some denominations say, "you shouldn't touch alcohol at all." Some denominations say, "it's no big deal." And really, what the Bible says is, "don't be drunk with wine." It also says, "strong drink is a mocker" – it will mock your life, and in the end, it will mock you and ruin you if you get

addicted to it. But it never says, "Don't drink alcohol" in the Bible. Did you know that? It doesn't say that. So, when I read all that stuff I asked myself, "what is God saying to me about that?" Well, here is what God said to me, "Your mother was an alcoholic; Your grandfather (her father) was killed as a drunk driver (he was a drunk driver in a car crash, he died), so, you probably have a chance of being addicted to alcohol very easily. Rick, for you, strong drink is out of the question; alcohol is out of the question. So Rick, you don't go there." Now, that's what God said to me. But, that's not necessarily what God is saying to you. Do you understand what I'm saying?

The same thing applies to debt. There are things in the Bible about debt. The Bible says, "the borrower becomes servant to the lender." So some people will take that and go, "you should never borrow anything in

your whole life!" And here's the deal, if you're addicted to "stuff" and you can't stop putting plastic down and you're going in the hole and you're \$10K, \$20K, \$30K in debt because you've got to have the latest and greatest thing, and you read those scriptures, God might be saying to you, "Tear up your credit card!" But that doesn't mean you need to go around and preach at everybody else. Do you follow what I'm saying? What God says to you might not be what He says to everyone else on these issues in which there is wisdom and advice coming from the scriptures, not doctrine, like Jesus rising from the dead.

Again, don't assume that because God has said something to you that you're now to become the crusader for that cause for everyone else.

3. Finally, and maybe most importantly, be

aware that the “quality of hearing” is dependent on the “quantity of doing.”

Let's say that again. The quality of your hearing from God is dependent on the quantity of doing what you hear. “Be doers of the Word and not just hearers only” the Apostle James writes.

See, once we realize God is speaking to us, we need to take Him seriously. If you are reading the Bible or listening to a sermon or taking part in a small group discussion about the scripture or Biblical principles, and you hear God speaking (God draws your attention to something or you have a new realization, an “aha”), then you need to make a note of that. You need to ask, “why is God revealing this truth to me right now? Is there something He wants me to know about himself that I haven't understood before? Is there something He wants me to do or say? Is there some sin in my life that I need to

confess that I wasn't aware of before this new information?" Or, is there a way that God just wants to say "I love you. I love you, no matter what, because of what Jesus did. Stop trying to prove yourself."

See, God is not arbitrarily sharing a new truth with you for no reason – He is trying to lead you someplace when He does. And you need to know what He is trying to do and start moving in that direction because if you don't – if you fail to respond to what God is saying, not only do you miss out on the blessing of actually following, Jesus said you'll also begin to hear God's voice a little less often. He said,

To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding [of my teaching] will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those

who are not listening [those who say, "God's my consultant, He's not my director"], even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.

Matthew 13:12 (NLT)

And for some of you this answers the question of "why am I not hearing from God whenever I open the Bible and read? Why am I not hearing from God whenever I come to church and we worship and someone stands up and teaches?" It's because you're not attempting to do what you're hearing. Quality of hearing is dependent on quantity of doing.

Communion

Well, I hope this has been helpful to you and I hope that you will be encouraged because you're now able to recognize that God is

speaking to you and when God is speaking to you through the Bible.

But since we're talking about the Bible this morning, I think we would be remiss if we didn't close our service this morning by focusing on the central message, the central story, the highlight of the story. And, I'm going to ask the band to get in place for this part because they're going to help us with this. And, as I said before, sometimes Christians think of the Bible as just a theological textbook or a divine game plan for their life, and it is those things in some ways, but it's so much more than that. Remember, it's the story of a loving God and what he has done and is doing to redeem his creation from the curse of sin and death brought on by our disobedience to Him.

This is why Jesus once said to the religious leaders of his day:

"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. [How to have your best life now and in eternity,' 'How to know all about the theological data about God, all the the rules and regulations.' You think that's what they're telling you.] But I'm telling you the Scriptures point to me!" John 5:39 (NLT)

This is why the Apostle Paul writes to his disciple Timothy:

From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise [not so that you can have great theological knowledge; not so you can have your best life now, although it will help in those areas] for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:15 (NIV)

In other words, "Timothy, the scriptures are telling you the story and pointing you to the salvation that God is working out in this world through his Son, Jesus of Nazareth."

And that's where I want us to end this morning. We've talked all about the Bible and how you can hear God. It's wonderful, but if we miss the point that what God is saying all through the Bible is, "I love you. I'm sending a savior because you're all jacked up and you're going to who knows who knows where if you don't repent." Okay? God is saying I love you and I've sent my son, Jesus. That's the whole point of the thing. You can get all this other stuff right and miss the whole point.

And I want to make sure this morning we don't miss the point that what the scripture is telling us about is God's love expressed in

Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross and rose from the grave so that the new creation that God is creating could begin in him and then spread to all of us and then one day take over this whole world when he returns.

And we have a way that we do that around here (not just us, but all Christians do it), it's called communion. And when we take communion, we have this little piece of bread, and Jesus said, "whenever you eat this piece of bread you remember that this is my body. My body was broken for you on the cross." Then it says he passed the cup of wine (we use juice) and he said, "take this fruit of the vine and remember that this is my blood which was given for you."

So, what we're going to do as we close, the band is going to play, and you will have an opportunity to say, "God, thank you that you

“speak to me through the Bible, I’m so pleased with that, but, I thank you so much that the message of that Bible is that Jesus loves me.”

Endnotes

ⁱ Larry Osborne, *Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, pg 74-5.