

DAY 2

GOD SPEAKS

Most of us have had that frustrating mobile phone call where the person on the other end keeps cutting out. You may be talking (on hands-free of course), in the middle of a long story or a funny joke or a serious problem, only to realize the call was dropped miles back. Don't you hate that?

Is that how our communication is with God? We think we are in conversation with Him, but are we really sure He's up there taking our call? How will we hear what He has to say to us?

Throughout history, God has demonstrated His desire to communicate to us. Whether it was speaking to Adam and Eve in the garden, warning Noah of the flood to come, calling Abraham to be the father of a great nation, giving Moses the Ten Commandments, God reached out. In the New Testament, God's desire to speak directly to us becomes even more evident.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

- JOHN 1:1, 14, 18

The embodiment of God in the person of Jesus was God's ultimate expression of His desire to communicate to us in a way we could grasp. In the passage above, we see that the word, "Word" means Jesus, the Son of God. The writer, John, is introducing Jesus with a word or a term that both his Jewish and Gentile readers would have been familiar with. For example, in the Old Testament, the "word" of God is often personified as an instrument for the execution of God's will (Psalm 33:6; 107:20; 119:89; 147:15-18). So, for his Jewish readers, by introducing Jesus as the "Word," John is in a sense pointing them back to the Old Testament where the "Word" of God is associated with the personification of God's revelation. And in Greek philosophy, the term "Word" was used to describe the agency by which God created material things and communicated with them. So, in the Greek worldview, the Word was thought of as a bridge between God and man.

Then, as we saw in our reading yesterday, God sent His Spirit to continue the communication. "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my

name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Salvation in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit allow us to have a personal and intimate relationship with God. Saying yes to Jesus means we now stand rightly connected to God and are able to grow into that relationship. One of the most awe-inspiring parts of this new relationship is that God – the Creator of the universe – wants to speak with us. Because God is personal, He desires to connect with us and lead us into greater intimacy with Him. Central to intimacy is communication. We can learn to listen to God’s voice by paying attention to the ways He speaks to us. First, God speaks to us through His creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

- PSALM 19:1-4

Because God made the whole world and universe, it makes sense that by observing His work we could learn a lot about Him. When we look carefully at the things He has made, we see His beauty, creativity, power, ingenuity, knowledge, organization, purpose, wisdom, mercy and grace. The Bible argues that a design as magnificent as creation leads us to believe in a Grand Designer. So much so, the Bible says we have no excuse not to see the fingerprints of God in His work.

For since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

- ROMANS 1:20

God also speaks to us through other people. We see examples of people hearing the words of God through a human voice. For instance, Jethro gives his son-in-law, Moses, godly leadership wisdom in Exodus 18. Deborah tells an Israeli general named Barak that God wants him to attack their enemy in Judges 4. Samuel is God’s mouthpiece to tell Jesse that his son, David, will be the next king in 1 Samuel 16. Daniel communicates God’s plan for the future to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. In the New Testament, we see in Acts 15 that Peter speaks for God when he insists that new converts to Christianity don’t have to first be circumcised in Acts 15.

God continues to speak today to you through other people. This is one of the reasons it is so important for us to be part of a church and to connect with other Christ-followers. The Bible tells us God puts different people with different gifts in each

church body. The result is a group of people who are mutually dependent on each other to hear God's voice. As you talk and pray with other believers about an issue you're facing, God will often use their words to tell you how to handle it and move forward. Seeking Christian counsel is often a wise way to hear from God.

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

- PROVERBS 15:22

A third way God communicates with us is through circumstances. Here we need to be careful because Satan can use circumstances to distract us. But there is no question God will arrange circumstances in such a way as to give us direction. We see an example of this in the Apostle Paul's travels.

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

- ACTS 16:6-10

As Paul traveled, he saw God's Spirit behind his circumstances. We get the idea that when circumstances would change Paul's plans, he would pray and open himself up to what God wanted to tell him – a great model for us to practice.

Another way God speaks is through supernatural means. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush (Exodus 3), to Balaam through his donkey (Numbers 22), to Gideon through an angel (Judges 6), and to Isaiah in a powerful vision (Isaiah 6). Do you believe God still speaks to His people in these ways? If you have your doubts because you think no rational person could believe such things, reconsider. Depending on the circumstances and whom God is trying to reach, He may still use miraculous ways to speak. Two ways God speaks to us, through the Bible and through prayer, will be examined in more depth in the next three readings. God also uses dreams, visions, and to some people, an audible voice. It is most important for us to remember, regardless of the means, God indeed speaks to us, and whatever He says should be met with a commitment on our part to listen and obey. A phrase Jesus used often as He taught was, "To him who has ears to hear, let him hear." In other words, don't just listen to what God has to say...hear Him.

