

How to Know the Voice of God

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Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Introduction

I am sure that at some point you have heard someone say, “God personally spoke to me and told me fish over there” or “God spoke to me while I was fishing and told me to tell you to sell everything and move into a tent.”

Perhaps God speaking directly to other people has left you wondering if something is wrong with you because God does not speak to you this way. Maybe it has caused you to wonder if something is wrong in your relationship with God or it might just be that other people are “super-believers” with a hotline to God – and you are wondering why you don’t have that kind special relationship with God.

Let’s lay down a solid foundation. As Christians, we believe that the Bible is the complete, divinely inspired, authoritative Word of God. We accept the pillar undergirding the Reformation some 500 years ago: *Sola Scripture*, which means that Scripture alone, not the Pope, modern-day prophet, tradition or “new” revelations is our Christian authority (2 Peter 1:20-21 & 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

A Puzzle

1. If you accept that God still speaks outside of the Bible, you also accept that the Bible is not finished, because being the very Words of God they belong in the Bible. This is called an open canon, “canon” meaning the set of books that make up the Bible.
2. If you believe that canon (the Bible) is closed, you also cannot accept that God speaks outside of the Bible.

Either the Bible has been written or it’s still being written. But what if something is going on, perhaps a decision to make or a crisis and you are not sure what to do and you really need to

hear back from God? Let's move toward answering that question towards the end of this message. This is a difficult message, you are up to it, so please stay with me until the end.

The Difference Between Revelation and Illumination

Let's revisit the puzzle of an open or closed canon in terms of revelation and illumination.

Revelation refers to God uncovering or revealing new information; something that was previously hidden. Nothing is hidden in the Bible – which is complete – from Genesis to Revelation it's all written down for everyone to see and study.

Illumination, on the other hand, is where the Holy Spirit works within your spirit and soul and draws you to a particular Scripture so that you can deeply study it, understand it and apply it.

Revelation has ceased, illumination not. In fact, illumination must be a regular part of your walk with God.

You might ask, "Pastor did you just imply that God will not speak to me when I need Him the most?" No...

How Does God Speak Today?

Let's recall this morning's Scripture, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

There is a partition in this text: days that have gone by and the days in which we live.

In the old days, the days of prophets, God spoke in many different ways, for example, directly to a prophet, a small voice to Elijah, through a donkey and more. Every time God's speaking was both external and audible. No inner private revelations.

In the last days, however, say the writer of Hebrews, "he has spoken to us by his Son." Jesus is the final speaking of God – note that the Word of Scripture is in the past tense. He has spoken. Everything that God has to say, has been said in His Son, Jesus and we have perfect, errorless, authoritative, all-sufficient record of that in His Word – the Bible. Jesus is the final speaking of God.

There is nothing in the New Testament about how to hear the voice of God. There is nothing, for example, in the Lord's prayer about listening for a small voice, unique revelations and so

forth. It's not there, but why? Mainly because it is not necessary. The truth is, God has never stopped speaking through the closed canon of the Bible.

Hearing God

How then do you know God's will for your life? How do you get answers to prayers? Read, study, and obey God's Word. If you're not doing that, then nothing else matters anyway. So read, study, and obey God's Word.

You don't have to seek a special word of knowledge or will for your particular life or your situation. We don't see anyone in the New Testament doing this. We see the apostles just getting on with the business of God.

But if something is going on in your life, a crisis or a career change and you need to hear clearly from God, what do you do?

1. Read, study, and obey God's Word.
2. Always pray for wisdom, James 1:5. If you're not reading and studying and obeying God's Word, then don't pray for wisdom, but if you are, pray for wisdom.
3. Make a biblically-based wise informed decision. There is safety in a multitude of (Godly – biblical) counsellors (Proverbs 11:14). If you are not sure what to do next, you have been reading, studying and obeying God's Word, seek Godly counsel. Start with your husband or wife. if you both decide you need to hear some other voices, go to some mentors or your pastor.
4. Trust God. Proverbs 3:5-6 reads, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." If He spoke the universe into existence, He is more than capable of directing our paths.

Paul writes in Titus 3:12, "I have decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis." He didn't say, "I prayed and asked the Lord to give me a word of knowledge of where I should spend the winter."

In Acts 16:6, Paul wanted to go into Asia, and the Holy Spirit closed that door. So he went to Europe and Turkey, modern-day Turkey, and the gospel leapt from one continent to the next, and Lydia was converted. God's purposes will be achieved.

What if you wake up at 2 am with a burden to pray for Rudolph, Susan or anyone else? Is that the Holy Spirit speaking? Here is what we do know: Pray and give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), so don't doubt, pray.

Conclusion

Spurgeon says, "I have little confidence in those persons who speak of having direct revelations from the Lord as though He appeared otherwise than by and through the gospel. His Word is so full, so perfect that for God to make any fresh revelation to you or to me is quite needless. To do so would be to put a dishonor upon the perfection of that Word indeed."

If you want to hear God speak to you, there's one way I guarantee that you will hear God speak: read your Bible. If you want to hear God speak to you audibly, and read it out loud. One hundred per cent guaranteed, He will speak and you will hear Him speak.

Amen.