

## LISTENING TO GOD

### EXPERIENCE A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD BY LEARNING TO HEAR HIS VOICE

#### Lesson 2 – How God Has Spoken

God has used a variety of ways to speak to His people down through the ages. There are at least 7 ways in which God spoke to His people in Bible times...

1. Direct revelation
2. Dreams
3. Written words
4. Prophets
5. Angels
6. Jesus Christ
7. The Holy Spirit

#### Ways God Does NOT Speak

1. God does NOT speak to His people through natural phenomena.

Having feelings about God's presence and about His creation is NOT the same, however, as claiming that we have a message from God through some act of nature. The broad message of God in nature is that God is orderly and operates according to purpose, design, and intention. We see in nature that God loves beauty and that God has a sense of humor. Nature speaks of God, but that is far different from saying, "God speaks through nature with a personal word to us."

2. God does NOT speak to us through astrology or fortune-tellers. The Bible says these practices are from satan.

Acts 16:16-18, "One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved. This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And instantly it left her."

3. God does NOT speak to His people through occult practices.

We are to stay away from things like tarot cards, ouija boards, crystals, magic charms and things associated with the occult. God's Word speaks strongly against conjuring spirits, such as in séances, or any form of magic that might attempt to give us direction for our lives. Soothsayers and seers were among the people that God clearly told his children to avoid.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12, "For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord."

## How God Has Spoken

### 1. God spoke through Direct Revelation.

Direct revelation is what we would refer to as the audible voice of God.

Abraham had a direct revelation from God, "Get out of your country... to a land that I will show you"  
Genesis 12:1.

The burning bush Moses saw while tending sheep is another example of direct revelation (Exodus 3).

Read 1 Samuel chapter 3. What does this passage reveal about God's methods of speaking to His servants? What does it say about Samuel's response?

### 2. God spoke through Dreams and Visions.

Joseph had 2 notable dreams (Genesis 37). Those were prophetic dreams about what was going to happen later in Joseph's life. Daniel had visions in which God revealed to him the destiny of the world and the empires that were to come. Joseph, the husband of Mary, had 2 remarkable dreams.

Peter had a vision that led to his sharing the gospel with the house of Cornelius, which ultimately led to the sharing of the gospel to all Gentiles. Read Acts 10:9-35. How did Peter know that the vision was from God? What was God's purpose in giving him the vision?

### 3. God spoke through the Written Word of God.

Exodus 31:18, "When the Lord finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God."

God has always placed great value on the written word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

Hebrews 4:12, "For 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."

What does it mean that the bible is living and powerful? What are the uses of a sharp sword?

### 4. God spoke through the Words of the Prophets

We repeatedly find this phrase in the Scriptures, "This is what the Lord says." Those who spoke these words are what we call prophets.

Prophets did far more than foretell future events. To be a prophet means to speak the truth of God to others. Sometimes it's about future conclusions other times it's a very specific truth about a particular circumstance, and still at other times it is the declaration of what God's Word says.

God continues to speak through proclaimers today: through preachers, teachers, Bible study leaders, and Sunday school teachers.

We need to be very careful in discerning who is telling us the truth today. Our main source for discerning a true prophet from a false prophet is the written Word of God. We must ask, "Is this person telling me something other than what I can find in the Word of God?" If so, the person isn't God's prophet. Our second means of discernment is evidence. What a prophet says...happens. If a person tells us that God is going to do something it must come to pass. If it doesn't, the person is a false prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22, "But you may wonder, How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the Lord? If the prophet speaks in the Lord's name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the Lord did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared."

Why is it important to discern whether a prophecy is from the Lord or not? How can a person know whether or not a prophecy is truly from God? What role does a prophet play in the body of Christ today?

#### 5. God spoke through Angelic Messages

The word angel means "messenger from God." God spoke through an angel to the parents of Samson, to Mary, and a number of other people in the Bible. God sends angels at His will and for His purposes. We are not to seek or pray for angelic encounters.

God's angels come to people uninvited, unannounced and unexpected. They are usually so awesome in form that their first words are, "Fear not." They deliver their messages, which are very direct and specific and then they leave. They always come at God's choosing. They do not appear when we think we need help, rather, they appear when God chooses.

#### 6. God spoke through Jesus...God's Word Made Flesh

God has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus. Jesus is God's full expression of love, holiness, power, and relationship.

John 1:14, "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."

What does John mean, "the Word became human"? What difference does it make to your prayer life?

## **The Holy Spirit Conveys God's Truth**

God speaks to each believer by His Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-18, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you."

What did Jesus mean that He would not leave us orphans? Why can't the world receive the Holy Spirit? What is required for such an intimate relationship with God?