

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

HEARING GOD *“How To Listen to God”*

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”-John 10:27

Is God Still Speaking? *Psalms 81, Various Scripture*

Perhaps there has never been a more important time than now for us to “hear from God,” or for us to at least feel like we are hearing from God. I am pretty sure we are not the first generation to feel this way, but I know most of us feel like that today.

- I need to hear God’s voice.
- I need to know that God is speaking
- And I need to know what He is saying in all of this.

For believers/Christians, hearing God and knowing what He is saying in times like these is paramount in importance to us.

- We need His comfort
- We need His direction
- We need the calming wisdom of His voice and words
- We need Him to tell us what to do and when to do it
- We need Him to tell us how to react
- We need Him to tell us how to navigate times like these.

We need to hear God, but that is the great struggle we find ourselves in, isn’t it? How to hear God? Does He still speak today? And if He does, how can I be sure I am hearing His voice? These are important questions for Christians and believers today?

We are beginning a new Bible study this evening called “Hearing God: How To Listen to God.” Based on Dr. Charles Stanley book by the same title, “How To Listen to God.” By the way, that is my favorite Charles Stanley book. In his book Charles Stanley addresses such things as; God’s Goal in Communicating, How God Gets Our Attention, Identifying the Voice of God, Hindrances to Hearing and more. He also addresses the topic of this first introductory lesson in our study, “Hearing God”... “Is God Still Speaking?”

Well, what do you think? Is God still speaking today? Let’s think about that for a minute. See if you can probe some of these questions with me, and let’s discuss them a bit:

- (1) *Is God still speaking today?* – Show me the evidence. What things can you point to today that give evidence that God is still speaking?
- (2) *If God is still speaking today, how does He speak today?* – Explain your response. Cite examples.
- (3) *What cautions would you give to this idea that God is still speaking today?* – We must be discerning. Not everyone who claim to speak for God is speaking for God. There are many manipulations, and twistings of Scripture in our day. And many false religions and even cults that claim to speak for God that are false and misrepresenting the Bible, the truths, and what God's Word says. This is a major reason Christians must be grounded in the word today.

Our theme verse for this study is going to be **John 10:27**, where Jesus said, **"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."** That verse tells us a couple of things, even about why we need this study:

3 Supplemental Reasons We Need this Study: (according to John 10:27, our theme verse)

- (1) **If you are a Christian you need to learn to hear and listen to His voice** – Why? First of all, it's evidence that you are His... "My sheep listen to my voice..." Second, He is your Shepherd, Master, Lord, Savior... you have to listen to Him so you know what to do.
- (2) **He knows you, if you are His, and He knows just what you need and what you need to hear** –
- (3) **As His, you need to hear him because you need to know how to follow Him and go where He is telling you to go** -

So let's dig into this first lesson in our study on "Hearing God," and look at the question "Is God still speaking today?" **I think we would all agree that He is, but if He is why are so many not hearing Him?, why is that that we sometimes can't hear Him or won't hear Him?, why do we so often miss His voice?, why do we find His voice so hard to hear and indistinct?, and why do so many feel like God is not speaking and the Heavens are brass?** Perhaps you have some ideas about how to answer these probing question, but let's see what God's Words has to say.

We want to begin in the Old Testament book of Psalm. If you have Bible go to the 81st Psalm (Psalm 81).

Psalm 81 is a sad saga of a people who would not listen to God. The compassionate heart of the Father in His numerous attempts to gain Israel's attention and devotion and their persistent rejection are revealed in verses 8-14,

"⁸Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me! ⁹There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. ¹⁰I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ¹¹But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. ¹²So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. ¹³Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! ¹⁴I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries." – Psalm 81:8-14 (NKJV)

God is saying to His people, “I desire to speak to you. I am speaking to you. The problem is not with me speaking. The problem with your hearing.” Do you see it? They were ignoring God’s voice and therefore not hearing Him. I wonder if that is why we often fail to hear Him in our own lives.

You can almost feel the pulse-beat of God as He pleads for the nation of Israel, saying, “Please listen to Me. Please hear My voice.” Each of us, too should ask, “Lord, have You been trying to tell me something that I desperately need to hear? Are You exhorting me to listen to Your Voice?” I wonder how many times God has spoken to us and we were not listening. I wonder how many times He had something specific we needed to hear, but we were too occupied to pay attention.

There are times in all of our lives where we become too occupied doing things... not necessarily bad things... sometimes even good, religious, servant things... but busy doing things, and we are so occupied that we fail to pay attention to God’s voice. We may be going to church every time the doors are open, service on committees, teaching Sunday School, involved in a Bible Study, singing in the Choir, helping out here and there, but we are so busy doing that we are not taking the time to really listen to God.

I believe that one of the most valuable lessons we can ever learn is how to listen to God. In the midst of our complex and hectic lives, nothing is more urgent, nothing more necessary, nothing more rewarding than hearing what God has to say. And, the Bible is explicit, God speaks to us just as powerfully today as in the days in which the Bible was written. His voice waits to be heard, and having heard it, we are launched into the greatest, most exciting adventure we could ever imagine.

I. WHY GOD SPEAKS TODAY?

We might ask, “Why would God still want to talk to us today? Hasn’t He said enough from Genesis to Revelation?” There are several compelling reasons why God still has His lines of communication open with His people.

4 Reasons God Still Speaks Today:

1. **God still speaks today because He loves us just as much as He loved the people of the Old and New Testament days** – He desires to fellowship with us just as much as He fellowshiped with them. If our relationship with Him is a one-way trip and there is not communication or dialogue between us and the Lord Jesus Christ, then there isn’t much fellowship. Fellowship is nil when one person does all the talking and the other does all the listening. God still speaks to us today because He wants to develop a love relationship that involves a two-party conversation.
2. **God still speaks today because we need His definite and deliberate direction for our lives today as much as they did in the Old and New Testament days** – We need His direction as much as did Abraham, Joshua, Moses, or Jacob... Peter, Paul or Timothy. As His children, we need His counsel for effective decision making. Since He wants us to make the right choices, He is still responsible for providing accurate data, and that comes through His speaking to us.

3. **God still speaks today because He knows we need the comfort and assurance just as much as did the believers of the Old and New Testament days** – We have “Red Sea” experiences, when our backs are to the wall and we do not know what way to turn. We undergo failures just as Joshua and the people of Israel did at Ai. When we undergo such defeats, God knows our need for His assurance and confidence.
4. **God still speaks today because most importantly God wants us to know Him** – If God has stopped talking, then I doubt we will ever discover what He is really like. If the priority of all of our goals is to know God, then there must be more than just a one-way trip. Rather, there must be a communication link in which He talks to us and we listen or we talk to Him and He listens.

II. HOW GOD SPOKE IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT DAYS

If God is still talking, how does He speak? We can discover His methods by reviewing the different ways He revealed Himself and spoke in the Old and the New Testament days.

7 Ways God Spoke in the Old and New Testament Times:

1. **God spoke by direct revelation (Genesis 12:1-2)** – First, He spoke by direct revelation. By His Spirit He spoke to the spirit of men like Abraham, who one day heard God directly tell him to leave the land in which he was living and go into a land that God would show him. In **Genesis 12:1-2** we get a chance to hear God speak by direct revelation to Abraham, *“¹Now the LORD had said to Abram, ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.’”* In other words, God spoke directly to Abraham and told him... revealed to him exactly what He wanted him to do. God still speaks by direct revelation sometimes. He tells us directly, specifically what He want of us... what He wants us to do and we know it... there is no doubt. His directions are clear, direct and specific. It’s not always this way, but sometimes He does make it that clear. For Abraham it was that clear. I want you to move, leave your home place and go to the place I will show you! Now what happens with this one is we say, “Nah! That can’t be what God is saying! I have too much invested in this place. This is my home. I could never leave here!” and we shut out the direct voice of God in our lives and we miss out on all that God has for us all that God want to do in us and through us and for us. If Abraham had not listened to this direct revelation from God and done what God said what would have happened? Think about it... no great nation (v.2), no great name for Abraham (v.2), no blessing for others (v.2). To put it in real terms... no nation of Israel, God’s chosen people, no Issac or Jacob, or Moses, or Joseph, or David, or Mary or Joseph, no father of faith in Abraham as the writer of Hebrews tells us, no blessing from the seed of Abraham... no Jesus. Wow!
2. **God spoke through dreams (Genesis 37:5-11)** – Second, the Bible says God spoke through dreams. A good example of this is the dream and vision of Joseph in **Genesis 37:5-11**, *“⁵Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶So he said to them, ‘Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.’ ⁸And*

his brothers said to him, 'Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.'¹⁰ So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?'¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind."

We know that later Joseph's brother and father would bow down to him as one who had risen to a place of prominence and authority in Egypt mostly through his ability to interpret the dreams that God was giving to the Pharaoh at the time, and Joseph would become a type of savior to his people and a prototype of Christ our Savior. God spoke to Joseph through dreams and those dreams kept Joseph going through some rough times. Another example of who God spoke through dreams is evident in the experiences of Daniel, to whom God revealed His world destiny in series of dreams. Through visions Daniel saw the empires that were to come. In this way, God gave Daniel tremendous insight into future world events that are still in the process of unfolding today.

This is a point, however, in which we must be extremely careful and very discerning. We tread on very tricky territory here. The Bible does not ever say to seek the mind of God through dreams. They just may not be reliable, trustworthy and they can be easily manipulated and controlled by external circumstances. Neither are we encouraged in the Word of God to seek the mind of God through visions. That is not to say that He can't or won't speak to you through a dream or vision, but we are not to go looking for that... seeking it... or trying to manipulate it. Remember that Jesus, Himself, said, *"⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it..."* (Matthew 16:4) The word "sign" literally means admonition, as in dreams and visions or some miraculous event as in a vision. We aren't to seek out dreams and visions, but that doesn't mean that God may speak through them. How do you know when God is speaking through a dream or a vision? I'm not really sure that there is a definitive answer here, but some principles and warnings may be helpful:

4 Applicable Questions To Ask To Discern If It's From God: *(especially as it relates to dreams and visions, but note that this may apply to anytime someone says they are speaking for God or God told them something)*

- (1) **Is it inconsistent or contradictory to the Word of God?** - If it is not consistent with the Word of God it is not from God (period). Reject it. A dream or a vision is never to supersede or take the place of what God has revealed in His Word. Remember the canon of Scripture is closed! There is nothing being added or subtracted from it **Principle:** *God will never ask you to do something that is against His Word or inconsistent with His Word.*
- (2) **Is it inconsistent with the character of God (and who He reveals Himself to be)?** – For example 1 John 4:8 reveals God to be a God of love when it says, *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* So when the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas says God appeared to them and told them to carry picket signs that say "God Hates Queers" that was not God that told them to do that. God

doesn't hate people. He love man... all mankind. He sent His son to die for man... all mankind. He hates sin... all sin (no matter what it is), because it destroys man, and ruins lives, but he doesn't hate people. He is not going to instruct you to do something to communicate the message that He hates people. ***Principle: God will not ask you to do something is inconsistent with His character and who He reveals Himself to be in His Word***

(3) **Is it going to glorify God or me?** – Who will get the attention, the praise, the glory, be magnified by this. This may also cut to the heart of the matter... the question of motive may help us discern what we are really hearing or seeing. ***Principle: If God is not getting the glory or being glorified through our actions in some way it's not from Him.***

(4) **Could this be coming from something or someone other than God?** – If there is a question in your minds, wait, process, pray, let God make it more clear before you move. Remember **Romans 14:23** says, ***“...for whatever is not from faith is sin.”*** ***Principle: Always allow for the possibility that there could be external influences on what you are dreaming of seeing.***

3. **God spoke through His written word (Exodus 20:1-17ff, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)** – Third, God spoke through His written words, such as when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments and then used the Law to communicate to His people. The Apostle Paul even tell us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, ***“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*** God still speaks primarily through His Word, but we will get more into that as this study continues.
4. **God spoke through His prophets (Jeremiah 1:1-9)** – Fourth, God spoke through His prophets. The prophets exclaimed, “Thus saith the Lord...” and the people obeyed because they were called of God to be His mouth piece, and the people knew it came directly from God. Listen to **Jeremiah 1:1-9**, ***“¹The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ²to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. ⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁵‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’ ⁶Then said I: ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.’ ⁷But the LORD said to me: ‘Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,’ says the LORD. ⁹Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.’”*** God put His words in the mouths of the prophets and they spoke for God. God still speaks through his called out messengers.
5. **God spoke through circumstances (1 Kings 19:1-18)** – Fifth, God spoke through circumstances. We've all heard the story of how God used the Prophet Elijah to destroy the Prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. What a great moment of victory both for

God and His people. But the event brought great danger and peril, threat and fear on the life of the Prophet Elijah and in 1 Kings 19 he flees for his life from the wicked King Ahab and his even more wicked wife Jezebel. It is interesting how God spoke to the Prophet Elijah in the midst of this trauma in his life in 1 Kings 19:9-13, *“⁹ And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’¹⁰ So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.’¹¹ Then He said, ‘Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.’ And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”* This is an interesting event that takes place in the cave. God actually spoke to Elijah in a couple of ways here. He spoke orally, audibly in some way in verse 9, “...and behold, the word of the Lord came to Him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” but God also spoke through the circumstances surrounding Elijah, primarily through the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and a still small voice. What do you suppose God might have been saying to Elijah? God is not in all the flash and flare and the sensational and the fanfare, is with us all the time, even in the most mundane, simplest places of our life. He is in the still, the small, the voice. God graciously reached down to Elijah and through these circumstances gave him the assurance and confidence he needed.

6. **God spoke through angels (Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-25)** – Sixth, God spoke through angels, introducing Mary and Joseph to the birth of Jesus Christ through angelic proclamation. There are many other example of God speaking through angels to Abraham, the parents to Samson, Gideon, the parents of John the Baptist (Elizabeth and Zacharias), the women at the tomb, etc.
7. **God spoke through His Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6-7)** – Seventh, God spoke through the Holy Spirit. You remember that in the life of Paul, who was on his way to Asia, God spoke to him through the Holy Spirit forbidding him to go there, *“Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them”* (Acts 16:6-7)

III. HOW GOD SPEAKS TODAY?

While we marvel at the methods God used to speak to His chosen ones of old, our spirits long to engage in direct and meaningful communication in this present age. We want to proclaim along with the Samaritans’ response to the woman at the well in John 4:42, *“⁴² Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’”* In other words, we want to hear for ourselves and we have! We can be thankful that God is still in the communication business. He employs four primary methods of revealing Himself to us today.

4 Ways God Primarily Speaks Today:

1. The Word of God - The Lord's primary way of speaking to us today is through His Word. We already have the complete revelation of God. He doesn't need to add anything else to this Book. The revelation of God is the unfolding truth of God by God about Himself. It is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, controlling the minds of men who penned the pages that make up the Bible. The Bible is the breath of God breathed upon those men that they might know the truth. I love what God's Word says about it's self at this point in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Do you get what that is saying? If you want to hear God, this book, the Bible is the answer. It is given by Him and it speaks to every area of our life. It is profitable for doctrine (correct teaching and understanding of truth), reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness (right living), that the man of God (the one who what to hear God) may be complete (whole), thoroughly equipped for every good word. It says everything we need to hear. Let me ask you based on that verse, why is the Word of God so important to hearing God? It's His Word to us right? And it's specific at what He wants to say to us?

Yes, the most assured way you can know and hear from God is through His word. When we face difficulties and heartaches, rather than seek this counsel or that counsel, we should first go the Scripture.

Now, this is important to understand... God's Word was written to the people addressed in Scripture right? Isaiah wrote to Judah, Paul wrote to Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi, or Colosse. We know that the Bible was certainly written to a specific people during a specific time in history, right? But the Scripture were also written for us today. The Bible is God's instruction book for His people for all time, and it speaks and it applies and it is relevant to all people in all ages, in all walks of life. It is amazing how God's Word works like that. Again, listen to what it says about itself... first in Isaiah 55:11, God is speaking and He says about His Word, *"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* I have always loved that verse, I quote it quite often if you've ever noticed when I preach and before I preach when I pray. When God's Word goes out it never return empty, it always speak, and touches, and ministers, and heals and blesses. It is always relevant, and applies in all ages, at all times. It never return void. And then in Hebrews 4:12, *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* It always speaks.

The Lord spoke to Joshua and said in Joshua 1:7-8, *"⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth,*

but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” The book of the Law (the Word of God) was Joshua’s guide, his instruction book in godly living. So the Bible is for us today.

How does this work out in a practical way for us as believers today? When we pray and seek guidance about a decision, we should ask God to speak to us specifically through His Word and give us some advice to clarify our direction. As we meditate on the Word with our request or decision in mind, God will often lead us to an incident in Scripture, a passage, or even a single verse that will relate to what concerns us. It may deal with our specific experience, or the principle governing our decision may be prominent in the text.

Sometimes God will lead us to the source, to the same passage over and over again. It is not that we choose to reread the same passage, but somehow we just seem to continue to open that book to that text, or He just continues to put it before us. I get asked from time to time how I come up with the passage I am going to preach from each Sunday. My answer is always about the same... “I spend time in prayer about it and God always seem to place the passage I am to preach on my heart, impress my spirit about it, or somehow show me, but He just always does.” On more than one occasion (really more times than I can mention), God has just put a passage before me that I just can’t seem to get away from. It’s like the passage will just keep coming up in a song I hear on the radio, in a book I’m reading, in a sermon I listen to, someone will quote from it, I’ll read it in my quiet time and then again in a devotion... it will just keep popping up and I will sense that God is trying to get my attention with it... so I’ll preach it. It is amazing how, if we will watch, God will put His Word before us if we will just listen to it.

Through His Word He directs us, challenges us, warns us, comforts us, assures us. I have found it (God’s Word) to be one of the most rewarding experiences in my Christian life: to face a challenge and meditate upon God’s Word until I know He has spoken.

2. **The Holy Spirit** – A second method God uses to speak to us today is through the Holy Spirit. In fact the primary way Jesus spoke in the New Testament was through the Holy Spirit. Today, God still speaks to our spirits through His Spirit who now lives, dwells, and abides in us if we are a born again believer, a Christian.

If we walk in the Spirit daily, surrendered to His power, we have the right to expect anything we need to hear from God. The Holy Spirit living within us and speaking to us ought to be the natural, normal life-style of believers. We can claim His presence, direction and guidance.

I believe that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are God’s two primary modes for speaking to believers today. When I say the Holy Spirit “speaks,” I do not mean audibly. Rather, He impresses His will in my spirit or mind, and I hear Him in my

inner being. Though not audible, the communication is precise nevertheless.
²⁰ *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,*
²¹ *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” - 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NKJV)

3. **Other People** – A third way God speaks to us is through other people. This has always been a mode of God’s communication to others. Certainly He spoke through Moses, and Joshua, and He spoke through the prophets of old to His people. He spoke through the Apostle Paul and through Peter, through John. He has spoken throughout the history of Christianity and the church to bring about Great Awakenings and Revival that spread throughout the world. He spoke through men like Martin Luther, and John Calvin, through George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. He spoke through Charles Haddon Spurgeon and D.L. Moody... today through men like Billy Graham, and Charles Stanley. God still speaks today through preachers, evangelists, missionaries and Christian teachers, but it doesn’t stop there. On a more personal level God sometimes speaks through a Christian brother or sister in our church family who shares an encouraging word or a word of caution or warning. He speaks through family members and friends. Actually, the people we ought to listen to the most are those we live with every day. Those people who love us the most, those who pray for us the most, are often the instruments God uses to reveal Himself to us. I can name several who, in passing conversation, have said something that has altered the course of my life to some degree and they may not even know it, but God used them. Just a simple passing word, just a word here or there from someone close to us (or on rare occasions from a casual acquaintance), can have dramatic consequences.

That is why we need to be very careful about what we say. Recognizing that we can be used as God’s spokespersons should cause us to soberly examine our dialogue. Perhaps God has a message for the listener that he has chosen to deliver, and our talking about the weather or a football game would detract from the message. We should seek to be alert, sensitive, and available to God’s voice.

A Word of Caution: *I do want to give a word of caution here. Although God can and sometimes does speak through others, beware of those who come to you and say, “God told me to tell you...” and then proceed to tell you what God has supposedly told them to tell you. I am always a bit skeptical and leery of this line of conversation for any number of reasons, not the least of which is that it is a bit to presumptuous for anyone to think that they speak for God. Second of all, I believe that most of the time when God does speak through someone to an individual that “someone” He chose to speak through more often than not doesn’t even know it... that God spoke to you through them.*

Let me remind you again of the principles and questions that I gave you a moment ago. These are a good test for whether or not God is really speaking thought that person:

4 Applicable Questions to Ask and Corresponding Principles for Discerning if Something is From God:

- (1) Is it inconsistent or contradictory to the Word of God? - ***Principle:** God will never ask you to do something that is against His Word or inconsistent with His Word.*
- (2) Is it inconsistent with the character of God and who He reveals Himself to be?. ***Principle:** God will not ask you to do something is inconsistent with His character and who He reveals Himself to be in His Word*
- (3) Is it going to glorify God or me? -***Principle:** If God is not getting the glory or being glorified through our actions in some way it's not from Him.*
- (4) Could this be coming from something or someone other than God? -***Principle:** Always allow for the possibility that there could be external influences on what you are dreaming of seeing.*

4. **Circumstances** – A fourth way God speaks to us is through circumstances. Such circumstances take on many forms. Sometimes it is a failure. Sometimes it is a success. Sometimes it is a disappointment. Sometimes it is a tragedy, but God uses all circumstances in life to speak to us. Think of how God used circumstances in scripture to speak. The following are a few examples just from the story of Moses and the exodus.

1. **God spoke through the unusual circumstance of a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-22 [focus vv.1-4])** – Sometimes God speaks through unusual circumstances and occurrences in our lives, things that are out of the ordinary, that get our attention and cause us to sit up and take notice. For Moses it was a bush that burned, but was not consumed that got his attention and allowed him to hear God's call on his life to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. When the out-of-the-ordinary happens in our lives as believers our first instinct ought to be a glance heavenward... "God what are you wanting me to see here?"
2. **God spoke through the destructive circumstance of the plagues (Exodus 7-13 [focus Ex. 7:1-7])** – Sometimes God does speak through destructive circumstances we may encounter. He was certainly speaking through the plagues that He brought on the land of Egypt during the time of Israel's brutal bondage to the Egyptian taskmasters and Pharaohs. The plagues we read about in the book of Exodus (Ex. 7-13) were devastating and destructive to the land and the people of Egypt. The loss of personal property, livestock, and life was enormous and catastrophic, yet is there any doubt that God was speaking through those circumstances both to the Egyptians and their leaders and the children of Israel. Tragic and destructive circumstances surround us all the time, and God can and will speak to us during those times if our ears are attuned to Him.
3. **God spoke through the amazing circumstance of the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14 [focus vv.21-31])** – Sometimes God speaks through some circumstances that we get to see that amaze us. For God children being delivered

from Egyptian bondage they say many amazing circumstances and miraculous happenings, but perhaps none as amazing as the parting of the Red Sea before their very eyes. Wow! What a moment that must have been. We may never see a sea or ocean parted before our eyes, but God does manufacture some amazing happenings and circumstances before our eyes all the time if we are willing to see it and give Him praise and glory in its midst, and He is speaking through those amazing circumstances. Maybe it a worship service where the presence of God is so real that you can feel him enveloping the place

4. **God spoke through the nurturing circumstance of water from a rock and food from heaven (Exodus 16-17 [focus vv. 16:6-17, vv.17:4-7])** - Sometimes God speaks through what He provides for us, even at times we don't deserve it, aren't looking for it, or even know we needed it. God spoke to his people, though they were grumbling and complaining and wanting to stone His messengers (Moses and Aaron), through His provision for them in the form of quail and manna, and water that gushed from a rock. God often speaks through what He is providing for us... even daily.
5. **God spoke through frightening circumstance of fiery serpents (Numbers 21:1-9 [vv.4-6])** – God speaks in the midst of frightening, even terrifying circumstances and experiences. Sometimes He is tell us to trust and wait on Him. Sometimes He is tell us to trust His provision for us. God spoke to His people in Number 21 through fiery serpents that he sent into their camp. Many were being bitten and killed by these snakes... how terrifying this must have been. God was speaking to His people in the midst of their grumbling, complaining, stubbornness toward Him. God does often speak through frightening situations and circumstances.

IV. SUMMARY

So, today, God speaks to us in four primary ways.

4 Primary Ways God speaks Today:

1. **His Word** –
2. **The Holy Spirit** –
3. **Godly People** –
4. **Circumstances** –

Now that we recognize that God sill actively participates in communicating His message to believers today, we must endeavor to hear intently. When God speaks (and He does!), everyone should listen. As David declared in Psalm 85:8, *"I will hear what God the Lord will speak..."*

To Hear God:

1. **Make a determination to listen** – David said *"I will..."* He willed that he would listen. This is the first step in us beginning to hear God. We must determine that we will seek after His voice, that we will listen everywhere, all the time for Him speaking.
2. **Make a distinction of what you will listen to and for** – David said *"I will hear what..."* There are many competing voices out there, many of them very misleading, many of them no worth listening to, and many of them while noble and good may not

be the best voice to listen to... many of these may even drown out the voice we need to hear, His voice. What will you listen to? We decide what we will and will not listen to.

3. **Make a decision do what God says** – David said, *"I will hear what God the Lord will speak..."* that verse indicates that David is not just going to hear God, but that he is going to hear what God has to say and act on it. The best way to develop our hearing of God is to do what He says when He speak. As we train ourselves to hear God and obeying His voice the more easy to hear His voice will become.