

Saturday/Sunday, May 24-25, 2008

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

“Why God Speaks”

John 10:1-5, Hebrews 4:12-13

INTRODUCTION

“Can You Hear Me Now?”

How God communicates, what He says and how we hear Him speak.

Communication matters ... refer to ways of communication on table.

We communicate because we were made to do so. The One Who created us made us like Himself ... so if He communicates, we communicate, if He speaks, we speak.

God speaks ... How do you feel about that? Heard Him lately? What's He sound like? What's He been saying to you?

I meet people on both ends of the spectrum ... “I hear God speak to me all the time, almost rapid fire” and then others “I never hear God speak, what's wrong with me?”

“Can you hear Me now?” is a question that deserves an answer.

Why? Because the Bible describes God as One Who speaks; Who wants to communicate with people and because hearing Him speak can bring about the kind of life you were always intended to have.

Over the next four weeks we will look at this from some different vantage points: ways that He communicates today; how we can position ourselves to hear Him most clearly; and why at times it seems like God is completely silent when it comes to our life.

This weekend I want to lay a foundation, a foundation found in the Bible that will help us to answer key questions in upcoming weeks.

1. God speaks!

Challenging idea for some because God is invisible, can't see Him and speaks inaudibly (not words like we speak to one another).

Expelled – talk between Ben Stein and a scientist, atheist. “*What if when you die you discover that God exists what would you say to Him?*” “*Well, You sure didn't do a very good job of making Yourself known!*”

Amazing comment! Especially for a highly intellectual scientist who has literally looked right into the very creation made by the One he doesn't believe exists.

(Psalm 19:1-5) *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 display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world*

(Romans 1:20) *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 men are without excuse.*

The creation speaks of God existence; reveals His power and nature.

From the first page of the Bible to the last page God is speaking or telling us how He has spoken.

Over 1,000 references describe a God Who speaks because He can and because He wants to; many of these examples seen in OT.

He speaks directly to people (Moses face to face), at other times He chooses communicates through His prophets or angels (Sodom/Gomorrah); other times through historical events (Red Sea, Babylonian captivity, worldwide flood during Noah's days).

At times He speaks to people through dreams & visions (Daniel, Ezekiel, and Nebuchadnezzar).

He has spoken to unwilling servants (Jonah) and wicked people (Ninevites)

He has spoken audibly, out of a burning bush (Moses), from a cloud (Hebrews), on top of a smoke covered mountain and even one time out of the mouth of a donkey (Balaam).

The NT reveals communication advancements because of the coming of Jesus that enhance our ability to hear God speak.

He spoke through Jesus:

(Hebrews 1:1-2) *In the past **God spoke** to our forefathers **through the prophets** at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us **by His Son**, Whom He appointed heir of all things, and through Whom He made the universe.*

He speaks through His Spirit:

(John 16:13) *But when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.* (in us)

He speaks through His written Word, the Bible:

All Scripture is God-breathed ...
(2 Timothy 3:16, also 2 Peter 1:20-21)

From these verses and so many others the Bible reveals that ...

- God speaks **clearly** (clear communication is never the problem)
- God speaks **accurately** (sees big picture, speaks with this perspective, speaks specifically)
- God speaks **often** (more than we probably hear Him)

God speaks ... it is a matter of faith (scientist) ... do you believe?

Why does God speak? What is His ultimate motivation?

Is it to tell us what to do and what not to do; help us make decisions; know whether to take this job or that job; to help me live a pure/moral life; to help me avoid temptation; to help me remember what I would normally forget, info download, etc.

This happens but the primary reason God speaks to people is ...

2. God speaks so that you might know Him PERSONALLY.
(Jeremiah 9:23-24, John 10)

This has always been His highest good for us from the first human beings to the one most recently born on the planet. It is the big deal of life from God's perspective.

(In Jeremiah 9:23-24) *This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: **that he understands and knows Me**, that I am the Lord, Who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on Earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

In John 17 Jesus said ... *Now this is eternal life: that **they may know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.* (v.3)

Eternal life = knowing God personally. That is why Jesus came ... so people, created and loved by God would know Him in the way they were originally created to know Him.

Jesus didn't come to make us moral, to make us biblically literate, to make us religious, so we'd go to Heaven and not Hell, to make us Baptist, Lutheran or Catholic, but through faith in His Son that we would become alive spiritually in order that we might know God personally and make Him known to others.

So that we above all others would live abundant lives, lives that reflect the very life of the one we follow, lives that cause others to say ... what's with these people?!

This isn't always what people outside the church believe we are about. Some of their thinking is based on a wrong perception and some of it is what we've helped to create ... by not emphasizing what's on God's heart and by majoring on the minors instead of the more important matters. (sin hierarchy)

This kind of personal relationship is described beautifully by Jesus in John 10 when He says ...

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” (John 10:1-5)

When we know God personally Jesus reveals that we experience:

- Personal **recognition** - I know you (name), you know Me (voice)
- Personal **reassurance** - Trust me, I do trust you (listen/respond)
- Personal **leadership** - I will lead you, I will follow

God speaks so that you will know Him personally; do you recognize His voice, do you trust what He says, do you follow His lead?

3. God speaks because He wants to **CHANGE** your life.

(Hebrews 4:12-13) *For the **Word of God** is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.*

- Ongoing **change** (for a lifetime; don’t get stuck in halftime)
- Lasting **change** (no quick, temporary fix but change that lasts)
- Surprising **change** (in areas we aren’t even aware of ... cool!)

Closing comments:

God speaks ... clearly, accurately and often

He speaks so that you might know Him personally. Do you recognize His voice, trust what He says, follow His lead?

He speaks and you experience life change, ongoing life change that can at times be very surprising.

The way it begins ... you hear Him affirming that Jesus is His Son, that He came because you, like every person, have been spiritually separated from your creator because of your sin.

Forgiveness and freedom from sin’s sickness has been provided for you in Jesus ... accept Him, what He’s done for you and see God’s communication between God and you will begin in a brand new way.

Song

Next week: “How God Speaks” How does God speak today? Do you think He speaks often or just now and then? Does He just speak to us when we pray, read the Bible or go to church? If so what about the other 99.9% of our life? Let’s look at this together next weekend.

Pray