

Saturday/Sunday, May 31 – June 1, 2008

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

“How God Speaks” (Psalm 19:7-11, comment on Scriptures)

Last week: “Why God Speaks” So that you might know Him personally; experiencing ongoing, lasting and at times surprising life change.

Did you pay closer attention to this God Who speaks? Did you hear Him more clearly or was it still kind of a fog? Did you write down some of the words He spoke to you? Keep at it! It will make a difference.

This morning we are going to take a closer look at how God speaks. He is not limited in the ways He can speak to you and me but the NT emphasizes three ways that God speaks into our daily lives. This is true whether you are a new follower, a veteran in the faith or someone who is searching for God but hasn't found him yet.

1. God speaks through His WRITTEN Word.

Last week we spoke about why the Bible came into existence, Who was behind its writings, what makes it a unique, one-of-a-kind book.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17) *All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Knowing this is important but it is not enough; truth must make its way into our life experience ... the “so what” of truth.

Over the years I've observed three places people tend to find themselves as it relates to the Scriptures: **1)** In the Word and the Word in them, hear from God often and see His impact in their life through the Scriptures **2)** In the Scriptures somewhat regularly but not getting anything out of it **3)** Little to no time in Scriptures and can't seem to break out of this pattern. (I've been there)

What causes these different experiences? I've concluded that ...

Hearing God speak from the Bible has more to do with our belief and attitude about it than our time in it. Ouch! Can hurt.

The rabbis, leaders and teachers of the OT Scriptures within Hebrew religious life had to memorize the first five books of the Bible along with other laws and commands established within the Hebrew community to be elevated to rabbi status.

Yet it was for these well-versed Bible teachers that Jesus saved His harshest words and most severe criticism. Even though they knew the Scriptures they did not practice what they preached.

Do you believe what the Bible says about itself; inspired by God, able to change your life, grow you up spiritually?

Or is your conviction simply underdeveloped or has it been watered down; so that you are less enthusiastic than you once were – has it become all too familiar, you've heard it all, stories are old, not sure it carries the punch it once did, or gotten along ok without it, slowly adopted the culture's view of Bible, nice book but not authoritative or relevant to today's world. You'd never say that ... I know.

This kind of thinking over time can significantly impact your attitude towards the scripture. You no longer approach it with the expectation you once had ... so it gets easier to read Bible simply out of habit (a good habit by the way) or not interact with it at all.

The words of Psalm 19 give us a picture of what a healthy belief and a healthy attitude look like. I found this personally refreshing this week:

(Psalm 19:7-11) *The law of the Lord is perfect, **reviving the soul.** The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, **making wise the simple.** 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, **giving joy to the heart.** The commands of the Lord are radiant, **giving light to the eyes.** 9 The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. **The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.** 10 They are **more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.** 11 **By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.** (Read Ps. 119 this week)*

(1 Peter 2:2-3) Like newborn babies, **crave pure spiritual milk, so that** by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2. God speaks to you by His SPIRIT.

Last week we saw that when Jesus left planet Earth and went back to His home in Heaven He sent the Holy Spirit so that we would not be alone and so that we would have someone who would actively speak to us in Jesus' physical absence.

We learned that the Holy Spirit speaks ...

(John 14:26) *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will **teach you all things** and will **remind you of everything I (Jesus) have said to you.*** (Explain)

(John 14:17-18) *The Spirit of truth ... **will be in you.***

He speaks to us person-to-person; not as an "it" or some impersonal force like we see in Star Wars or with the flow of electricity but as the third Person of the Godhead.

We see this described in ...

(Galatians 5:16, 18, 25) *16 So I say, **live** by the Spirit ... 18 But if you are **led** by the Spirit ... 25 Since we **live** by the Spirit, let us **keep in step** with the Spirit.*

(Ephesians 4:30) *And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God ...*

The Bible goes on to describe this person-to-person work of the Spirit by the way He brings and speaks words of comfort, encouragement, correction, counsel, power, leadership, reminding us of our adoption and just how much we are loved by God, and He is the one who brings clarity to the Scriptures; their meaning and application to our lives. (Give examples of this)

How can I know for sure that it is the Holy Spirit speaking?

1. Consistent with God's Character (never anxious, fearful, hurried)
2. Consistent with Scriptures (sexual immorality, taxes, gossip)
3. Consistent with who He has made you to be (how you hear, ILL)
4. Consistent with love (Rom. 5:5)

Is your life boring? Hearing God speak by His Spirit brings a sense of expectation and anticipation to your daily life.

God Spirit will speak to you as much as you let Him:

We are commanded in Ephesians 5:18 to "*be filled with the Holy Spirit*" describing God's desire to give us Himself fully through His Spirit **IF** we continue surrendering our lives to Him.

God speaks through the Bible, by His Spirit and finally ...

3. God speaks to you through other BELIEVERS within biblical community (ongoing life-to-life time w/other Jesus followers).

Those who have put their trust in Jesus and have become His followers have been born into a new spiritual family, what the Bible calls the "body of Christ".

(Romans 12:4-6) *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.** 6 We have different **gifts**, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

We belong to each other; we need each other; we are meant to speak into each other's life, use our gifts so that others will be able to grow and mature in the way they have been designed for (Give examples)

This can be challenging today for a couple of reasons:

We live in a culture that values independence and isolation; we don't need anyone else ... we don't need to hang out with anyone else ... we are self-sufficient and self-contained. These values are a contradiction to what it means to be a Christ follower. Our salvation is about reconnecting with God and other believers.

Life is really moving at a pace that means we **MUST** be intentional about this or it just won't happen, it will pass us by. We might attend a 75 min. service like this but if this is it for you it is just not sufficient connection with others. (Small groups, service teams, time w/spiritual friends)

Danger! Hanging around other believers could be risky; God may use them to speak into your life!

For many this is the missing piece in their lives; what is keeping them from hearing God speak clearly and more often.

God speaks through His written Word (belief and attitude); by His Spirit (begin to listen for His daily promptings) and through other believers (make sure you put yourself in a position to hear from God through them)

Closing comments, next weekend & closing prayer

Next week: *“When God Speaks”* So, what’s supposed to happen when God speaks to me? How can I best position myself to hear Him, to receive what He says to me? Let’s find out together next weekend.