

A Voice You Can Trust

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God wants to speak TO YOU and speak THROUGH YOU!

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1-NIV)

Prayer: Father, speak to us, we want to hear your voice, your word, give us something from your Holy Spirit that will make us like Jesus. I pray that nothing in me will get in the way of those who have taken this time to come and hear from you. We are here to express our hunger to learn from you, so reward these people for Christ's sake. Amen.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my twenty-seventh year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning.

Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: Without God life makes no sense. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light. (Purpose Drive Life)

You may trust in the dark about God speaking to you, this series A Voice You Can Trust, is going to help you walk into the Light.

I love this verse. *Psalm 145:3-3* *Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. (NIV)*

We can know a lot about God-his nature (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence), his character-holiness, justice, grace, mercy, and love. Read the word of God, long enough and we can get to know this God that we love and worship.

But as knowable as God is, some of his ways are unsearchable, beyond discovery, no one can fathom, he will act in a mysterious way. And as our text says, he will do it... at many times and in many ways.

There is a limit to what the finite mind can know about God. About the time when you think you have God figured out, he surprises us-

...we scratch our head,

.... we shake our head,

...we let out a big sigh of surprise. Jaw drop. Or you are going to say-Oh, wow! Did not see that coming.

Then we say: I guess I can't really put him in a box. Can I? How unsearchable are his ways. How Mysterious are his soundings? How often are his speaking's? How creative are his strategies?

If you are troubled by a God you cannot use for your purposes, a God who holds you to a standard of righteousness you don't like, a God who does what he pleases for his glory and (only) sometimes for your good, maybe the solution is to **learn to hear his voice**, and you will discover how sweet this relationship with God can really be.

In fact, for those of us who already allow God to run and rule our lives, we enjoy this kind of relationship. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

*Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. (Ps 34:8-NIV)*

Few things are as important as hearing God's Voice.

*You heard God's voice when you got saved. God's Voice: You can never fall below my forgiveness.

*You heard God's voice when you desired to marry. God's Voice: Be patient I am preparing you a partner for life.

*You heard God's voice when you came to this church. God's Voice: This is the place I will change your heart. This is the place I will heal your hurt. This is the place I will make you whole.

There is nothing more important than hearing God's voice, because you can't have a relationship with God if you do not hear God. If all you do is talk to him, and don't hear God, that is a one-way relationship. That is not much of a relationship. **God wants to speak to you.**

We have been looking at some filters, which answer the question: **How do I know this idea or thought in my mind is from God?** If I get an emotional prompting, how do I know this is from God?

How do I know this instruction or insight is not from the devil, from my self-centered lifestyle, or from a philosophy in the world? How do I know? How do I know something is not just from my own thoughts?

You talk to yourself all of the time. While I am talking to you, you are talking to you, your emotions of hunger are talking to you, your sinful nature is talking to you, your past hurts are talking to you, your spouse lingering words are talking to you, those are a lot of voices talking to you.

I talk to myself all the time. I am my own best friend. You have a running conversation going on all the time, will I be late for work? Does this blouse look good or make me look fat? I hope my coworker is sick today. I hope my boss is sick today. Maybe I should call in sick today.

When I fell in love with Danice, I thought about her all the time. I thought about her when I was driving to school, taking exams, running three miles daily and while I cleaned my house. Nothing got more of my time! I would say to myself, self your crazy about that girl, self your intoxicated about that woman, self,

don't let her get away." The more I thought about her, the more I loved her. The more you think about God, the more you will hear his voice. Feel his prompting.

But it is very easy to get confused. Is God talking to me, or is this just something I want to do? Is this my idea or God's idea? It is important that you learn as a Christ follower when it is God talking to you. So, I have been suggesting some filters you can use, to screen out the wrong voices.

Filter 1-Does this possible word from God align and agree with God's Word?

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. (Eccl 12:11-NIV)

The Bible is where I start to find answers, it is where I go to retreat from the world, the bible gives me a boost when my emotions are putting me in the tank. It is not only my starting point, but also, my final authority on matters of faith, fun and finishing well with my one and only life.

Truth today fluctuates with the latest fad. For others science is their guiding star. For me it is the bible and bible first and bible last, it is my moral compass and my baseline helping me distinguish between right and wrong.

We live in a world where tolerance trumps truth. When you live in a world where tolerance trumps biblical truth your society is fulfilling the prophecy of what happened to God's people at the end of the book of Judges: *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit. (Judges 21:25-NIV)*

For the unregenerate mind, the heart of the person who has cast God aside, this seems attractive. So appealing. It might seem that everyone wins in this society, but in the end everyone really loses. Let me see if I can illustrate how **silly** and **ignorant** this approach is.

To think that everybody is right, and that nobody is wrong is as silly as pretending that everybody wins, and nobody loses. In T-ball or biddy basketball where there is no score clock or runs being counted, T-ballers and b-ballers are all keeping score. And even if you think that works in kids' sports; it doesn't work in real life.

God calls us to a higher standard than tolerance, He calls us to the standard of truth. And his benchmark for our life is the bible. You will be judged at the end of the age, based the truth of this book.

Now, remember you are not just going through the bible, the bible is going through you. **As it goes through you, God talks to YOU!**

Filter 2- Does that prompting or whisper from God make me more like Jesus Christ?

The Louvre in Paris is perhaps the most famous art museum in the world. It displays originals by such masters as Delacroix, Michelangelo, Rubens, da Vinci, Ingres, Vermeer, and many others. Since 1793, the Louvre has encouraged aspiring artists to come and copy the masters. Some of our most famous modern artists have done that and have become painters by copying the best the world has ever known.

An article in the Smithsonian magazine talks about Amal Dagher, a 63-year-old man who has been duplicating art at the Louvre for over 30 years. Dagher remains in awe of the masters and continues to learn from them. He said, "if you are satisfied with yourself, you can't improve." My prayer is that we resist the temptation to be satisfied with our present imitation of Jesus.

This is our goal. To imitate the life of Christ and Paul reminds us of that in *Eph. 5:1, "be imitators of Jesus."* You were created to be like Jesus. When you know your purpose in life you are able to...

...keep your life simple,

...know what you should and shouldn't be doing,

...help others find meaning and direction for life,

...experience personal satisfaction.

Jesus is the standard I use to evaluate every philosophy, ideology, belief system, every fad, every world religion and every western religion, every secular religion, and every agnostic and atheistic religion. Jesus Christ is the standard by which I evaluate every thought, prompting, tingle, idea, and whisper. I hold everything up against Jesus Christ. *Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. (Prov 19:21-NIV)*

The reason so many are frustrated with life, is because they don't know why they were created. And in their search for meaning, they come up empty. You're only here because God intended to use you in His plan for humanity. He has designed His universal plan for man, and it's incomplete without you.

God wants you to look like you belong in heaven, practice, and possess the qualities of heaven and take as many people as possible with you. To do that you will have to face some challenges, hardships, and difficulties. You will have to go through many of the life events Jesus went through. Life is tough. Because nothing works on this planet correctly. Everything is broken. Everyone's body is broken. Every emotion is broken. Every mind is broken. Every marriage is broken. Churches are broken. Pastors are broken. People in churches are broken. Weather is broken. **All because of sin.**

Heaven will be place where it all gets made right. But, to prepare for heaven, God wants you to look start looking like Jesus. God is more interested in your character than your comfort. Phil 2 reminds us of this. ⁵*In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. (Phil 2-NCV)*

Filter 3-Is the word from God confirmed by other Christ followers?

God wants to use other spiritually mature believers to confirm a word is from God. Why is this important? You need others to help you discern your **loony ideas about God.**

You find other Christ followers who know you, love you and are following Christ as well and ask them, "Is this from God?" What do you think about this?

God wants to use other people in your life to confirm what God is speaking. I can see that. **Let me illustrate:** if you get a word from God, but have a resistance to telling others, which should be a huge red flag, don't you think?

Test the impression with others. If mature believers are hesitant, you should be hesitant too. Why does God want us to run some stuff up the flagpole, to save you from a disaster. *The wisdom of the righteous can save you (Prov 11:9).*

What can it save you from?

A waste of time.

From conflicts that are about to start.

From pain you are about to experience.

Godly advice and confirmation can save your reputation and save your life.

A couple reasons why you stray, stumble, or act stupid, is you have no Godly connections, or you won't listen to your Godly connections. Best piece of advice today, **get into a life group.**

Filter 4-Is this possible word the result of divinely inspired emotions?

God wants us to think like Jesus, having this mind of Christ(Phil 2:5), to act like Jesus, and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col 3:17), now I get this part of the equation, to think like Jesus and act like Jesus, **but** we often overlook what it means to **feel like Jesus.**

Our emotions are a gift from God. Do you know there are 8 primary emotions? Joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness(depression), disgust, anger, and anticipation (connected to anxiety).

Negative emotions like fear, can prevent you from achieving God's Promised Land for your life.

Positive emotions like joy can energize you for some of your biggest challenges-the cross is referred to as the joy that was set before him. *...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2-NIV)*

Whether your emotions are positive or negative, each one impacts your decision making and memory making. Your emotions are used in discerning God's voice. While emotions are often misused by each of us, they still play an important role in discerning a prompting, prodding or premonition, from God.

To fail to use your God given emotions correctly, is a sure-fire way to miss and misunderstand the voice of God speaking to you. **Take for example your tears.** God speaks through both tears of sadness and tears of gladness(joy).

When Nehemiah had heard the wall of Jerusalem still lay in ruin and destruction, it produced this outburst of emotion, ⁴ *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. (Neh 1:4-NIV)*

Tears are clues to help identify God given desires. God gets upset and angry with sin. Anybody agree with that? God moves quickly from anger to mercy. If you don't use your emotions the right way, sin will ruin and rule our lives. Our hearts should break, at those issues, sins that break the heart of God. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime. *Weeping may endure for a night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. (Ps 30:5-AMP)*

When God speaks, his emotions and our emotions should work in harmony. Whether it's a voice of sadness or a voice of gladness, don't ignore or be ignorant about divinely inspired emotions. Hurray for God inspired emotions, they produce joy at the first sight of a newborn, and they produce fear at the first sight and sound of fangs ready to bite.

God is often speaking to you through your God given divinely inspired emotions. On my wedding day (Nov 24, 1988), I was a bundle of nerves, another way to say it, I was a bundle of emotions. I almost passed out just before I was to enter the sanctuary. Why do you ask? Because of the anxiety that lurked behind the door in front of me and because of the joy that awaited me behind the door.

Make sure your emotions are properly aligned with God, then you will hear a Voice You Can Trust through them. *Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. (Psalm 37:4-NLT)*

Filter 5-Could God be using this sign to speak to me?

Is this possible word from God the result of signs and wonders? Or I call it sign language.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

God's ability to speak in strange and subtle ways is nothing short of miraculous. Astounding. Head scratching.

- (1) God spoke to Moses through a burning bush.
- (2) God spoke to Pharaoh through signs and wonders, called plagues-10 in all. Darkness. River turning to blood. Locust.
- (3) God spoke to Hezekiah in the midst of his sickness.
- (4) God spoken to some Babylonian astrologers by some stars.
- (5) God spoke to Joshua through some walls collapsing.
- (6) God spoke to Belshazzar via a zombie handwriting on a wall.

And my favorite.

- (7) God spoke through a donkey. I would guess Balaam was a little shocked. Maybe he had a panic attack, "this thing speaks."

The moral of the story: if God can speak through Balaam's donkey, God can speak through anything, anyone, at any time.

But, let me be absolutely clear about Heb 1:2. All other revelations of speaking were only partial or temporary. While God spoke through dreams, visions, God's creation, animals, and all were object lessons as communication.

All of this fragmentary. God's message through the prophets, signs and wonders always came with a P.S., to be continued!

All of the announcements of God's plans and purposes were spot on. Truth telling. Forecasting. Miraculous creating. The word, insight, premonitions, voice,

dream, vision, prompting was complete for the moment, but was incomplete for the whole.

The best way to illustrate this is with our parents' words, voice and instruction to us as children. If you remember those messages came in various methods and at different times while I was growing up.

Some messages were vital. A note left on the refrigerator by mom-do your homework, only play in the yard and put your brothers and sisters in bed by 8pm.

Some messages were visual. If my mom was going for a tree branch, a shoe, or a broom, I did not need any words, I knew what that meant.

Some messages were verbal. If mom saw my sadness or suffering, she often invited me to sit in her lap as a kid.

My mom was communicating with me all the time. Comfort or correction. A firm hand on the shoulder, a big hug at my shoulders. A dialogue. A discussion. But it seldom became a debate. And it never became disrespect.

One thing is for sure, whatever I received from mom, it was never the last word. It was always a partial word. She reserved the right to give me more word, stronger word, about life. But, let me be absolutely clear about verse two, all other revelations of speaking were only partial, temporary. Progressive revelation is the word.

This is exactly what verse one of Heb 1:1 says, a word in on the way, but it will not be the final word. The thought of Hebrews 1:1 continues to verse 2. ² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.*

The truth of this verse tells us, God has moved into a new era of speaking. He no longer just speaks through the prophets; he is now speaking through the greatest prophet-Jesus. And he is no longer just speaking in signs and wonders, Jesus is on the scene, and he will be a sign and wonder and do signs and wonders.

If we ignore the signs and wonders God speaks through, we could miss the miracle God wants to do.

The reason Jesus is a better sign and wonder is because of his character. All other signs and wonders were fragmentary and flawed. Not because of the voice or sign, but because of the instrument who offered it.

God's greatest revelation is Jesus Christ. He is the full and final voice you can trust. He is the son of God and Son of man. He is the creator of all things and Heir to all things. ³ *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1-NIV)*

And one day every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess- *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (Phil 2:10-NIV)*

It does not matter if you are Magic or Mohammed, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Madeline Ohair, or travelers I Ohair airport, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Muslim or Mystical, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Joseph Smith or Joseph Stalin, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Jerry Lee Lewis or Jerry Jones, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Donald Trump or a person giving a fist-bump, one day every knee shall bow.

You may be Joe Biden or Joe DiMaggio, one day every knee shall bow.

So, does God still speak in various way? Yes. Does he still speak at any time? Yes. But we who live on this side of the cross have God's word, the Holy Spirit and Jesus interceding for us right now. God's word is our check and balance.

To believe that God only speaks through the bible, it is to limit a unlimitable God. God will not say anything that is contrary to his good, pleasing, and perfect will as revealed in God's word.

God's signs can be misinterpreted; opportunity does not necessarily mean sovereignty.

If this series does anything, let it open you up to God speaking more, and when he does speak, know that His speaking is ...**to be continued**. The big lesson today: God will not be put in a box.

The key to hearing a Voice You Can Trust is to love the ONE speaking.