

## A Voice You Can Trust

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Week 3, January 21, 2024

God can speak to anyone, at any time, using any method.

*<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup> A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*<sup>10</sup> The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. (1 Sam 3-NIV)*

In the prologue leadership jazz, Max Dupree writes, "Ester, my wife, and I have a granddaughter named ZOE, the Greek word for "life." She was born prematurely and weighed one pound, seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide upon her arm to her shoulder.

The neonatologist who first examined her told us that she had a 5-10% chance of living three days. When Ester and I scrubbed up for our first visit and saw ZOE in her isolette, in the neonatal intensive care unit she had two IVs in her naval, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth.

To complicate matters, Zoe's biological father had jumped ship the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me several instructions.

"For the next several months, at least, you're the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I want you to rub her body and legs and arms with the tip of your finger. While you're caressing her, you should tell her over and over again how much you love her, because she has to be able **to connect your voice to your touch.**" If there is one experience we have when we hear God's voice, like Zoe, we feel loved.

The opening insight on your notes features this truth: God can speak to anyone, at any time, using any method.

In fact, this is why God chose a bush, instead of a pyramid to get Moses' attention. God spoke out of a bush.

God used a large fish, instead of another prophet to get Jonah's' attention. God spoke to Jonah from inside the fish.

God even used a donkey, to get the attention of the rider, and yes, that is right, God spoke through a donkey and a Balaam listened.

*28 Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" (Numbers 22-NIV)*

I know there are those who believe God can only speak through scripture. It is a well-meaning error, mistake that even those who have a high view of scripture, and many theological degrees can be deceived with. You only have to look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis and you discover, a snake talking to a woman.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Gen 3-NIV)*

I certainly believe the Bible is in a classification and category, all its own as the inspired word of God. And that God is not giving any additional and new revelations to people.

You actually undermine the authority of God's word when someone says, God can only speak through scripture. When you believe that, you are saying, God's ability to speak to us in the ways he did in the pages of the Bible, no longer exists.

Even a first-time reader of the Bible, can't help but draw the conclusion God often shows up in strange places, at strange time and in strange ways.

Nothing has changed.  
Nothing will change.  
He is the unchangeable God, who cannot change.

God is still the constant God, doing the unthinkable.  
God is still the consistent God, doing the miraculous.  
God is still the God who never contradicts himself, but is unpredictably, unpredictable.

God will never stop speaking. He is speaking even as I am speaking. And what he has to say, "is far more important than what I say." In fact, he takes credit and authorship of anything I speak.

The question we have been asking in our series is: Does God still speak to his people today?

There are very few subjects that I feel more passionate about than God speaking. I love to encourage, preach, and talk about how God speaks to people.

The defining moment of a young person's life can often happen, just like Samuel when they are young. And this defining moment often includes God speaking. If you have kids or teenagers, please listen to this part of what I am talking about today.

The story of Samuel's calling often gets relegated and reserved for children's ministry. I want to bring it out the kid's life and into adult life. This is a beautiful story, and it introduces us to a transition in the life of the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel is moving from the priestly leadership to the prophet leadership. From a nation of tribes to a nation that is a kingdom. This is a drastic change in Israel's form of government. The period of Joshua and Judges has come to an end, the door has closed on that period of time. Now, we enter a new era, a new epoch where the nation will be led by a prophet-king form of government.

The king will learn to lead his people, based on the Word of the Lord, given by the prophet. Our lead character in our story Samuel will minister before the Lord like the priest, but he will also give governmental direction and leadership as he is the mouthpiece for God to the king.

Samuel will pour anointing oil on the kings; he will also correct and rebuke Kings who fall into sin.

*<sup>7</sup> Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.*

*<sup>9</sup> Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' (1 Sam 12-NIV)*

By the way, the responsibility to coach and correct is still to be carried out today, by the pastor. There are times when I am called on to support people in their suffering, but also correct them in their sin.

So, God did not speak directly to the king, he spoke to the prophet who then spoke to the king. That is why in the reign of David, you see him asking his cabinet leadership to go ask Samuel if they should go to war against the enemy. We pick up the story of Samuel as a teenager, about 13, who is working in the temple on behalf of the priest Eli.

God loves to speak to young people.

*And the child Samuel ministered before the Lord. A child never served in the temple. Samuel was more like 12 or 13. We see an echo of Jesus. Who at 12, was hanging out with the temple priests when Mary and Joseph thought they had lost him.*

*The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. <sup>2</sup> One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place.*

*<sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." (1 Sam 3-NIV)*

This kid is 12 or 13 years old, and he is in the temple service with this old guy named Eli. We also learn that God had seldom spoke to his people. It was rare to hear from God. But God was about to change all of that. God is about to open a new era of speaking to his people and he is going to start that era with a teenage boy named Samuel.

Before, Samuel could stand before Kings, and speak the word of the Lord, he had to learn how to hear the - Voice You Can Trust. Samuel needed to learn how to hear a prompting or whisper.

In our story, Samuel learns how to distinguish the voice of man, from the voice of God. Samuel then hears his first prophecy about Israel's future. Predictive prophecy. A prophecy he will carry into adulthood. At 12, Samuel gets a glimpse into the future of Israel.

*<sup>10</sup> The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening. <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. (1 Sam 3-NIV)*

When God says something, it is the same as if it is done. What we have here is the prophetic tense. It is a past tense word from God, but it speaks of the future.

God speaks about a future event that has not yet happened, as if the event has already taken place. God speaks to Samuel and tells him he is about to correct the sin connected to Israel's past.

**Now, hold that thought.** When I was in Jr. High, in our Baptist Church-Delta we had a weekend emphasis where the men did all the ministry. No women involved. And I had a small part in the weekend. Nothing to make me feel impressed with myself or think I want to do this vocationally, but God had a plan to speak to me.

And when the event was over, one of the church leaders approached me and suggested I should consider going into the ministry. I looked around to see if he was talking to someone standing behind me. I then realized that statement was directed at me.

Then a waterfall of thoughts cascaded through my mind.

Me, a kid from the projects, in the ministry?

Me, a kid who causes more trouble than stays out of trouble, in the ministry.

Me, a kid who flunked 1<sup>st</sup> grade, in the ministry.

I believe all the way down to my toes that God speaks to his people. There have been times throughout the day, that I have gotten unmistakable thoughts from God. I knew I did not make that up. Who put that thought there?

When you get a thought, don't be afraid to say, "It might be God, it might be pizza, be careful there.

Make sure that prompting or whisper from God, aligns with God's word. Make sure that prompting or whisper from God, makes me more like Jesus Christ. More about that in a minute.

Never forget this, one of the distinguishing features of the Christian faith, is that, not only are we in relationship with a God that is alive, but we are also in a relationship with a God who still speaks.

The defining feature of Christianity is not only we have a God who will save us, we have a God who will speak to us.

Some of you know exactly what I am talking about, and others are not sure how this works. Don't miss a message. God listened to them again and again.

Do all of the assignments and participate in all of the experiences with others and God. I am praying for those of you who are learning about what it means to have God speak to you. I don't know what it would be like to go through my day and not sense encouraging words from God.

If you tune your heart to heaven, you will hear God speak.

Sometimes in the middle of day God will put these kinds of thoughts in my mind and heart:

\*I love you Ken

\*You are on the right track today.

\*Sometimes I will get animated or strong and God will say, “amp down.”

\*I will cross a line sometimes, and God will say, “You need to apologize and make that right.”

\*Sometimes God will say, “you need to apologize to Me, come on, get on your knees.”

\*God will move in my life to bless someone financially and he will often ask me to give a certain amount of money.

God still speaks if you would tune your ear toward heaven. You would think that as a pastor, I would get all of these whispers and words right. It does not always happen.

So, when I get a thought or idea, I apply two filters:

Filter 1: Does that prompting or whisper from God, align with God’s word.

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

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 man’s heart, but the Lord’s purpose prevails. God has a purpose for everything. God has never created anything without a purpose.

He has a purpose for every rock, plant, animal, mineral, light bulb and every plant bulb. Every sports team, every chess team. Every church and every church attendee.

The Bible tells us in Eccl, *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: (Eccl 3:1-NIV)*

So, God’s plan and purpose from the beginning of time, has been to make us like Jesus Christ. If you spend your life doing anything that detracts from that purpose, it is a big waste of time, it is rebellion against God, it will only lead you to heartache and misery.

In Gen 1:26, we see God’s original purpose for man-*Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” Romans provides the New Testament version, <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, (Rom 8:29-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.

Imagine being lost in the mountains; you come upon some hikers and ask for directions, and they say, "You can't get there from here. You must start on the other side of the mountain." So, it is with life. You can't understand or comprehend your purpose in life by starting with YOU! It is essential that you start with GOD! (Purpose Driven Life)

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. *(16) For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. (Col. 1-MSG)*

Why doesn't God just take you to heaven when you get saved? Why does he leave you here 70-80 years? Have you ever thought about that? God put you here to make you like Jesus because life is test, trust, and temporary assignment.

Life is a test, trust, and a temporary assignment.

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. Everybody 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, you have to look like Jesus. God is more interested in your character than your comfort. In Phil 2, reminds us of this. *<sup>5</sup>In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. (Phil 2-NCV)*

In the Bible we learn to test every thought, so we know it is from Jesus. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:5-NIV)

When I get an idea, I ask would Jesus do this? Your thoughts must be God-thoughts if you are to hear a prompting or whisper from God. (2 Cor 10:5)

Would Jesus act this way? Would Jesus feel this way? Would Jesus have these emotions? Jesus is the standard. Jesus is the second filter, to discern if a voice is from God.

When I get a prompting or whisper, I ask would Jesus think this or do this?  
WWJD.

So, let me invite Pastor Jon to come and tell us how he is learning to discern God's voice, from other voices, as he makes important decisions with his one and only life. Pastor Jon, how are you learning to discern God's voice and will for your life?