

# *You May Be Hearing God If...*

## Lesson 13

### GETTING READY TO TEACH

For many years I have prayed that I would be able to discern God's voice as readily as I recognize my son's or daughter's voice when the telephone rings and they say, "Hi, Dad." In this final lesson in our series, Roger outlines seven ways that God speaks to His people. He gives Biblical examples of each and illustrates several with stories from his personal pilgrimage.

In addition, he provides seven Biblical standards that can help us determine if, indeed, we are hearing God speak. These standards bring real practicality to what often feels like a very subjective process.

Our final **MATURITY INSIGHT** says: God communicates with His people in many different ways, including speaking to us Holy Spirit to human spirit in the innermost part of our being. This statement serves as a fine thesis sentence around which to develop a teaching plan. There are three main ideas or key points to be communicated:

- ◆ God may speak to maturing believers in several different ways
- ◆ As we grow in intimacy with Him, God frequently speaks to us Holy Spirit to human spirit
- ◆ There are several standards that we can use to help clarify whose voice we really are hearing: God's, Satan's, or our own soulish self

While there are only three big ideas to be communicated, there are numerous sub-points. So, it will be important for you to carefully plan your presentation. Economy of words again will be essential. You also will likely need to maintain a fairly fast pace with your teaching segments. Make your point, support it with the referenced Bible passage, and use one of Roger's illustrations or one of your own stories to land the idea.

Roger refers to several concepts that were taught in Lesson 11 in this week's lesson. You may find it helpful to review it before reading through the study material for this lesson. That man is body, soul, and spirit is an idea that must be well established before teaching "Hearing God's Voice."

Finally, let me suggest a meditation that you might work through before you even begin to read **STUDYING THE WORD TOGETHER**. Begin by thinking about and/or jotting down several instances when you feel that God has revealed His heart, given you direction, blessed you with Godly counsel from others, or maybe even spoken to you in a dream. Take time to thank Him for each leading and prompting. Savor the grace of such provision!

Now ask Him to show you more of Himself as you prepare this lesson. May He bless you with genuine wonder at His goodness as you teach this exciting message.



## STUDYING THE WORD TOGETHER

Roger Barrier and Jerry Wilkinson

“**Y**ou are a lost sheep” are the first words I sensed God speaking directly to me. Most of my pastor’s message was incomprehensible to me as a seven-year old. He was teaching on the Parable of the Lost Sheep. But loud and clear, in my inner human spirit, the Holy Spirit’s “still small voice” came through. Several days later I entered into His sheepfold.

**Maturity Insight 17: God Communicates with His People in Many Different Ways, including Speaking to Us Holy Spirit to Human Spirit in the Innermost Part of Our Being**

**A** careful study of the Bible shows us that God communicates with His people in many different ways. The Scriptures clearly say that God’s people can intimately know Him, receive His revelation, discern His will, and understand His instruction. In this lesson we will review some of the ways in which God has chosen to communicate with His people throughout the ages.

Many of the concepts that follow will be familiar both to you and to those you teach. For this reason, I am not going to provide in-depth information here. Instead I will briefly explain the principle and give an example from Scripture.

### *God Communicates to Us through the Bible*

**M**uch of what we need to know about God is recorded in the Bible. I believe to a large degree that when God desires to open His heart to us, He does so through our interaction with His Word. By studying and meditating on His written revelation, we can get way down the road in knowing Him and understanding His will. As the Psalmist said:

☀ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word. Accept, O LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws. Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end. (Psalm 119:105-112)

### *God Communicates to Us As We Reflectively Reason*

**T**he Bible teaches that God has given us minds capable of discerning His will and intentions. The will of God is always open to reason and reflection. God oftentimes speaks when we simply get out a piece of paper and analyze a particular situation. I often encourage Christians who are seeking God’s will to make a list of the pros and cons and to carefully analyze both lists in making wise decisions. Solomon recommended the wisdom of using our rational minds in seeking to hear from God:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom, and applying your heart to

understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom....

(Proverbs 2:1-6)

### *God Speaks to Us through the Counsel of Godly People*

During youth-led week in our church, as a youth I was assigned to teach Jake Ellis' Sunday morning Bible class. Jake was well known to be, by far, the best Bible teacher in our church. After the lesson Mr. Ellis pulled me aside, complimented my lesson, and said, "I think God has given you the spiritual gift of teaching. Cultivate it well." God spoke on that marker day in my life through one of the godliest men I have ever known. I hope Jake knew how his words affected me—unfortunately, I never told him. We will discuss it some day together in heaven. Solomon reminds us that:

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

(Proverbs 15:22)

By the way, if God can speak through Balaam's donkey (Num. 22:26-31), He has few limits regarding the number and kind of people He may utilize to speak through to touch our hearts. However, we may be wise to remember the advice from A. W. Tozer: "Listen to the people who listen to God."<sup>1</sup>

### *God Reveals His Will to Us through Circumstances*

I am not certain that I fully subscribe to the popular wisdom that whenever God closes a door He always opens a window, but God often speaks through circumstances. Sizing up circumstances and applying common sense often reveals God's will and intentions. For example, Paul wanted to preach the gospel in Asia;

but the Holy Spirit prevented him. Here is a clear-cut case of God closing a door. He turned to Troas instead and God opened the window to Greece through his Macedonian vision.

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10)

### *God Sometimes Communicates to Us through Dreams*

Several years ago, long before our move to our current church campus, Gary Shrader (Casas' Executive Pastor) awoke one night after a very strange dream. He sensed God was speaking to him. So he got up and said, God, are you speaking to me? He had this deep impression that God was saying, I've got some things I want to share with you, Gary. And Gary said, Well, all right, if that's true, then give me the interpretation.

God gave him the interpretation of the whole dream. He recorded in his journal the dream and its meaning. A day or two later he shared both with all of our ministers. It was a dream about our church and her future relocation.

While the dream was rather enigmatic, we all had this deep sense that the Spirit was speaking to us about how we would have to trade what we had at our old location at Ina and La Cholla for something new. We understood from the dream that we were in for a long, difficult

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Christian Publications, 1982.

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process.

It has been over fifteen years since God spoke to Gary in that dream. Even though none of us ever completely understood the dream, we look back and we can relate certain aspects of the relocation process to key elements of the dream and say, Oh! This was that! Later, in the middle of some hard circumstances that seemed to threaten the success of what we believed God had called our church to do, we all were encouraged because we had the sense that He had spoken to us about the relocation in advance of our experiencing it.

The writers of Scripture recorded many occasions where God spoke to His own through dreams. Consider how God spoke to Joseph:

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21)

When they [the 3 kings, wise men] had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” (Matthew 2:13)

*Sometimes God Reveals His Will or Direction for Us through “Signs”*

Sometimes, God may allow us to ask Him for a sign and/or to “put out a fleece” to test His voice. He did both for Gideon. We find this in the book of Judges:

Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of

Jezeel. Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

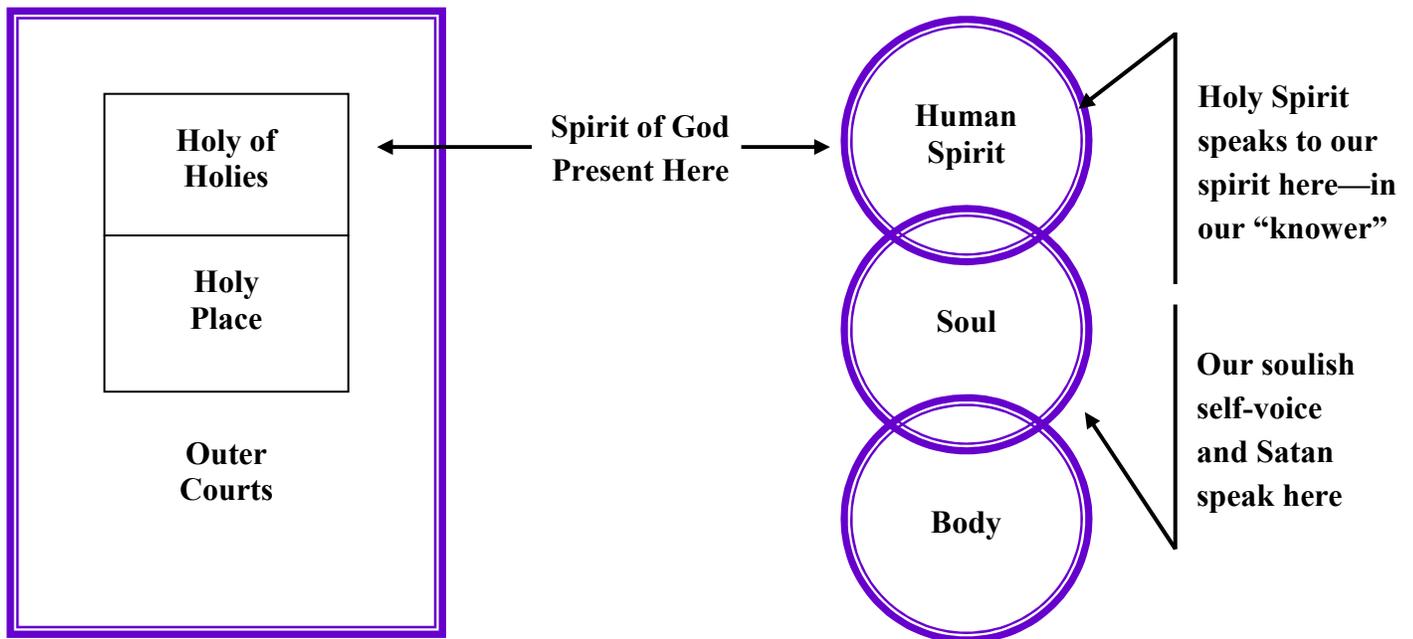
Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor.

If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew— a bowlful of water.

Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.” That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew. (Judges 6:33-40)

*Our Most Intimate Conversations with God Seem to Take Place in Our Spirit, Where God Speaks Holy Spirit to Human Spirit*

Perhaps best of all, God provided a spiritual organ, the human spirit, which when cultivated, may well be the most dependable way of all to hear God speak. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus declared: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” I believe that the term *heart* refers here to our deepest innermost human spirit. Here is where God dwells. Those who are pure in heart interact intimately with Him, Holy Spirit to human spirit. They see and hear God.



Sometimes to explain the promptings of the Spirit I use the term *knower*. You certainly have had those experiences when you just sense God’s voice from deep within telling you something was either right or wrong. I am sometimes asked, “How do you know it is God’s voice?”

*Spiritual “Knowing”*

I might respond, “Well, deep down in my ‘knower,’ I just know.” Most people seem to relate well to that terminology. I identify my “knower” as my deep, innermost, human spirit.

Charlie was a middle-aged, intellectual agnostic who began attending our church with his wife. One Sunday I invited everyone who might like to become a Christian to come to the front platform at the end of the morning worship service and talk and pray with one of our pastors. Charlie came that morning, surrendered his life to Christ and began quickly closing the gap in his spiritual life with God. Several years later he related what really occurred that Sunday morning during the church service: “Roger, something in

me told me to walk down that aisle and give my life to Christ. I had no idea what it was, but the prompting was so strong that I could not say no. I had to come.” He responded to the voice of God deep in his innermost human spirit—his “knower.” This is the intuitive function of the human spirit: the Holy Spirit was expressing Himself through Charlie’s spiritual intuition in his “knower.”

Watchman Nee’s three-volume work *The Spiritual Man* made a deep impression on me during my early struggles to recognize and follow the voice of God in my spirit. The next five paragraphs summarize his understandings of the work of the spirit in conjunction with that of the soul. My study and experience cause me to agree with Nee’s perspective.

*Between Spirit and Soul*

In our Biblical model in which we view man as a trichotomy, we might say that the spirit knows while the mind understands. *Knowing* is the work of spiritual intuition; *understanding* is the work of the mind. We need good minds to

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figure out how to live and behave, and what is scriptural and what is heresy; but if our mind is all we have to depend on, then only the smartest and brightest can live the best Christian lives. This is why God chooses to communicate deep in our human spirit through our “knower” or spiritual intuition. We should follow the still small voice that comes from our intuition instead of being overawed by people’s knowledge and drawn away from the voice of God within us.

### *Direct and Sought-After Revelation*

**T**he revelation of God in our spirit is both direct revelation and sought-after revelation. Direct revelation occurs when God has a specific word for a particular individual and He reveals it to the person’s spirit. Sought-after revelation is the result of a believer approaching God with a need, then seeking and waiting for an answer through God’s movement in his or her spirit.

The revelation that young believers receive is mostly the sought-after type. More mature followers more often receive the direct kind. Too often, spiritual young men and women become impatient while waiting for God’s revelation and substitute their own, disguised will for God’s will.

In the intuition of the spirit, Christians unmistakably know the will of God. This is living by the Spirit and is explained in 1 Corinthians 2. Remember:

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught

by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

(1 Corinthians 2:10-13)

The will of God originates in God; His Holy Spirit reveals the things of God to the spirit of man. In turn, the human spirit causes the soul to understand, through the mind, what the spirit knows. The human spirit is where God speaks to man. The human soul or mind is where God’s will is understood.

**Warning: God’s Voice Is Not the Only Voice That Speaks. How Can We Distinguish between God’s Voice and What Might Be Either Our Own Soulsh Voice or Satan’s Voice?**

**I** have counseled with so many people who want to know how to recognize when God is speaking to them. They seem to understand that they can be easily confused by other intrusive voices. We know that Satan seeks to speak to us. His voice always will lead us astray. Then too, most people know that they carry on conversations with themselves in their mind. So how can we really tell when we are listening to God, to Satan, or to our own soulsh self?

We begin to be able to answer this question when we remember that God speaks to us in our spirit. Satan speaks to us in our soul. He cannot get into our personal Holy of Holies, because God is there. And we carry on those internal conversations with ourselves in our minds which, along with our will and emotions, are part of our soul.

Scripture tells us that it is possible, with God’s help, to cultivate our inner spirits to the point that we can discern what is happening in the spirit and what is happening in the soul.

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.

(Hebrews 4:12-13)

It takes time to learn to make the distinction between soul and spirit. I think that as we grow to be spiritual mothers and fathers and cultivate this, we are much more likely to hear God speak clearly—and to find that what we think He is saying is always very consistent with His written Word. It also is fair to say that sometimes we make mistakes. And that is okay.

As you begin to practice listening to God in your spirit, you will find it helpful to have a set of indicators by which to test the source of what you are hearing. I want to share with you some Biblically based tests that I have applied and found useful in confirming when God is speaking or when God is not speaking. Because none of the tests are sufficient in themselves, you will want to judge what you are hearing by several of the standards.

Remember that hearing God speak is a process that often involves other people. We can be most certain that we are hearing from God when His revelation to us can be confirmed by the spiritual fathers and mothers in our faith community.

Now that doesn't mean there are not times, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, that no one can sit in judgment on what the Holy Spirit says deep in a spiritual man's spirit. I mean, nobody else can get in there. And so it is hard for me to judge conclusively what you may be saying that God has spoken to you in your spirit. At the same time, as a member of the body of Christ, I do not want to be running around saying that God spoke to me and be the only one who feels like He really did. That is why it is good to test the word that has been heard. It is good to counsel with other spiritually mature Christians.

Let's look now at some of the standards by which we can judge what we believe

we are hearing God speak in our innermost being.

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If the Revelation Seems to Come from Deep Within*

**W**hen God speaks in the spirit, there is always a sense that it is coming from deep within. Earlier in this lesson I talked about hearing God in my "knower." Just deep within. For me it is a situation of knowing that I know that I know that I know. When I am hearing from my soulish self or from Satan, there will be a sense that it is coming from the soul or "not so deep within."

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If the Revelation Is Quiet and Peaceful, Like a Still Small Voice, Providing Gentle Promptings*

**H**ere is another standard that you might find helpful. It is based upon an account in 1 Kings about Elijah seeking God. Now the crux of the story is this: there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; there was a whirlwind, but Elijah could not find God in the whirlwind; fire from Heaven fell, but God was not in the fire. When everything got still and quiet, God began to speak:

- And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:12-13)

When God speaks in the spirit, it often is quiet and peaceful. He always is patient and there are gentle leadings. On the other hand, when self or Satan speaks in the soul, there is a sense of loud, demanding, compulsive clamoring.



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### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If the Revelation Produces a Liberating, Unburdened Freedom*

When Satan or self speak, often there is a sense of being trapped, a sense of being overburdened, or a sense of being in bondage. When God speaks, His voice produces freedom. I base this standard on a familiar passage in Matthew where Jesus invites us to minister with Him in a way that is not burdensome.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28-30)

Sometimes I will hear a pastor who has stopped out on Skyline Drive to overlook Tucson. He will say, "Oh, I was out there praying and God gave me this great burden for the whole city!" It is like it is his job to lead the city to Christ. And that man lives with a tremendous burden.

It is one thing to have a sense of God's burden for the lost of a city. It is quite another to think that it is your responsibility to lead the whole city to Christ.

Maybe what God really wants to say is: "You know, I really am burdened for this city. Why don't you step into the yoke with me, cultivate some relationships with eight or ten other pastors, and we will work together to get well on the way to reaching this city for Christ." Now that is not burdensome. That is liberating and exciting.

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If the Revelation Provides Orderly, Clear-Cut, Specific Directions*

The message, instruction or revelation tends to be rather disorderly or confused when we are listening to our soulish self or Satan. I

think God always speaks in an orderly fashion. It is always very clear-cut and specific.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:40 Paul says, "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. Let everything be done decently and in order." When that happens, God speaks very clearly. It is very clear-cut. You are not left wondering and confused.

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If You Are Experiencing Conviction of Specific Sins*

When God speaks to us out of the spirit regarding some of our sins and our wrongdoings, it will be very, very specific, and there will be deep conviction over something that we actually did wrong.

He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

(John 16:8)

When we are hearing Satan speak in our souls, we often experience a sense of a haunting, free floating, general guilt. You see, Satan is in heaven right now, accusing us before the Father. And he accuses us in our minds, too. If you are walking around with, Oh, I am feeling so guilty over what I did, and you are being hassled about it, probably that is not God. It is Satan.

For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

(Revelation 12:10)

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If You Are Consciously Seeking the "Mind of Christ" on a Matter*

It is my experience that God tends to speak while we consciously are seeking after His mind and His heart. Satan tends to speak with sudden, intruding thoughts that pop into the mind out of nowhere. For example, the prophet Jeremiah says,

☞ Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

When does God speak? When He is found? No. He speaks when we are consciously seeking after Him. If you are consciously seeking after God and you begin to feel like you are hearing God speak to you, it is much more likely He is speaking to you then, than if you are a guy standing up shaving or a gal putting on makeup one morning, and this sudden thought pops into your mind.

### *You May Be Hearing God Speak If the Instruction, Message, or Revelation Is 100% Consistent with the Word*

When God speaks out of our spirit, what he says will be 100% true. And you can test it by the Word of God, the Bible. So this is a marvelous test: Is what I hear God saying 100% consistent with or in line with Scripture and its truths? If not, it was not God who spoke. If so, it may well be that God has spoken. Of course, this means that we need to be very familiar with Scripture if we are going to use it as a standard by which to divide between soul and spirit. Paul wrote to Timothy saying,

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

There are times when folks believe that God has spoken to them, but what they

think God has said directly contradicts His written Word or violates a principle of Scripture. When this is the case, you can be certain that person has not heard God. What is more, if they knew how to “correctly handle the Word of Truth,” they would know that they were being deceived. When Satan tends to speak, He does so using lies, deceit and half-truths.

More than once I have advised against marriage when I have been told, “God told me to marry this person who is a non-Christian.” Did God say that? No! You can pretty well be certain that person is hearing from their soulish inner voice or from Satan, because Scripture teaches that Christians should not be unequally “yoked” or partnered with a non-believer (2 Cor. 6:14).

But what if they say, “God has told me to marry this guy, and He is a Christian.” Now who spoke? Well, not as easy. There is no guarantee it was God, but you see, at least you are not violating some Bible principle. And so now you begin to put the other tests into place and check with many counselors to see if that is God speaking to me about whom to marry.

These are just some of the standards that I have used over the years to verify whether I really am hearing God speak. The ability to hear God speak and to recognize His voice when He calls to you will be cultivated over a long period of time.

I will close with this old spiritual growth truism: “God never reveals the deep things of the spirit to the Christian who just drops by for a little chat.” Give yourself wholeheartedly to listening for His voice as you grow into spiritual fatherhood or motherhood.

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## COMMENTARY

The dreams article below is provided as a “going deeper” kind of supplement to Roger’s point concerning God communicating to us through dreams. You are likely to get some questions on this topic. This article will give you a good outline from which to respond. We also chose to provide some additional illustrations for two other points made in **STUDYING THE WORD TOGETHER**. We placed them here rather than in the body of Roger’s teaching because they are not essential for making the point. However, they are strong stories that may be inspirational and instructive to those in your department. Use them if you like, but do not feel compelled to include them if they will not be helpful or you do not have sufficient time.

### *Dreams<sup>2</sup>*

The special will of God was often revealed to men through dreams. Such are the dreams of Jacob in Bethel (Gen. 28:12) and in Haran (31:10-13), the dream of Solomon in Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5), the dreams of Joseph the husband of Mary (Matt. 1:20), the night visions of Paul (Acts 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23). From 1 Samuel 28:6 we infer that God did at times answer sincere inquirers. Concerning the future, the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel are examples.

The dreams of Joseph in his father's house (Gen. 37:5-11), which figuratively predicted to him his future eminence over the house of Jacob; the dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh (Gen. 40); and the dream of the soldier in the Midianite camp in the time of Gideon (Judg. 7:13) are illustrations of dreams of presentiment.

According to Numbers 12:6, dreams and visions (which we see) are the two forms

of the prophetic revelations of God. Too much reliance is not to be placed upon dreams (Eccl. 5:7).

Because the dream was looked upon as a communication from the gods, there arose those who professed the ability to interpret them. They were not to be listened to if they taught anything contrary to the law (Deut. 13:1-3; Jer. 27:9; etc.). Instances are given of God's aiding men to understand dreams and the divine lessons taught thereby, e.g., Joseph (Gen. 40:5-23; 41:1-32), Daniel (Dan. 2:19-30; 4:8).

### OPTIONAL ILLUSTRATION 1: May Be used with “God Communicates to Us through Scripture”

A few years ago Glenn, Gary, all of our associate pastors, and I began individually and corporately seeking God’s counsel for Casas’ future direction. We all were experiencing some dissonance that signaled to us that God wanted to make some changes in order to move us into a new era for Casas. During the early stages of our seeking God, He began to speak to Glenn and some others on our team through Scripture passages that were a part of their regular study.

From Judges, He spoke to us about the danger of making ministry an idol. We began to realize that some would have to surrender some kingdom work about which they were truly passionate in order to move forward with new things that God had in store for them and for Casas. To refuse to let go would be idolatry. Now that was hard to deal with!

Then through John 10:10, John 7:39, and Revelations 22:17, God began to stir afresh our passion for leading people to Christ and helping them grow to spiritual

<sup>2</sup> *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.



maturity. As we began to ask Him how He wanted us to reach people and help them “close the gap” in their lives, He led us into a greater focus on what we have come to call the Sunday Morning Experience.

How encouraging it is to experience the Word as a lamp that keeps us from stumbling in the darkness and as the light that illuminates the path ahead.

### OPTIONAL ILLUSTRATION 2: May Be Used with “God Communicates with Us As We Reflectively Reason”

I have mentioned to several groups over the last few years that the relocation from our old site at Ina and La Cholla to our current campus was a very stressful and taxing process for our staff and lay volunteer leaders. It was extremely hard for me.

I had studied several mega-churches who had relocated. Each found it to be a difficult experience filled with many unexpected problems that threatened the success of the move. One of the statistics that concerned me most revealed that 60% of the pastors who led their churches through a relocation were so exhausted and disillusioned that they left their post within two years of completing the move. So before really launching the final phase of the project I determined, with pen and journal in hand, to spend some reflective time with God.

Following a conference, I arranged for about eight hours to be alone in the woods around Glen Eyrie Conference Center near Colorado Springs. I sat on an out-of-the-way bench a short distance from a walking trail, praying and asking God for His will

and wisdom concerning the needed relocation. While outside everything was peaceful, my soul was chaotic.

I began pouring out my questions and concerns to God: What do I do? Should I do it? Can I survive it? Can we raise enough money? I was so confused and in such turmoil. I began to calm my spirit and quiet my mind. Then, I started to reflectively reason through the challenge that was ahead of me. All of a sudden this great peace came over me and God said, “Okay, now, I’m going to give you eleven things I want you to do to make this relocation fly.”

I began writing down those things I felt God was quietly whispering to me deep in my spirit. The last one was, “Go get Glenn Barteau. You don’t want to do this relocation alone. And Glenn is going to be the key to Casas’ future after you retire.”

Of course, I did all eleven. I even called Glenn and said, “Come be a pastor here with me at Casas.”

He said, “No, no, I want to stay up here where it’s cold and snowy in Michigan.” He was pastoring a church in Kalamazoo and had a very fruitful ministry. He did not want to leave.

I said, “No, I think you need to pray about this.” And of course Glenn has been here almost eight years and is in the process of giving great vision to our church and doing a wonderful job of leading our staff.

There was a great peace when I finished my reflective time with God that afternoon. I look back and realize He was speaking to me as I reasoned through the relocation steps. I knew the move to our current campus was going to be hard. But, it has worked, and it has worked well.

Oh—I still have the list!

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## The Prayer God Always Answers

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### RESOURCES

#### NEEDED:

- ◆ 2-sided copies of Lesson Notes / Take-Home pages
- ◆ Pencils or pens for each person
- ◆ Dry erase markers and marker board or felt tip markers and a flip chart
- ◆ Blank sheets of paper for each Step One group to make their list
- ◆ Optional: Note pads and pens or other prizes for Step One

#### TIME FRAME:

- ◆ 45 minutes

#### NOTE:

- ◆ The 📌 icon marks passages shown on **Lesson Notes**

## LESSON PLAN

### Focal Scriptures:

- ◆ Psalm 119:105-112
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 2:10-13
- ◆ Acts 16:6-10
- ◆ 1 Kings 19:12-13
- ◆ Jeremiah 29:12-13

### Maturity Insights Covered in This Lesson:

- ◆ **Maturity Insight 17:** God Communicates with His People in Many Different Ways, including Speaking to Us Holy Spirit to Human Spirit in the Innermost Part of Our Being

### Teaching Goals:

- ◆ Learn: God communicates to us many ways
- ◆ Learn: Several “tests” for determining when we are truly hearing from God
- ◆ Experience: Become aware of experiencing Scripture by recalling a time when God has spoken through the Scripture (Ps. 119:105), through circumstances (Acts 16:6-10), or in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:12-13), or as they have sought Him (Jer 29:12-13); express gratitude to God for his past revelation and ask Him to help us listen more attentively as He continues to reveal Himself

### Before Class Begins:

- ◆ Sketch the rectangles and circles on your board or chart for the diagram on page **13-5**, so that you may quickly fill in the words and teach the concepts.
- ◆ Distribute handouts.

### STEP ONE: GETTING READY TO LEARN (8 MINUTES)

- ◆ Form groups of 5-6 people to brainstorm the *Ways We Communicate* exercise on their **Lesson Notes**. Allow 5 minutes to brainstorm. Recruit someone to list responses on your flip chart or marker board.

Optional: Award note pads and pens or other communication-related prizes to the winning group.

Transition statement: Just as we have many different ways we communicate with each other, we will learn today that God communicates with us in many different ways.

### STEP TWO: GOD COMMUNICATES WITH HIS PEOPLE IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS, INCLUDING HOLY SPIRIT TO HUMAN SPIRIT IN THE INNERMOST PART OF OUR BEING (10 MINUTES)

- ◆ NOTE: Of the six ways shown below in which God communicates, the first four probably are the most familiar to your class. You may want to take this assumption into account as you plan how much of the 10 available minutes you give to each point.
- ◆ You may choose to use this pattern for presenting these points: *Write the communication method on your board or flip chart; you read or have another read the associated Bible verse; offer an illustration or brief explanation.*

- ◆ God communicates to us through the Bible (Ps. 119:105-112)
- ◆ God communicates to us as we reflectively reason (Prov. 2:2-6)
- ◆ God speaks to us through the counsel of Godly people (Prov, 15:22)
- ◆ God reveals His will to us through circumstances (Acts 16:5-10)
- ◆ God sometimes communicates to us through dreams (Matt. 1:20-21; 2:13)
- ◆ Sometimes God reveals His will or direction for us through “signs” (Judges 6:33-40)
- ◆ Transition to next section: Tell your class that while God can speak to us in all of these ways ... and then fill in the blanks as you state the title in Step 3

### STEP THREE:

**OUR MOST INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD SEEM TO TAKE PLACE IN OUR SPIRIT, WHERE GOD SPEAKS HOLY SPIRIT TO HUMAN SPIRIT**  
(7 MINUTES)

- ◆ NOTE TO TEACHER: Some of this section will be review for your class. There are also new ideas to present.
- ◆ Fill in the Temple/Body, Soul, Spirit diagram. Refer classmates to their handout. (If you have newcomers, you may want to do a brief review using the Teacher Resource from Lesson 11.) Be sure to make the point that God can speak to us in our spirit, but we may hear our own soulish mental voice or Satan’s voice in our soul. Satan speaks to our mind. Our spirit is our secret place—our Holy of Holies. Satan has no access there.

- ◆ **Spiritual “Knowing”**—Tell your classmates that Roger often refers to his inner spirit as his “knower.” Explain the concept and tell Charlie’s story.
- ◆ **Between Spirit and Soul:** Tell your class that our spirit “knows” while our soul “understands.” We exercise our spiritual intuition in our spirit and we understand with our mind in our soul.
- ◆ **Direct and Sought-After Revelation:** Describe direct and sought-after revelation and compare the two. Read and explain 1 Corinthians 2:10-13. End this step by reminding them that God speaks inside-out. (Refer back to Lesson 11 if you need to.)
- ◆ Transition: Remind your class that God’s is not the only voice that speaks to us. We must learn to recognize God’s voice when He speaks. So we will review some tests we can use.

**STEP FOUR: WARNING: GOD’S VOICE IS NOT THE ONLY VOICE THAT SPEAKS. HOW CAN WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GOD’S VOICE AND WHAT MIGHT BE EITHER OUR OWN SOULISH VOICE OR SATAN’S VOICE?**  
(15 MINUTES)

- ◆ NOTE: This is the section that everyone is waiting for. In your presentation consider contrasting God’s voice to our soulish mental voice or Satan’s voice. You will find this information in the related **STUDYING THE WORD TOGETHER** segment. Make your point and move on. **You have about 2 minutes per point.** Your class can follow with their handouts.



## Lesson 13

# The Prayer God Always Answers

*You May Be Hearing God If...*

*Notes* 

- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if the revelation seems to come from deep within
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if the revelation is quiet and peaceful, like a still small voice, providing gentle promptings
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if the revelation produces a liberating, unburdened freedom
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if the revelation provides orderly, clear-cut, specific directions
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if you are experiencing conviction of specific sins
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if you are consciously seeking the “mind of Christ” on a matter
- ◆ You may be hearing God speak if the instruction, message, or revelation is 100% consistent with the Word

### STEP FIVE: EXPERIENTIAL SET (5 MINUTES)

- ◆ Quickly move your class into groups of 2 or 3. If by two, suggest couples pair up with someone other than their spouse.
- ◆ Ask them to become aware of experiencing Scripture by recalling a

time when God has spoken to them through the Scriptures that appear on their **Lesson Notes**. The check-marked items at the bottom of the column relate to the four scriptures above—through His Word (Psalms 119:105), through circumstances (Acts 16:6-10), in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:12-13), or as they have sought Him with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

- ◆ Ask them to each briefly share their memory with their group-mates. As they share, ask them also to pray (aloud or silently) an expression of gratitude to God for His past revelation, and ask Him to help them listen more attentively as He continues to reveal Himself to them.
- ◆ Tell them you will dismiss them in prayer in 5 minutes.
- ◆ Close with a prayer of blessing over yourself and your classmates. Ask God to draw near and speak to each of you—and to reveal Himself to you, as you pray the prayer He always answers: “Lord, make me a spiritual mother or father at any cost.”
- ◆ Remind everyone of the Daily Reflections on the back of their handouts.
- ◆ Invite all to return next week for whatever topic you have chosen for your next study series.

# Today in My Department

## Ways We Communicate

With a group of 5-6 people, brainstorm different ways that people communicate with each other. How many can you list?

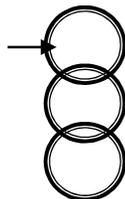
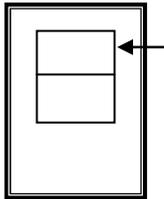


**Maturity Insight 17:** God communicates with his people in many different ways, including speaking to us \_\_\_\_\_ Spirit to human \_\_\_\_\_ in the innermost part of our being.

### God communicates to us...

- ◆ Through the \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 119:105-112)
- ◆ As we reflectively \_\_\_\_\_ (Proverbs 2:2-6)
- ◆ Through the \_\_\_\_\_ of godly people (Proverbs 15:22)
- ◆ His will to us through \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 16:5-10)
- ◆ Sometimes through \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 1:20-21; 2:13)
- ◆ Sometimes through “\_\_\_\_\_” (Judges 6:33-40)

Our most \_\_\_\_\_ conversations with God seem to take place in our \_\_\_\_\_ where God speaks Holy Spirit to human spirit.



God’s voice is not the only voice that speaks. How can we distinguish between God’s voice and what might be either our own \_\_\_\_\_ voice or \_\_\_\_\_ voice?

### You may be hearing God speak if...

- ◆ The revelation seems to come from \_\_\_\_\_ within
- ◆ The revelation is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, like a still small voice, providing gentle promptings
- ◆ The revelation produces a liberating, unburdened \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ The revelation provides orderly, clear-cut, specific \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ You are experiencing conviction of \_\_\_\_\_ sins
- ◆ You are \_\_\_\_\_ seeking the “mind of Christ” on a matter
- ◆ The instruction, message, or revelation is \_\_\_\_\_ consistent with the Word

## Today’s Scriptures

**Psalm 119:105**—Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

**Acts 16:6-10**—Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**1 Kings 19:12-13**—And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

**Jeremiah 29:12-13**—Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

**How have you experienced the above Scriptures as God has spoken to you...**

- √ Through His Word?
- √ Through circumstances?
- √ By His still, small voice?
- √ As you have sought Him with all your heart?

## You May Be Hearing God If...

## Daily Reflections

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**Monday:** *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word. Accept, O LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws. Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end (Ps. 119:105-112).*

David views the Scripture as illuminating. The Scriptures are a joy to his heart. He declares that he has committed himself to God and to being both mindful of and obedient to the Word. When you reflect upon David's heart as it is reflected here, what conclusions do you draw about your own heart for God and His Word? What declarations do you want to make concerning your commitment to God and His Word?

**Tuesday:** *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:6-10).*

Reflect upon God's interruption of Paul's plans. How did He redirect Paul? As you reflect upon God's work in your life, think about times when He has "closed one door" only to open another. How do you feel about such intervention by God in your life? What praises are you motivated to offer Him?

**Wednesday:** *The LORD said [to Elijah], "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave (1 Kings 19:11-13).*

Where are you prone to "look for God?" Do you expect to find Him only in the miraculous and major manifestations or events? Or are you accustomed to seeking Him in quiet, unexpected places—perhaps in your own personal Holy of Holies? If He speaks quietly, are you willing to listen? Whisper to Him and patiently listen for His response.

**Thursday:** *"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD (Jer. 29:12-14).*

What a promise! If you call to me, I will listen. If you intently seek me, you will find me. What do such promises tell you of God's heart for you? What response do you find yourself wanting to make to God right now?

**Friday:** *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed (Prov. 15:22).*

Who are your Godly counselors? What Word from the Lord have you heard from them? Take a moment to thank God for your Godly counselors and for His work in their lives. Thank Him for His work in your life brought about by your counselors' wise guidance.