

How Does God Speak to You?

I have made some decisions in my life based on thoughts that came to me at night. I dream every night but sometimes there are thoughts that have given me a clear direction on a decision I was pondering. No, there wasn't a booming voice, just a sense of peace that I credit to the Holy Spirit. Some of those decisions were career changing and many have been important issues. In hindsight, the nocturnal revelations ended up being the right choices for me to make.

Hollywood wants us to think that God speaks in a dramatic, sensational way. It makes for a great movie but is rarely the way God reaches out to us. God doesn't want us to make a show out of things – just to make the right decision for the right reason.



Hollywood loves the Wizard of Oz – a man with a booming voice, hiding behind the curtain, giving people his answer to their requests for help. The man had a microphone, a good sound system and light show, as he was trying to make people think he had power. "I am the great and powerful Oz," he would say. In truth, he was lost himself. He usually sent people on their way because he was powerless to help them. God does not deceive people. He tells us truthfully and lovingly.

In the Bible God spoke to a precious few people: Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Cain, Jacob, and Elijah. After Jesus' baptism, God said, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17). God also spoke to Peter, James and John similar words, *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him"* (Matthew 17:5).

What are some of the other ways He speaks to us?

The *most common ways* God speaks to us include:

- God speaks to us through His **Word** (2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 119:11). His instructions are clear to us as they are recorded in the Bible.
- God speaks to us through the inner voice of the **Holy Spirit** (Acts 11:12, Acts 13:2, Acts 16:6,7, 1 Kings 19:12 and Isaiah 30:19-21).
- God speaks to us through the **advice of men and women of God**, but be careful that their advice is

biblical and not what you want to hear. (Proverbs 12:15)

- God speaks to us through **circumstances** (events in our lives when doors open that pave the way for a new direction to serve.

- God speaks to us by **inner conviction followed by a feeling of peace** (Philippians 4:6-7).



In *rare cases* God speaks to us:

- God speaks to us through the audible voice of God (Acts 9:4-5).
- God speaks to us through visions (Acts 19:9-18)
- God sometimes speaks to us through angels (Luke 1:26-38). An example is the angel Gabriel speaking to Mary, prior to Jesus' birth.

It doesn't matter how He we get His message. What matters is that we believe and are committed to serve Him. Don't let someone make you feel like less of a person because you haven't heard His actual voice. We live in a time when people want to feel like they are important. They try to convince others they have actually heard the voice of God. Matthew 24:5 warns us against deceptive people. A key question to ask yourself is whether their message is one of trying to glorify themselves or to glorify God?

When you are evaluating a direction you think is from God, consider if the direction lines up with all three of these factors:

- **It is consistent with the Word of God.** Can you find references in the Bible?
- **Inner Conviction.** You have a strong feeling from deep within you.
- **Circumstances.** You can see things falling into place that support that decision. Remember, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13). God will make the right things happen.

We don't have to wait for a magical revelation that may be from God. We can feel God calling us to serve by reading the Bible. As we read it, we can look for our own inner conviction of what we think God wants us to do. Chances are, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us. And then, God will make things happen because God empowers you to action. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).*

Questions: Do you think God is leading your life? What are the signs that make you feel that way?

Prayer: Dear Lord. We live in a confusing world. We want to do the right thing but sometimes it is difficult to determine the direction you want us to go. Help us to see the path you have laid out for us. Amen.

Scriptural References – For Further Study

Speaking to us through His Word:

- 2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.
- Psalm 119:11 - I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Speaking to us through the Holy Spirit

- Acts 11:12 - The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house.
- Acts 13:2 - While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

- Acts 16:6-7 - 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. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.
- 1 Kings 19:12 - After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.
- Isaiah 30:19-21 - People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. ²⁰ Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. ²¹ Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Speaking to us through others of the faith

- Proverbs 12:15 - The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Speaking to us through the audible voice of God

- Acts 9:4-5 - He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

Speaking to us to give us inner peace

- Philippians 4:6-7 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Speaking to us through visions

- Acts 19:9-18 - But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out. Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done.

Speaking through angels

- Luke 1:26-38 - In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Beware of deceptive people

- Matthew 24:5 - For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many.