

# *Experiencing God - Hearing Him*

**Hebrews 1:1 - 2:4**

PREPARED BY  
KEN GEHRELS  
PASTOR  
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA  
ONTARIO, CANADA

A few weeks ago we began to consider seven statements which can be applied as basic truths of Christian living. They are:

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit in various ways.
5. God's invitation into your life often leads to a crisis of belief requiring faith and action.
6. God's invitation often calls for major adjustments in our life that we may join in His work.
7. God is known by us, experientially, as we obey Him and He does His work through us.

We've already covered the first three points.

If you missed the sermons, they're available on Calvin's web site.

Today we want to focus on point 4:

***God speaks by the Holy Spirit in various ways.***

God speaks to us.

He is not silent.

He is not distant.

Rather

He communicates.

And He is near us.

He communicates to comfort, to guide, to teach, to assure, to correct, to challenge.

God speaks.

As Maj-Len read from Hebrews 1, God has always spoken.

In ages past he spoke in many and various ways.

Many ways - God is not silent, but communicates regularly, often, to His people.

Various ways - God doesn't use only one form of communication.

That is so key to remember right from the beginning, as we speak about coming to hear the voice of God.

Please don't expect me to give you a particular formula.

Don't expect me to suggest that God's voice will come clearly to you in one, two, or three particular ways that **everyone** will experience in **exactly** the same way. Because it simply doesn't happen like that. As much as God has created us to look different from one another, so He has also made us to hear and communicate with Him in unique ways.

Hebrews 1:1... Many ways.

Various ways.

You see that illustrated all through the Bible:

He worked through visions.

He spoke through earthquakes.  
He appeared in flashes of fire and lightning.  
He communicated through a still, small voice.  
He moved events of nature to confirm His will.  
He even used the mouth of a donkey to speak for Him.  
(yeah, I know - some of you are thinking, "Nothing new there. He does that every week @ Calvin Church.)

Reading through the Old Testament - and the New Testament for that matter - you'll discover that as great and colourful a variety of characters as there are in the community of faith, so great and colourful is the variety of ways that God chooses to communicate with them, revealing Himself and His will.

All of these, however, pale in comparison to the greatest of all ways that God reveals Himself.

And that is through the Word of God that became - as John 1:1 says - very flesh and blood itself.

The Word of God become Human.  
Great than any dream.  
Greater than any angel.

This Word is the Son of God Himself.  
God come very physically and bodily to earth.

That is the greatest revelation of God ever seen and ever possible here on earth.  
God come to bring us salvation.  
God come to draw us into relationship with Himself.

Pay attention to that.  
Respond to that.  
First of all.  
Before anything else.

Before asking any more questions about how a person can hear from God;  
Before wondering about how clearly one can understand God's voice;  
Before wondering if the voice of God sounds the same today as it did 5000 years ago  
Before any of that -

Be sure that you have heard and responded to the great Word of God as it comes to us in Jesus Christ.

Be sure that you have opened your heart and mind and body up to Him.  
That you have invited Him into your heart.  
That you have responded to His invitation of relationship with you.

**That** is the bottom line message of Hebrews 1.

Because,

you see,

God doesn't want to see us get all concerned and focused on the **technique** of communication. He wants us to focus deeper.

And the deeper level is the reality of **relationship**.

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day.

Men - You'll be in a pretty tough space if you get all focused on working on communication technique - understanding the mechanics of how women speak and communicate

- good though such an understanding is!!

You'll be in tough space if that is the bottom line for you.

You want to go deeper.

Communication is a way to build and develop and strengthen the part that really matters - a heart relationship with the one you love.

Great to be a good communicator.

Wonderful if you can understand what she communicates to you.

But if there's no relationship, well, why bother?

The deep level with God is the level of relationship.

Before communication technique, think relationship.

Focus on the relationship,

be open to the fact that the God who loves you **will** communicate with you, and then you'll discover that it will happen.

It will happen in ways that are unique to you.

There's no set formula.

How you experience God speaking will be different than how your brother or sister in the congregation experiences it.

Except for this common thread -

That you look to Jesus.

You focus on Jesus.

And then

after surrendering to Christ

**Only then**

can we go to Hebrews 2:4 and notice that God adds to His testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.

Jesus first.

Jesus as revealed to us through the sacred pages of Scripture

Pages with truth made real and vibrant in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

And then, the welcome mat out in our lives for Jesus to make Himself at home.

then, we seek to hear God speak through His Holy Spirit in various ways.

And so -

Invitation # 1 - may I invite you to consider your relationship with Jesus Christ.

How much focused time do you give it?

Time to simply **be with** Him.

One of the most deadly challenges to a relationship is if you are so busy **doing** that you forget to simply **be with** the one you love.

That's the cause of failure for a lot of marriages. They get busy with jobs, and carting the kids to hockey, school functions and the like. Then before the couple knows it, the kids are grown up and moved out. They wake up one day and look at each other and realize that they have drifted miles apart from each other. They've been shoulder to shoulder for years..... **doing** stuff. But their hearts have never **been with** each other. They are strangers. And sometimes, tragically, the result is divorce.

And so Jesus visits the home of two sisters, one busy serving Him and the other quietly sitting with Him, listening to Him. Jesus points to the one sitting quietly with Him and says, "*she has chosen the better way.*" (Luke 10).

Martin Luther is popularly quoted as saying, "*I spend an hour a day in prayer. But when I am busy and the tasks press in on my, I can afford no less than 2 hours a day in prayer.*"

We cannot hear God's directive to us while racing around like mad fools.

Second thing that I hope you take home this morning is that we listen for the Lord's voice because we desire to **obey** Him. We want to **respond** to Him.

You can't cultivate a relationship with the Lord if you constantly ignore His will for you life.

In Matthew 21 Jesus describes a father with two sons - one who listens quietly to his father's requests and then goes away without obeying; the second son grumbling, but then heading out to obey. Neither is ideal. "But whatever you do," Jesus says, "Don't think that just sitting quietly and listening to the Lord, **without putting it into practice**, will please Him at all."

We seek the voice of God as people in relationship,  
obedient relationship  
with Him.

Most of all, first of all, most basic of all - that voice will come to us through the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16:

*All scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

Test every other form of communication and direction that you believe to be from God against the words of the Bible. If there is **any hint** of contradiction between the two, go with what the Bible says. Depend on it, first of all, most of all, above all.

Then, supporting that Word of Scripture, all sorts of different ways.

Let me list a few:

- Converging circumstances: things somehow come together, opportunities suddenly present themselves, doors open or close in ways outside of your control, people happen into your life in unexpected ways.
- a dream that leaps out at you, or a vision that comes into your mind which you cannot shake, an impression or thought that won't leave you alone.
- the word or actions of another person
- occasionally an audible voice
- a phrase of scripture leaping out and whacking you between the eyes, grabbing hold of you and not letting go.
- a thought in our mind; perhaps in a particular setting in creation, perhaps in the reading of God's Word. We "get this idea....."
- a situation or circumstance that stands out at you, which you can't shake. I think here of someone who encountered a report of suffering among children in a certain part of the world. She couldn't get rid of that image. It left an impression that brought her towards volunteering her efforts in focused relief actions and political lobbying for the welfare of children in places of global conflict. She was convinced it was God's will for her.

Some of the ways in which God speaks.

Again - don't get obsessed about method.

Focus on being in relationship with God, and being open to the idea that He will seek to communicate with you in ways that are unique and right for the way that your mind and emotions are wired, are created.

And He will.

In ways and frequency and times and places that are right for you.

Unique ways.

Interesting point - when the Bible describes an encounter between God and a person, rarely if ever do you see that particular way of encounter happen again.

How many burning bush experiences do you read about?

How many instances of sheets coming down from heaven?

How many times does the dew dry or dampen a fleece?

How many times does a man wrestle with an angel?

Be open.

Which means, conversely, that you can block God's communication with you.

You can become closed off from God's voice.

We can do that, you know. Block our ears, clog our hearts, close our minds, disrupt our lives and prevent ourselves from hearing God speak to us.

Psalm 66:18 names sin as one of the biggest culprits. If we insist on hanging on to lifestyle issues and patterns that we **know** to be displeasing to God, we **cannot** glibly expect that the Spirit's voice will ring loud and clear in affirming, guiding, comforting ways.

**Communication** with God is broken when our  
**Communion** with Christ is shattered by sin.

Or busyness. We've spoken of that earlier.

Or distraction - That's another form of busyness, really. If we don't ever remove ourselves from the constant barrage of internet, TV, other people chattering, phone ringing, hearing God becomes VERY difficult.

Final way is that when we're facing an issue we sometimes can prejudge solutions and get locked in to them:

- something that has worked before in my life or the community's
- the way we traditionally have done it.

And anything that doesn't fit that bill is discarded.

When we pray, "*thy will be done*" we don't want to be praying and **really** meaning, "*Thy will be done..... as long as it looks like.....*"

We need to acknowledge that sometimes the Lord may want to pour the wine of His Spirit's presence into new wineskins (Mt 9:17).

Acknowledging these struggles, then, we seek to grow in our ability to hear God. Recognizing that on this side of Christ's return we won't always get it right. We don't see the picture with full clarity (1 Cor 13). We will always have struggles between the believing and unbelieving sides of our human nature (see Romans 7 for Paul's personal testimony about that).

Be open to personal and direction guidance from God.

But also be open to checking that, confirming that, testing that.

John Wesley wisely said, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose that dreams, voices, visions, or impressions are revelations from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature. They may be from the devil."

The Bible tells us – 1 Thes 5:19-22:

*"Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. **Test** everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil."*

How do you test?

- With Scripture first of all. It's the big rudder for life. If there is any hint of contradiction reject it immediately as being work of darkness or imagination cloaked in light.

- Check it with God's people. 1 Cor 14:29 commands the community to weigh what 2 or 3 prophets say. Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:20 that He is present with power where 2 or 3 gather together.

To suggest that you'll get it right by yourself, without the support of other believers is an arrogant myth of contemporary society. Isaiah 53:6 speaks about believers going astray, and says, "*each one has turned to **his own** way....*"

A third way of testing is by looking at the fruit that results from listening to certain thoughts or circumstances. (Mt 7:20; 12:33) Ask:

- does it build faith?
- does it provide hope?
- does it restore creation?
- does it produce gratitude?
- does it exalt Jesus Christ?

Living the new life as believers, and learning to hear God speak.

It is a challenging task - a full and deep challenge, but one that promises great fruit. So let me close with these words of encouragement from the prophet:

Jer 29:13 "*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*"