



God Spoke to The Ancients and God Speaks to Us

An *Experiencing God* Devotional Experience

Introduction

These devotional guides were written to help you deepen your walk with God as we go through this season of *Experiencing God* together as a church. As part of your experience, you may want to read the scriptures referenced here in context to get a broader understanding of the concepts introduced. As you complete this experience, you may also want to record the things that God speaks to you in a journal and share them with your small group. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to complete this devotional. Feel free to respond as the Lord leads!

God Speaks: Considering the Old Testament

The Bible reveals that God spoke at many times and in a variety of ways. Some of the ways people heard God speak in the Old Testament were through:

angels (see Gen 16)
visions (see Gen 15)
dreams (see Gen 28:10-19)

Urim and Thummim (see Exod. 28:30)
symbolic actions (see Jer. 18:1-10)
a gentle whisper (see 1 Kings 19:12)

miraculous signs (see Exod. 8:20-25)
prophets (see Deut. 18:18-22)
burning bush (see Exod. 3:1-4)
symbolic actions (see Isa. 20)

*The fact **that** God spoke to people is far more important than **how** He spoke. When he spoke, people knew it was God, and they knew what God was saying. In studying the Old Testament Scriptures, I see four important factors present every time God spoke. The experience of Moses and the burning bush recorded in Exodus 3 provides a good example.*

1. **When God spoke, the way He communicated was often unique to the individual.** For instance, Moses had no precedent for a burning bush experience. When he encountered one while herding sheep in the desert, he could not say, “At last! This is my burning bush experience. My fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had their encounters with burning bushes, and I guess this is mine.” There are no other occurrences of God speaking that way. It was a singular event. And yet, that event with the shepherd Moses was perfectly suited to the moment as God revealed the amazing work He was about to accomplish.

God makes our experience with Him and His voice personal to us. He wants us to focus on our relationship with Him and not on the method by which He speaks. For example, if God chose always to communicate His will by having us roll a pair of dice, then every time we faced a confusing situation, we would immediately turn to the dice rather than to Him.

*At times, I hear people say God speaks to them through certain preachers or conferences or activities, so they continually turn to those when they need to receive God’s guidance. However, it is possible to trust more in a Christian conference or a preacher than in God. God will not tolerate any substitute for a relationship with Him. As with people in the Scripture, the key in your life is not **how** God speaks but **that** He speaks.*

Continue on the next page...

2. **When God spoke, the person was sure it was God.** Moses did not have any reference point for hearing God speak from a burning bush. Yet the Scripture testifies that Moses had no question that his encounter was with God – the “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod. 3:14). He trusted God, obeyed what He told him to do, and experienced God acting just as He promised He would. Could Moses logically prove to someone else that he had heard from God through a burning bush? No, all Moses could do was testify to his encounter with God. Only God could cause His people to know that the word He gave Moses was a message from the God of their fathers, and the same truth applies today. Only God can verify a word He speaks to you.
3. **When God spoke, the person knew what God said.** Moses knew what God was telling him to do. He knew how God wanted to work through him. That is why Moses raised so many objections. He knew God had high expectations. This was true for Moses, and it was true for Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, David, Daniel, and others. God didn’t use riddles. He made His message clear.
4. **When God spoke, that was the encounter with God.** Moses would have been foolish to say, “This has been a wonderful experience with this burning bush. I hope it leads me to an encounter with God!” The bush **was** the encounter with God! When God reveals truth to you – by whatever means – that is an encounter with Him, an experience of His presence and work in your life. God is the only One who can cause you to experience His presence or hear His voice.

At times I’ll hear someone tell me of a deeply moving worship service. Or talk about an awesome experience while mountain climbing or when reading the Bible. Often, it will become clear that this person has missed the most important aspect of what has happened. He or she did not merely experience a moving worship service or breathtaking scenery or a profound Scripture passage. This person just encountered God! It is all too easy for us to be distracted from God if we focus on the means through which God speaks.

To summarize: This reality of God speaking is evident throughout the Old Testament. The methods He used to communicate differed from person to person. What’s important is:

- God spoke uniquely to His people.
- Each person knew it was God
- Each knew what He said

(Experiencing God, 145-146)

Engage

1. What are some of the ways God has spoken to you? How did you know it was God?
2. When listening for God, have you ever unintentionally substituted relationship with God with a preacher/teacher, conference, activity, method, or person?
3. Dedicate some time to purposefully interact with God around this topic of hearing God, perhaps through a prayer walk, time the word, journaling, or silence. Share your experience with your group.

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Questions, discussion prompts, and small group challenges have been influenced and derived from *Experiencing God* (Blackaby, 2021) and related materials. We encourage your use of all Blackaby resources for deeper study. – Blackaby.org

We’re here!

We would love to hear about how things are going in your small group! Reach out any time with questions, ideas, thoughts, or concerns. Contact Care & Community Pastor, Michael Warren, (907) 646-4830, communitylife@changepointalaska.com