

"How God Speaks Today"

Where do you turn for spiritual truth? Many people think that God speaks to them through their thoughts and feelings. Can you trust your feelings or is there something more certain? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord's Way. And today we're going to explore how God speaks to us today. Stay with us!

Welcome to *In Search of the Lord's Way*, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's will for every aspect of our lives. We go to the Holy Scriptures, because we know that they are from God and are utterly true. Thanks so very much for letting us into your busy life. We love hearing that you're watching or listening. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Now if you listen to religious radio or TV, you've probably heard someone say, "Well the Lord spoke to me and said..." or they'll say "let God speak to your heart..." suggesting that God speaks directly to people today. Other people feel that the feelings that they possess are evidence of God's will for their lives.

Well we're asking, how does God speak to us today? Is it through voices, or through feelings, or through councils and creeds, or maybe the living church? We believe the Bible is God's revelation of truth to us today. The Word of God says, that "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1 verses 1 and 2).

God gave all authority to Christ, who promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets to guide them into all the truth. They wrote this truth into the pages of the New Testament. Now if we want to know the truth that sets us free, we must go to the Word of God found in the New Testament.

Now for many years we've focused on preaching the gospel of Christ with love. And we've concentrated on what the Bible says about how to live the Christian life. And that's why God gave us the Bible. So we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send us an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in song, and then we'll read from God's Holy Word in Matthew 7 verses 24 to 27 and then we'll explore how God speaks to us today.

Our reading today comes from the lips of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount from the gospel according to Matthew, chapter 7, verses 24 to 27. "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." Those are words of Jesus, words to be listened to. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for Your love, and we're thankful for Your teaching that leads us to do what is right and avoid the things that are wrong. We pray that Your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Because God speaks through His Son, we need to recognize the Lord Jesus as the one and only authority in religious matters. He has more authority than anyone, any group, or any church. He is the Son of God. And Paul said that God "raised Him (that is Jesus) from the dead and seated Him at His

right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1 verses 20 to 23). Now the church is subject to Jesus, not to any man or any council.

Jesus said before He ascended into heaven, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28 and verse 18). Now Jesus doesn’t need a representative on earth, because He himself is the one and only head of His church on this earth. John the Baptist said of Jesus in John 3 verses 35 to 36, that “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. Now he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” There’s no person in all the earth that’s not subject to Jesus Christ. God has given all things into His hands. Jesus is Lord of all, and we need to listen to Him very closely.

Now we shall be judged one day by the words of Jesus. Jesus said in John 12 verses 48 to 49, that “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.”

We’re not going to be judged by opinion polls, by the creeds of men, or by some denomination’s beliefs. We will be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament, so we truly need to know what the Bible says, don’t we?

Now Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gave His apostles the Word that His Father had given to Him. In John 14 verses 25 and 26, Jesus told the apostles, “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you (that is the apostles) all things, and bring to your remembrance (that is you apostles) all that I said to you.” God determined that the words that He had given Jesus would be taught by the Spirit to the apostles for their time and for all time. The words of Jesus were not merely for the first century, oh no, but for every century as long as this world stands. God “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” God is speaking to us in the Bible!

And Jesus promised His apostles in John 16 verses 12 to 15 this, he says “I have many more things to say to you (that is you apostles), but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you (apostles) into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; and therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” Now the apostles knew the truth of God—the whole truth of God. They were the spokesman for God in their own day and really for all time.

You remember it was Jude the brother of Jesus who wrote in Jude 3, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Now Jude who wrote sometime between 65 and 80 AD, was already speaking of “the faith,” that is that body of doctrine, which was “once for all time” handed down to the saints. What the Word said in the first century, it also says and means today in the 21st century. Jude wanted Christians not only to believe that faith but also to “contend” for it, to uphold it and to keep handing it down.

Paul told Timothy, his true son in the faith, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, you entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2 and verse 2). Paul wanted the truth to be passed down from generation to generation. And

this is why Paul said in Ephesians 4 verses 4 to 6, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” There is indeed just one faith, and we are to contend for it. When people get away from the one faith, they abandon the revealed will of God.

Now the writers of the New Testament spoke with the authority of God. In 1 Corinthians 2 verses 12 to 13, Paul said, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” Paul said what he taught didn’t come from men but from the Holy Spirit. God was behind his teachings and his writings. And that’s why we can say whatever Paul said, we can also say God said it, because both statements are true. God moved Paul to say the things he taught.

Later in his epistle, Paul deals with women speaking out in the church. And Paul said, “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they’re not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says... (he goes on to say) it’s improper for a woman to speak in church. (And then he says) Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things (Paul says) which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. 9And then he said) But if anyone doesn’t recognize this, he is not recognized” (that’s 1 Corinthians 14, verses 34 to 38). Now Paul would not be ignored; he had spoken the Lord’s commandment.

On another occasion Paul defends himself by explaining where he got his gospel. Paul said, “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, no. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1 verses 11 to 12). It was because of this that he could be so sure about his gospel—that his gospel was true and right! It was actually the gospel of God!

In fact, the apostle Paul warns everyone to stay with his gospel and not change it. And anyone who changes his gospel risks losing his soul and the souls of those he teaches.

Galatians 1 verses 6 to 10 says, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men (he says), I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

God’s written Word is sacred and unchangeable. When you get away from the Bible, you also leave God! In 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, Paul spoke well of the Thessalonians because of their faith and obedience. He said, “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.” Now God’s Word can work in our lives, when we are willing to listen to it and apply it to our lives. And unless we humbly obey God’s message, we cannot receive its blessings.

In 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 15, God said, “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” Now God has always demanded his people to stay with what they have learned from Jesus and his apostles, not

moving from those things or getting involved in human traditions or human ideas. There truly is but one gospel, so please, please hold to it.

Now with so many voices, so many denominations, so many non-denominational community churches saying so many different things, do they all speak for God when they contradict each other? When they contradict themselves and argue with each other, are they really from God?

The Lord Jesus Himself distinguishes people, and here's how He does it, He does it by how they listen and follow His Word. He said to the Jews in John 8 verses 31 to 32, that "If you continue (that is to remain, to dwell in, to abide) in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now to continue in Jesus' word means to remain, abide, or stay there. Jesus said "true" disciples do that. Now some people say that they're disciples, but they go outside to other sources of information. Some believe they hear from God directly, some trust in their feelings, some merely look to whatever is popular and "happening." The unfortunate thing is that when they get away from the Word, they leave God too.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 21 to 23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then (Jesus says) I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Now it's not speaking religious language or doing religious things that make us right with God, no. A true Christian is one who hears and one who does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

These people talked and acted like good, religious people; but Jesus rejected them because they did not follow what God wanted and commanded. They stepped outside the will of God; and they, they were lawless. They did what they wanted to do, they did what they thought was popular. God was not subject to the cultural whims of anyone, and He's not subject to the cultural whims of people today. A thousand people can say something different than what God says, but what God say is true, and they will find themselves building their house upon sand, if they make up stuff, and change or try to change the will of God. God hasn't changed, and you can't change Him.

Now if the "true" disciples remain in the Word, how do you rate the church that you attend? Let me ask you, does your church stay with the Bible or does it vary from the Bible? There are an awful lot of preachers this day and time that tell an awful lot of stories and do all kind of things, and maybe throw in one verse at the end. Let me tell you what, if you've got a preacher like that, he's not a preacher. There are a lot of churches today that have preachers that will not preach against sin. Let me tell you something, if you've got a preacher like that, he's not a preacher of the gospel. Because the gospel speaks about sin, and the answer to sin. Now, you and I, one of these days are going to be judged by the words of Jesus, not by how we feel about things. And the only standard we have is the Word. The written Word of God, found in this book, the Bible. And so let's stay with what we know to be true and right. We have no promise, no blessing, when we substitute our own ways for the Word of God. We truly become "lawless," because we aren't listening to God but to our own desires. Let's pray together. Oh Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May we listen to Your words here and take them to heart and follow You with everything that's within us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

The very best thing we can do is to read God's Word every single day and see whether or not the things we're hearing are so. Now don't be fooled by religious people who are not giving you God's word but their own opinions. Stay with the Bible, stay with the Bible, and stay with God!

The Bible taught in the first century some things we too need to hear. Hebrews 2, verses 1 to 3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It's very easy for us to become neglectful and drift away from the things we have heard from the Scriptures. That's where the truth is! Not in our feelings, not in what makes us happy, not some council or creed or human tradition. Go to the Word for the Truth!

Feelings can deceive and men can be wrong, but God's Word has stood true for centuries. It says today what it said from the beginning. And you can trust it. Why not trust it and become a Christian? You do that by trusting and loving the Lord, by turning away from sin in repentance, by confessing Jesus, your faith in Jesus, as the Son of God before all, and by being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized in water, God will wash away your sins, He'll add you to His church. And so keep studying and growing in the Word every day of your life. My friend, do you have a close, peaceful loving relationship with God? The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

We hope and pray that you've been blessed by today's study. And if you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, "How God Speaks Today," mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or e-mail us. Our address is searchtv@searchtv.org.

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Please visit one of the churches of Christ in the area served by this station. The church of Christ loves guests, and you'll be glad you worshiped with them, and we'll help you find a good sound one if you're looking. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about us, tell them about this program and that you're watching. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us In Search of the Lord's Way.