



HEARING FROM HEAVEN: HOW TO KNOW THE VOICE OF GOD

“22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.”

- John 10:22-30

Hearing from Heaven: How to Know the Voice of God

Hearing from Heaven. Hearing from Heaven. How does God speak to us today?

Undoubtedly, you have heard people say this: “Well, God has spoken to me and He’s told me that you are to do such and such. Pastor, God has spoken to me and He’s told me to tell you that our church needs to go this direction.” And it is just ubiquitous out there in the evangelical world – whatever evangelical means nowadays – that God speaks to people in still, small voices, maybe audible voices, dreams, visions, hunches, all of these things; and you hear this so commonly.

Has it ever made you stop and wonder, “What’s wrong with me? Why don’t I hear God speak to me that way? Is there something wrong with me? Is there something wrong with my relationship with the Lord? Do these people have a closer walk with God than I do? What’s wrong with me?” And if you have ever had those thoughts, I hope that this session will be an encouragement to you as we look at how God does and does not speak to us today.

Now as we begin, I want to define a couple of terms, because these are widely misunderstood. Revelation. Revelation refers to God revealing new information that has been previously hidden. So God revealing new information that up until this point has previously been hidden.

Revelation is not happening anymore today. You hear people say this all the time: “Well, God gave me revelation on this.” Well, no He didn’t, because God is not revealing anything new that has not already been revealed in Scripture. Now what may have happened to you is illumination. Illumination refers to the enabling work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers in order to understand and appropriate the truths of Scripture. Revelation is not happening anymore today; illumination, however, is. Illumination should be a regular part, in fact, of the Christian’s life, as the Holy Spirit helps us to understand and appropriate the written Word of God.

This notion of God speaking today outside of the confines of Scripture can be traced back to a movement known as pietism – and there’s a lot that could be said about this. But pietism was a reaction to what was at least perceived to be a highly intellectualized, almost cold

orthodoxy coming out of the Protestant Reformation. It was anything but. But some people perceived it to be rather too intellectualized. And so in the late 1600s, early to mid 1700s, this movement became known as pietism. Philip Spener was the father of pietism, and he was no heretic, but he began to deviate just a little bit from the sufficiency of God's Word. And as pietism grew, as is the case, error always begets more error. And then you get to men like Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf who we could say was a heretic. But this kind of goes back to the movement known as pietism.

In a more modern version, divine revelation knowledge – you've probably heard of this term. The term was first coined by Essek W. Kenyon. Kenyon is the grandfather of what we call today the Word of Faith movement, New Apostolic Reformation. He's the one that first coined this term. Kenyon believed in two different types knowledge. The first of these is sensory knowledge, that which we get through our five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. The other kind of knowledge is revelation knowledge, and this is supernatural knowledge that comes only from God.

Now according to Kenyon, the catch to this is that these two spheres of knowledge are mutually exclusive, and what that means is that reasoning or logical thought is of no value. So if you really want to go deep with God, if you want to get to the deep, secret, hidden things of God, you've got to disengage your mind, put the old noodle in park. I'm going to show you some more modern expressions of this.

You may have heard of the practice known as *Lectio Divina*. This is a practice that was endorsed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. This is a Catholic discipline – highly, highly mystical, very unbiblical. *Lectio Divina*'s been practiced by some modern evangelical names. We'll talk about these, one of which is Beth Moore.

Beth Moore: very, very troublesome teacher. Unfortunately, a lot could be said of her. But Beth Moore, I want to read this quote to you from her book *Praying God's Word*. She says, "What little I know I want others to know. Before God tells me a secret," – now if He's telling you a secret – and she says – "He knows up front I'm going to tell it," so I'm not sure how secretive that is. But she says, "By and large, that's our deal." So Beth Moore has this secret deal with God. This is Gnosticism. This is a modern-day version of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism.

Also from Beth Moore in her book entitled *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*, and this is rather ironically subtitled, *Arming Yourself in an Age of Seduction*. But Beth Moore says this. She says, “I heard the voice of God speak to my heart, ‘Come and play.’ I love that He said, ‘Come,’ not go, ‘Come.’ That meant He was already there. I also love how I could tell by the sweet tone of His silent voice,” – I’m not sure how a silent voice has a tone. But she said, “I could tell by the sweet tone of His silent voice that He was smiling. I could have outlined His expression with my finger.”

Now other than that just being a little bit weird, she goes on and she says, “I built a snowman. I laughed with God, He laughed with me. I am so in love with Him. I am so in love with Him.” Beth Moore wants you to believe that she has such an intimate relationship with Jesus that she not only hears Him, but can even see the expression that is apparently on His face; and Jesus wanted her to go and play with Him, so they built snowmen together. You see, Beth Moore has such a deep relationship with Christ, far deeper, of course, than what you have. This is a modern-day version of the ancient heresy known as Gnosticism.

Rick Warren stated, “Last week we began a new miniseries on “Understanding How to Hear the Voice of God.” Very few things are more important than this because you can’t have a relationship to God if you can’t hear God. If all you do is ever talk to Him in prayer and you never hear God speak to you, that’s a one-way relationship, that isn’t much of a relationship.”

So if you never hear God speak to you, then you really don’t have much of a relationship with God. Priscilla Shirer said in a video, “Hi, I’m Priscilla Shirer, and I’m hoping that you’ll join me for a six-week journey as we talk about how we can hear and discern the voice of God in our lives. Do you really expect and anticipate that the divine voice of God can be heard by you? Do you really think that He loved you enough to die for you but doesn’t love you enough to then talk to you?”

“Do you really think that He loves you enough to die for you but does not love you enough to talk to you?” What an insult. What a slight to the Word of God. God speaks to us today all the time through the Scriptures. Now she may not have meant it that way. And I want to say that the sincerity of these individuals is not what I’m calling into question. Sincerity is not what matters, truth matters.

Charles Stanley stated, “So are you asking if God speaks specifically, and the answer is yes, He does. Let me give you two or three examples. Speaking about buying groceries. On a particular day I had a very short period of time, and so I wanted to buy a turkey for Thanksgiving. My time was really running out and I thought, ‘Well, I shouldn’t do this now.’ I said, ‘God, just show me what to do.’ It’s like God said, ‘Go to this store, buy the turkey now.’ Against sort of my will, I went. I walked right in, straight to the right place, the right pound of turkey, walked right out, paid and got back in the car in less than about 25 minutes. Did God tell me to go? Yes, He did.” So close is Charles Stanley’s relationship with God that God even tells him where to go to buy his Thanksgiving Day turkey.

Now I’m guessing that probably most of us here understand God never told us where to buy our turkeys. But you see, this is how close he is with the Lord. And they buttress themselves, they use these claims to lift themselves up. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, they do it to lift themselves up to let you know just how close of a relationship with God they have. And if you don’t have that kind of relationship, if you don’t have that kind of intimacy with God, then there’s something wrong in your relationship with Him.

Now Sam Storms is someone who would share our view of soteriology, a more reformed view of soteriology. But Sam Storms is also a continuous charismatic. I want you to read this out of his book *Practicing the Power*. Sam Storm says this: “To be the recipient of prophetic revelation from God whether in dreams, impressions, trances, visions, or words of knowledge and words of wisdom can be nothing short of euphoric. The experience brings feelings of nearness to God and a heightened sense of spiritual intimacy that isn’t often the case with the other of the charismata. This is an unfortunate denigration of the non-apostolic gifts: the gifts of teaching, mercy, administration, exhortation, hospitality, the gift of giving. All of these gifts as card-carrying cessationists, all of us would affirm those gifts. But those gifts are somehow lesser. And if you don’t experience the apostolic gifts, the sign gifts, if you don’t experience those gifts, then you just don’t have the same nearness with God as you’re supposed to.”

This is a very unfortunate degradation of the more normative gifts, the non-apostolic gifts. And this goes against Scripture of course. This goes against what Paul says, teaches in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Again, this is a modern-day version of Gnosticism. So if you are

someone who gets dreams and visions and you hear still, small voices, and God speaks to you maybe even audibly, you're a have. But if you're one of these poor souls and all you have is the Bible and you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, well, then you're just a have not. You're just not as spiritual. You just don't have the same nearness with God as the haves do. This is Gnosticism.

I would submit to you that the resource, the book that is singularly most responsible for introducing charismatic theology into at least theoretically non-charismatic churches is *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby that came out in 1991. If you go back before 1991, at least in non-charismatic churches, almost everyone would have understood that God speaks to us through the Bible, we speak to Him in prayer. Today hardly anybody understands that; and I believe experiencing God is singularly most responsible for introducing these notions into non-charismatic churches.

Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby says this: "If you have troubling hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience." So this is very, very important, "You should be hearing God speak to you regularly, and if you don't then you're in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience."

Sid Roth has a television show entitled *It's Supernatural* that appears on TBN, On his show he stated, "Hello, Sid Roth here. Welcome to my world where it's naturally supernatural. I have read of the great men and women of faith. One in particular intrigues me so much. His name: Smith Wigglesworth. He had some of the most outrageous miracles I ever heard of in my life. Let me give you one example.

"Some parents had a two-month-old baby dying in the hospital. The parents kidnapped the child, took the child to a Smith Wigglesworth meeting; and Smith looks at the child, looks at the parents, and said, 'Can I do what God tells me to do?' Well, what would you do if you were the parent? The child's dying anyway, right? He takes the baby, two-month-old, throws the baby against a wall – the baby. Then the baby's on the floor. Have you ever seen someone play soccer? Have you ever seen them kick a soccer ball? He does that with the baby. The baby falls into the congregation. No crying. Is it dead? One hundred percent healed, no crying."

Is that not shocking? Friends, this went out on worldwide television. And lest you think that, “Oh, nobody would believe that,” the very fact that they put it on worldwide television is self-evident proof that people do believe this. And let’s keep in mind that one of the charismatic mantras is this: “Well, what God does for one, He’ll do for you.” And people are sitting at home and they’re watching this, and these people, they claim to hear from God. And a person’s sitting at home and he’s thinking, “Wow, well God told Smith Wigglesworth to throw a sick baby against a wall. My kid’s sick. My neighbor’s kid is sick. What God does for one, He’ll do for you.”

The very fact that they aired this on worldwide television is self-evident proof that people are dumb enough to believe this. It’s a very dangerous thing to say, “God told me to do such and such.” You see how extreme this can get.

How do you know God told you to do that? Well, Henry Blackaby says, “I sensed God’s call. I prayed and sensed God wanted me to. I began to sense a great urgency. We began to sense God leading us. Our church sensed God wanted us to do such and such. One of our members felt led to do this.” Same verbiage that the charismatic movement uses.

Well, how do you know this? When God speaks, what does that sense feel like? Well, we’re never really told. This from Bill Hybels. Bill Hybels, up until about a year or so ago was a pastor, wrote this book *The Power of a Whisper*, and he says this in his book. He says, “Without a hint of exaggeration, I can boldly declare that God’s low-volume whispers have saved me from a life of sure boredom and self-destruction.”

It’s a very ironic statement for him to make, given what has happened with Bill Hybels. God says in Jeremiah, “Is not My word like a fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?” Doesn’t sound very boring to me. You see, this is a denigration of the authority and the sufficiency of God’s Word. Now they would not say that in so many words, but that is exactly what it is.

Robert Morris tells us that prayer is a two-way street. So when we pray, we are to pray to God, and then we are to listen for Him to talk back to us. He stated, “You know, if we said we’re going to have a class on prayer, you’d say, ‘I need that.’ And even the disciples said, ‘Teach us to pray.’ But let me remind you that hearing God is the second half of prayer,

because if you can't hear God, why would you pray? Now one reason is to make our requests and petitions be known to God. But God never intended prayer to be a giving of our to-do list to Him every morning. He intended prayer to be communication between a Father and His children. And if you'll just take some time and start to listen, you'll be amazed that He'll speak."

This is ubiquitous. We hear this all the time that prayer is a two-way street. "We are to pray to God and then we are to listen for Him to talk back to us." And maybe you have done this before; and I don't mean to mock here. I know a lot of people are very sincere when they do this – very misguided, but very sincere. But we hear this.

And so, you hear this and you've got something going on in your life. You've got some crisis situation, you've got a decision to make, and you're not real sure what to do. You really feel like you need some direction from the Lord, and so you go to the Lord. You're very sincere. The TV – you turn the TV off, the kids are in bed, and you sit down at your kitchen table or your study or wherever you do your praying, and you sit down and you pray and you go to the Lord and you tell the Lord what's going on in your life.

You say, "Lord, this is what I'm facing; I'm not sure what to do. Lord, speak to me, I'm listening," and you get real still and you listen real hard. And then after just a few seconds, what happens? A thought, right, just kind of flashes through our minds, and we think, "Oh, was that You, Lord, or was that me? Was that God or was that the pizza I ate tonight? How do you know when it's God speaking to you? How do you know that that still small voice is really of God if God is supposed to be speaking back to us when we pray?"

You remember what the disciples asked Jesus in Luke chapter 11? "Lord, teach us to pray." The ball is sitting on the proverbial tee waiting for Jesus to knock it out of the park and affirm what Robert Morris and the vast majority of evangelicals believe today, that prayer is a two-way street.

"Lord, teach us to pray." What did Jesus say? "Okay, here's how you do it. You talk to God, and then you get real quiet and you listen for that still small voice." Is that what He said? No, He didn't say that at all. He said, "When you pray, say this: 'Lord, hallowed by Thy name,'" nothing about listening for some still small voice, nothing about listening for God to speak

back to you. So this whole notion of prayer being a two-way street, that is foreign to the Word of God. There's nothing in the Bible about that at all.

So what of this still small voice? We hear this all the time: "God speaks to us in quiet whispers and still small voices." One example of this: this is a tweet from Beth Moore. Beth Moore says, "There's a time to give up and a time to keep trying. Sometimes the time to keep trying feels a whole lot like the time to give up. The only difference is the still small voice of the Holy Spirit within you saying, 'Try again.' It's not the same old Monday if they're brand new mercies."

So you've got to listen for this little still small voice. And where does this still small voice come from? It comes from 1 Kings chapter 19, let's look at it, 1 Kings 19; this is the King James Version. "And He said, 'Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." Literally in the Hebrew, "The sound of a quiet whisper."

"And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'" This is where the still small voice comes from. Dear friends, the still small voice was not some inner impression inside Elijah's head. It was not internal to him, it was external to him. Notice it says that he went out of the cave to the entrance, and there he clearly heard the voice of God.

So it's not something internal, it's not some notion inside of his head; it was an external voice. So can we please do away with this whole still small voice thing? It was never intended to be some inside impression; it was external, not internal. But this is something that has worked its way into our evangelical lingo, and few people understand what this really is. It's a terrible misuse of it.

Speaking of terrible misuses, "My sheep hear My voice." Watch this from Robert Morris. [Video starts] "So John chapter 10, look at verse 1. We're talking about we're sheep and we

can hear God. ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens,’ – now watch this carefully – ‘and the sheep’ – watch – ‘hear his voice.’ Can you just say those three words? ‘Hear his voice.’”

“So John 10:27 to me is the most concise and comprehensive verse in Scripture about hearing God. It is when Jesus says, ‘My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.’”

Practically every single book, every sermon that is out there about how to hear the voice of God cites John 10:27. This is the go-to text for God speaking to you somehow inside your head in some inner impression, “My sheep hear My voice.” Well, let’s look at this.

John 10:27, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” This is universally used as the proof text that God speaks to us today outside of the confines of Scripture: “My sheep hear My voice.” But let’s look at it in context, beginning in verse 26.

Jesus says, “But you do not believe,” – why? – “because you’re not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” We see right there that the voice of the shepherd is connected to believing in the shepherd. And look at verse 28: “And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

Dear friends, this is not talking about God telling you where to go to have lunch one day or where to go buy your Thanksgiving Day turkey. This is salvation; this is regeneration; this is the effectual call. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give eternal life to them.”

Before you and I came to Christ, we were lost sheep, lost sheep wandering around out in the pasture of life, grazing, minding in our own business. But all of a sudden we hear a voice, and we lift our heads up, and we see the shepherd, and we go to Him. What a terrible trivialization of such a majestic, beautiful passage of Scripture of the Good Shepherd giving life to His sheep, not telling them where to go have lunch one day. This is a terrible trivialization of such a beautiful, deep, majestic passage of Scripture.

“I give eternal life to them; they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand.” The Shepherd holds His sheep in His hand. If you’ve ever wondered about eternal security, dear friends, if you are His sheep, He is holding you in His hand, and you’re not getting out of that.

And as if that were not enough – and it is – but as if it were not enough, look at what Jesus says in verse 29. He says, “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” As if His hand was not enough – and it is – but as if it wasn’t, He wraps, as it were, the Father’s hand around that of His own. What a beautiful passage, and what a terrible trivialization to reduce this text to something like God telling you where to go to get your Thanksgiving Day turkey.

Uh-oh. Jesus Calling, by Sarah Young. Jesus Calling is the hottest-selling devotional book on the market anywhere, and it has been for seven years now. It is lightyears ahead of everything else out there, lightyears ahead of it. This is no ordinary devotional book. Now I’m going to show you excerpts from Jesus Calling. I’ve copied and pasted word-for-word, no edits on my part here, straight out of Jesus Calling, straight out of the introduction of Jesus Calling.

Sarah Young says this. She says, “During the same year in ‘92 I began reading God Calling, a devotional book by two anonymous listeners. These women practiced waiting quietly in God’s presence, pencils and papers in hand, recording the messages they receive from Him. God Calling is indeed a book. I have one on my shelf. It was written back in the 1930s by two anonymous female mystics. We don’t know who these ladies were, but two anonymous ladies. But these ladies claimed to practice waiting in the presence of God, practicing hearing God’s voice; and with more practice, it’s like they tuned in to just the right frequency; and when they hit just the right frequency, God started calling them, and they began to write down what He said.

This was Sarah Young’s inspiration for Jesus Calling. Sarah Young says this: “I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more.” You see, the Bible just was not enough for Sarah Young. And you know what? That is the mindset of the vast majority of professing Christians today. The Bible just is not enough for most people, we’ve got to have something more. “I yearned for more.”

Anytime I hear somebody say, “Well, yeah, I know God speaks in the Bible and I know that’s His Word, but I need something more,” here’s my question, here’s my question: “Have you mastered this Book? From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, you have completely mastered it; there is nothing else that you can glean from this Book, no more drops of truth you could possibly squeeze out of its pages; you have mastered it from cover to cover?” If the answer to that question is no – and it is – then please don’t tell me the Bible’s not enough. You don’t even understand what you have in black and white right in front of you. Please don’t tell me the Bible’s not enough.

But it wasn’t enough for Sarah Young, and sadly, it is not enough for the vast majority of professing believers today. Sarah Young says this: “I decided to listen to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying.” Houston, we have a problem. Just like the ladies who wrote *God Calling*, and they wrote down what He said, Sarah Young tuned into just the right frequency; and when she hit just the right frequency, Jesus started calling her and she began to write down what He said.

And if you have a copy of this book, I should say – well, I started to say read it. Don’t read it. But if you happen to have one, you might notice that all of the devotionals in there, 365 of them, all of them are written in the first person for Jesus Christ: “I Jesus am such and such. I will do this, I will do that.” They’re all written in the first person for Jesus. If Jesus really is calling Sarah Young and she is writing down what He is saying, you know what she’s doing? She’s writing Scripture. That’s what she’s doing, she’s writing Scripture, because God cannot speak less authoritatively on one occasion than He does on another. Friends, if God is speaking, God is speaking, and whatever He says carries the exact same authority as does John 3:16 or Romans 10:9 and 10.

And it’s not just *Jesus Calling*, but every time someone says, “God spoke to me and said, quote, ‘Da-da-da-da-da,’” then whatever’s inside those quotation marks, that has just as much authority theoretically as any verse in Scripture. And so, you know what we ought to do? We ought to add that to this Book, because it should have the same authority. We should add it to this Book. There’s just one problem with that: this Book says, “Do not add to this Book.”

Beth Moore stated, “What God began to say to me about five years ago – and I’m telling you, it sent me on such a trek with Him, that my head is still whirling over it. He began to say to

me, ‘I’m going to tell you something right now, Beth. And boy, you write this one down, and you say it as often as I give you utterance to say it: My bride is paralyzed by unbelief. My bride is paralyzed by unbelief.’”

“My bride is paralyzed by unbelief.” Did you know that? I didn’t know that. But apparently it must be. The bride of Christ, the church, is paralyzed by unbelief. Never mind that the Bible itself says, “The gates of hell will not prevail against it.” But apparently, the church is paralyzed by unbelief. This is new information, new information, because it is not recorded anywhere Scripture. But it must be true because God told her to tell us that. Not only did He tell Beth Moore to tell us that, but He actually told her to write it down.

This is not an isolated statement, by the way, from Beth Moore. It’s not an isolated statement. Her book *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*, Beth Moore says this. She says, “I am being as honest as I know how to be when I say that I did not write these pages by simple preference. I wrote them, because had I not, the rocks in my yard would have cried out. What God does with what He has promised is His business. I entrust this message entirely to the One who delivered it while I sat bug-eyed.”

So if we are to believe Beth Moore, then she was just this passive recipient. She emptied her mind, and God began to speak to her, and God delivered this message to her while she sat bug-eyed. And had she not done it, the rocks in her yard would have cried out. Nothing like applying that text to yourself. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. This is very common. This is, as I’ve said, ubiquitous in the evangelical world.

Matt Chandler stated, “So let’s talk about what prophecy is and what prophecy isn’t. The ‘thus sayeth the Lord’ – look right at me – is over. Look at me. When this text is talking about prophecy, it’s not talking about the way Jeremiah prophesied or Isaiah prophesied. No, no, no. That’s closed, that’s canonized, so you will never prophesy in a way that’s on par, equal to, anywhere near the inerrant, infallible Word of God. That’s closed, shut. And so the best you’ve got, the best you’ve got is the humility to say, ‘I think the Lord would have me lay this before you.’”

A couple points to be made in this passage. Now I will say, Matt Chandler said in this sermon, to his credit, did begin by saying, “I don’t want you to rely on me for your church. If

you'd don't go to this church," he said, "I want you to go to your local church, and that's important. And basically, don't just rely on TV preachers for your church." And that is commendable in and of itself. But this is full of error.

He says that when God – he affirms that God speaks to us today, but he says, "It's not as inspired as Scripture is. It's not like what God said to Jeremiah. It's not like what God said to Isaiah. That's canonized, that's closed. But God still speaks to us today." That is a false dichotomy. That makes no sense. As I said, dear friends, if God is speaking, God is speaking; and whatever He says should be just as authoritative as any verse in the Book. God cannot speak less authoritatively on one occasion than He does another. God cannot speak in the Bible and really, really, really mean it. But when He speaks to us today outside of the Bible, He still means it, but He doesn't mean it quite as much as He meant it here. How does that work? If God is speaking, God is speaking. This is a degradation of the authority, and especially the sufficiency of Scripture.

Sam Storms, his book entitled *Practicing the Power*, the foreword, interesting, was written by Matt Chandler. But notice how Matt Chandler says, "The best we can do today is say, 'I feel like the Lord is saying such and such.'" Sam Storms picks up on this. He says, "Dramatic pronouncement aren't helpful. Avoid saying things like, 'Thus sayeth the Lord,' or, 'This is the word of the Lord for your life.'" He says, "Avoid those things; they aren't helpful. We have found that it is better to introduce prophetic utterances with statements such as, 'I have a strong inner impression that I believe is from the Lord. I had a sense from the Holy Spirit,' or, 'I had a dream which involved several of you.' So we shouldn't say things like, 'Thus sayeth the Lord, we should say instead, 'Well, I feel like the Lord is saying such and such.'"

This whole premise rests on a fatally flawed assumption that somehow prophecy in the New Testament is a degraded version of prophecy in the Old Testament. They all have to affirm that Old Testament prophets were held to a standard of 100 percent perfection in what they spoke. And if any prophet, so-called prophet spoke something that was not from the Lord, well, we all know what was called upon to do to that so-called prophet; he was to be put to death. And so, they've got to somehow degrade New Testament prophecy, and they say, "It's just not the same. We're not held to the same standard." But there's nothing in Scripture to indicate that that is the case. New Testament prophets were held to the same standard as Old

Testament prophets. There's no degradation in the gift of prophecy from Old Testament to New Testament.

But what of this whole notion that, "I feel like the Lord said to me, I feel like the Lord said this to me"? Well, let's look in Scripture. "The word of the Lord came to Abram. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. The word of the Lord came to Elijah." Even in the New Testament, when the Holy Spirit spoke, He spoke very clearly, very precisely: "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

"I feel like the Lord might have said to me to tell you," said nobody in the Bible ever. That is not something that you'll find anywhere in the Scriptures. Dear friends, if you have to wonder whether or not God spoke to you, He didn't. If you have to wonder whether or not God spoke to you, He didn't. When God spoke in the Bible – and it wasn't nearly as often as what a lot of people think. Some people had this idea that God was just speaking all the time, everywhere, and all throughout the Bible to everyone. He really wasn't. There were major characters in the Bible who went their entire lives, never heard God say anything. Nehemiah never heard God say anything. But when God did speak, it was crystal clear.

There was no ambiguity about what God said. There was none of this, "Was that You, Lord, or was that me?" You won't find that modeled anywhere in Scripture. Whenever God spoke, people knew exactly what He said, and they knew exactly who was who said it. The only exception to that was the boy Samuel when he heard God calling him by name three times. But even at that, Samuel still knew exactly what God said, he just was a little unclear first who it was who said it. But he knew exactly what he said. But he was just a boy. Nowhere in the Bible will you find anyone saying something like, "I think the Lord might be trying to tell us such and such." That is a concept that is absolutely foreign to the Word of God.

Now, have you ever thought about this? All of these books on how to hear the voice of God – The Power of a Whisper, Robert Morris' book Frequency, Priscilla Shirer's book Knowing the Voice of God – all of these books, I mean, bookshelves in Christian bookstores practically sag under the weight of books telling you seven easy steps to know the voice of God. Have you ever wondered if hearing the voice of God was so vitally important for us as

New Testament believers, why are there absolutely no instructions anywhere in the New Testament about how to actually hear the voice of God? You ever wondered that?

In the four Gospels, we have the record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, we have a record of the early church in the spread of the gospel. In the pastoral epistles, we have loads of instructions about doctrine, about theology, about church polity, about the qualifications for elders, about how to resolve conflict amongst believers. We have loads of instructions about this. We have lots of information about eschatology in the future events in the end times, all these things. But there is nothing in the New Testament about how to hear the voice of God, nothing. If this was such a vitally important part of the life of the believer, don't you think there would be something in the New Testament telling us how to actually hear the voice of God?

It's not in there. Why isn't it in there? Because it's not necessary. It's not necessary. Number one, God is only speaking to us today in the Bible. Number two, when God did speak in the biblical days, everybody knew exactly what He said; no need for instructions on how to hear the voice of God.

There are warnings about adding to or taking away from Scripture, Old and New Testaments. Take your pick. "Oh, yeah, but that instruction in Revelation 22, that warning there about adding to the word of this book, that's just talking about the book of Revelation. We can add to other books, that's okay." No, we believe in what is called the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture: if you add to one book, you have added to them all.

We are not to add to nor take away anything from the Word of God; and yet this whole notion of, "God spoke to me and He said, quote, 'Da-da-da-da,'" then what you are doing, you are adding to the Word of God. You may not admit that that's what you're doing; but theoretically, that is exactly what you're doing; and the Bible warns us not to do that.

Several years ago Matt Chandler produced a video where he stated, "What I'm asking you to do is be brave. Ask, hear, step out, approach, and just say, 'Hey, while I was praying, the Lord brought you to my mind, and even if it sounds crazy to you, just trust Him.' Just going, 'Okay, Danny, let's do it. Lord, what would you want me to encourage Danny with?' And then I'm quiet again, trying to listen. And then automatically in my head there's a picture of a

ship, a pirate ship. And then there's like cannons on the pirate ship, and there's a shark chasing the pirate ship. Now at that point you're like, 'Nope. No, not gonna happen!' Right?

"And here's what I want you to do. I want you just to step out, and you can even admit, like we're growing together and we're going to fail, and this is going to get weird. It's going to be awesome. Like I'm just going to go to Danny and I'm going to be like, 'Hey, brother, you heard my sermon. I was praying. Danny, it was a pirate ship, it's a shark chasing it with cannons.'

"I'm not going to interpret that for him. I'm not going to be like, 'What I think that means is that maybe you're stealing some stuff from people, and Jesus is the shark, and you need to repent.' I'm not going to interpret that for him. I'm just going to go in a great deal of humility. I'm just going to be, 'Does that makes any sense to you?'" No, it doesn't make any sense at all, on any level does that make any sense.

You know, every time we have a dream, every time we see something that may be a little bit off, you know, we think, "Oh, that's – ooh, I wonder if God's trying to tell me something here." Bill Hybels writes in his book *The Power of a Whisper* how he was seeking a word from the Lord, and how God wasn't speaking to him. But he was out fishing one day, and there was a Bud Light beer can that literally floated by his boat, and he says in his book, he said, "I sat there staring at the can." He said, "I wondered, is this a message from God? If so, what does it mean? Am I supposed to drink Bud Light?" He says, "Am I supposed to tell my people not to drink Bud Light?" And then he says, "Is there a message inside the can?"

This was a pastor, and he thinks God's trying to give him messages through Bud Light beer cans floating past his boat. How are we supposed to make sense out of any of this? No, it doesn't make any sense.

Lou Engle, sitting on the stage of Bill Johnson and Benny Hinn, stated, "You know, the last day's language of the Holy Spirit is dreams. We say, 'Well, it was just a dream.' What do you mean just a dream? Who knows what angels had to fight through to break into your world to give you their thoughts, and you just say, 'It's just a dream.' I think the church needs to stop saying, 'It's just a dream.'"

But dear friends, that is exactly what it is: it's just a dream. There are no significance to your dreams, they're just dreams. I dreamed one time that I was being chased around a Kentucky Fried Chicken by four tornados. My doctor may tell me not to go to KFC, but I don't think that was God trying to tell me not to go to KFC.

So how does God speak to us today? Let's go to the text. Hebrews 1:1 and 2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." The writer of Hebrews says that in the old days, in the days of the prophets, in the Old Testament, God spoke in a lot of different ways. Indeed, He did. God spoke to Moses up on the mountain through a storm and thunder. God spoke to Elijah through that still small voice, which was an external voice – audible, external voice. In Numbers chapter 22, God even made a donkey talk. So God did indeed speak in many different portions and in many different ways.

"But in these last days," – says the writer of Hebrews – "He has spoken to us in His Son." Friends, Jesus is the final speaking of God, the final speaking of God. Everything that God has to say He has said to us in His Son Jesus Christ; and we have a perfect, inerrant, infallible, all-sufficient record of that in His Word. Jesus is the final speaking of God.

Now I don't want you to misunderstand. I don't want you to think, "Oh, well Justin says that God doesn't speak to us anymore today." Yes, He does. God speaks to us right here. This is how God speaks to us.

"Well, Jim, I've had these dreams. I've had these dreams and they came true. What do you make of that? I've had these experiences, Jim. I was driving, and I always turn left on this particular road, every day I always turn left. But something just told me, no, to take a right. And I turned right and ran into someone who needed my help. How do you make sense of that?" I can't exegete your experiences, all I can do is exegete Scripture.

But speaking of experiences, let's look at one such experience; Peter writes about it. Second Peter chapter 1, Peter says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." This is the transfiguration, Matthew 17. "For when He received honor and

glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

This was the transfiguration. This was Peter, James and John, and they were there; and Jesus, before their very eyes, was transfigured with Moses and Elijah. The veil of His flesh was peeled back and they saw the majestic glory, Jesus transfigured in His full glory. What an experience. What did Peter say about this? He said, “But we have the prophetic word made more sure,” made more certain. What’s the prophetic word? This is the prophetic word: “The written Word of God was more certain than that.”

And I don’t doubt that many of you here or are watching have had some experiences, I don’t doubt that. But whatever you think your experience may or may not have been, no matter if God woke you up at 3:00 in the morning to pray for someone; turns out that person needed prayer at 3:00 in the morning; you know, whatever your experience was – and I’m not doubting God’s providence in all of our experiences – but whatever your experience was, I guarantee you one thing: your experience didn’t approach what Peter experienced. God waking you up at 3:00 in the morning to pray for someone, that doesn’t begin to approach what Peter, James and John experienced. And if they could say of the written Word of God that the written Word of God is more certain than that, I can promise you it’s more certain than anything you think you may or may not have experienced. The Word of God is more certain than anything that we could experience. We cannot exegete experiences, we can only exegete the Word of God.

And dear friends, no matter how real experiences may seem to us, if that experience does not plumb with the Word of God, then we have done exactly what Paul told us not to do in 1 Corinthians 4:6. He says, “Do not exceed what is written.” When we exceed what is written, when we exceed biblical parameters, we are actually opening ourselves up to demonic influence and demonic suggestion. We cannot interpret the Bible by what we experience, we must interpret our experiences by the Bible, by the prophetic word made more sure.

Well, the Bible doesn’t tell me where to go to college. The Bible doesn’t tell me who to marry. It tells you to marry a believer, but it doesn’t really tell me who to marry. The Bible

doesn't tell me what job to take or what house to buy or which car I should buy. The Bible doesn't tell me, "Should I be an engineer or a dentist?"

How do I know God's will for my life? How do I know God's will for my life? Here's how you know God's will for your life. Read, study, and obey God's Word. Read, study, and obey God's Word. If you're not doing that, then nothing else matters anyway. Read, study, and obey God's Word.

And then if you've got some situation in your life, you've got some decision to make and you're not real sure what it is to do, some crisis and you're not sure the right thing to do, or you want to know God's will for a particular thing that's going on in your life or in your church or whatever, read, studying God's Word, obey God's Word. Pray for wisdom. James tell us that: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."

Now if you're not reading and studying and obeying God's Word, then don't bother praying for wisdom, He's not going to give it to you. But if you are, pray for wisdom. And then, seek godly counsel. The Bible says there is wisdom, there's safety in a multitude of counselors. And if I've got something going on in my life or my ministry and I'm not sure what to do, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to seek godly counsel. The first person I'm going to go to is my wife Kathy and talk about it with her first. And if both of us together decide, you know, we need some other voices on this, I've got some men in my life that I go to from time to time; and I'll say, "Brothers, this is what's going on in my life, this is what's going on in the ministry. Give me your counsel. What do you think?" There's wisdom in doing that.

So read, study, and obey God's Word; pray for wisdom, seek godly counsel; and then Proverbs 3:5 and 6 it: "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, lean not unto your own understanding. But in all of your ways acknowledge Him, and" – He might direct your paths; He'll direct your paths if He's got nothing better to do – "He will direct your paths." How does God do that? I don't have the slightest idea, I just know He does.

Friends, He spoke the universe into existence; I think He can direct our paths. You don't have to worry, "Oh, well if I choose this when I really should have chosen this, everything's just going to fall apart and unravel like a row of dominoes." Relax. Relax. He spoke the universe into existence; He can certainly direct your paths.

Read, study, and obey God's Word. Pray for wisdom. Seek godly counsel. And then, make a wise informed decision; trust the providence of God and do whatever you want to do. You don't have to seek a special word of knowledge or will for your particular life or your situation. In fact, we don't even see anyone in the New Testament doing this. We see the apostles just doing things.

Look at a couple of examples. Paul writes in Titus. Paul says, "I have decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis." Paul didn't say, "I prayed and asked the Lord to give me a word of knowledge of where I should spend the winter." "I decided to spend the winter in Nicopolis." Paul stayed in Athens by himself and he sent Timothy because, "We thought it best. We thought it best to do it."

You just see the apostles doing things. And on occasion, like in Acts chapter 16, you see God's providence hindering them from doing things that they had planned on doing. Like Paul wanted to go into Asia, and the Spirit of Christ hindered him, closed that door. So Paul went to Europe and Turkey, modern-day Turkey, and the gospel leaped from one continent to the next, and Lydia was converted. So you see God occasionally just providentially altering their paths, but you don't see the apostles, "Lord, show me Your will for my life"; they just did things. They went out and they preached the gospel. They did things.

And dear friends, Paul makes a beautiful statement to the Colossians. He says this in Colossians chapter 3. He says, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you. Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you." The more the word of Christ, this Book, dwells richly within us, the more that our thinking, the more that our decision-making will just be naturally conformed into what God would have us to do. So let the word of Christ dwell richly within you. Read, study, and obey God's Word, and you will be making wise, God-honoring decisions.

In closing, these things cannot coexist. These things cannot coexist: a belief that God still speaks today outside of Scripture and a belief, an affirmation of a closed Canon of Scripture. Those two things cannot exist. If God is still speaking today outside of Scripture, then whatever He says is just as authoritative as any verse in this Book, and so we should add it to this Book; and so we have an open Canon of Scripture. If God is still speaking outside of

Scripture, then this is not closed, this is still an open Canon. You cannot have your canonical cake and eat it too.

This cannot coexist: a continuist position on the apostolic gifts and the sufficiency of Scripture. You cannot hold to a continuist position on the apostolic gifts: the gifts of prophecy in the sense of foretelling the future, the gift of miracles and healing, the gift of tongues, interpretation of tongues – those apostolic gifts. If you believe that all of those apostolic gifts, sign gifts continue today, those sign gifts are by nature revelatory. They are revelatory in their nature. So if those gifts continue, then you cannot also affirm the sufficiency of Scripture; they are mutually exclusive positions. And even the most careful, quote-unquote, of “charismatics” cannot with a clear conscience in the logical consistency hold to the sufficiency of Scripture. They are mutually exclusive positions. Once you take a continuous position on the apostolic gifts, then the sufficiency of Scripture’s out the window, it’s gone, it’s gone. They’re mutually exclusive.

Does God speak to us? Or, you know, you hear people say, “Well, God gave me a burden for so and so. God laid you on my heart.” We hear that kind of lingo. Can God do these things? It’s not a matter of whether or not He can do anything. God could do it, of course. God can do whatever He wants to do. God could put a leprechaun in my refrigerator if He wanted to, but I’ve got no reason to think that He will, and an awful lot of reasons to think that He won’t. It’s not a matter of God’s ability, okay.

And I hear, “Oh, well you’re putting God in a box. You’re saying God can’t speak.” I’m not saying He can’t. It’s not that He lacks the ability. The question is whether or not He is. In Hebrews 1:1 and 2, Romans 10, all these things, very clear that God speaks to us in His Word, not outside of Scripture. It’s not a matter of His ability. “But God laid you on my heart.”

We don’t have any mechanism to know when God may or may not be laying someone on our heart – to use that lingo. We have no mechanism to know that, so it’s really a moot point, it doesn’t matter. Just do like the apostles and just do things. Read, study, and obey God’s Word.

This from Spurgeon. Spurgeon says, “I have little confidence in those persons who speak of having direct revelations from the Lord as though He appeared otherwise than by and through the gospel. His Word is so full, so perfect that for God to make any fresh revelation to you or to me is quite needless. To do so would be to put a dishonor upon the perfection of that Word indeed.”

Dear friends, if you want to hear God speak to you, there’s one way I guarantee you you will hear God speak: read your Bible. If you want to hear God speak to you audibly, read it out loud. One hundred percent guaranteed, He will speak; you will hear Him speak.

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in – what? – in His excellent Word. What more can He say than to you He hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.” What more can He say to us, dear ones, than what He has already said in His Word? God’s Word is sufficient.