

When God Speaks

by Jim Cymbala

God desires to communicate with His people on a daily basis and speaks to us through His Word, the gifts of the Spirit, and other ways.

Duration: 32:46

Scripture: Psalm 119:15, Psalm 119:64, Acts 9:12, Revelation 2:7-29

Topics: "Voice Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God desires to communicate with His people and reveal Himself to them. He uses examples from the Bible, such as Psalm 119, to support this idea. The speaker also highlights that even though God is all-powerful and unseen, He still wants to speak to His people on a daily basis. He encourages the congregation to seek a word from the Lord and offers a time of prayer for those in need of direction or encouragement.

Transcript

As part of our Vital Truth series that our church has been going through, I want to give you one that is absolutely vital. I wouldn't tell it to you unless you absolutely needed to know this for growth. What the meaning of the second horse in the book of Revelation, chapters 6 or 7 there, there's an image of four horses, a white one, a red one, a black one, a dappled one.

You don't need that to grow in the Lord, to understand that. In fact, Christians through the ages have not agreed what the symbolism is of those horses and the rider on that horse. What 666 means as the mark of the beast and the antichrist, you don't need that to grow in the Lord.

There's different views on those things. The qualifications of a deacon, now that's important, but you don't need that absolutely to grow in the Lord, but you need what I'm about to tell you. The Bible tells us that even though God is omnipotent, omniscient and knows everything, he has all power, even though he exists in a way that no one has ever experienced God, no one has ever seen God, and by one single word he created the universe that we know, and time and matter, it all came in in an instant.

Even though all of that is true, one of the marvels of the Bible is that that God wants to speak and communicate with his people on a daily basis. God wants to speak to you. Love wants to communicate to the one who's loved.

So God every day has things to tell the sopranos and the altos and the deacons and all the pastors, and Carol, every day. This is not believed by a lot of people. They think that because God is so great and so awesome and so far away that it's almost like falling back into the deism centuries ago, where the thought was that God was a master clockmaker and he started the clock called the world, and then he stepped away and he's totally distant from it.

And we're all running around and working out our lives, but God is removed from it. He's too transcendent to be involved in everyday lives like yours and mine. But that's not what the Bible says.

The Bible teaches us in several places that God desires to communicate, reveal himself, show himself to us, give words of encouragement, give words of direction, give words of warning. I got a little granddaughter named Charlotte. She's two and a half years old, and I love when she strolls into my office so that I can talk to her.

When I ask her, what's Nana's name? What's your Nana's name? She goes, Cowboy Joy. I just want to hear her talk. I want to communicate back and forth with her.

So look at these passages and then we'll just summarize them. Psalm 119, open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. That's verse 15.

Verse 64, the earth is filled with your love, Lord. Look what it says there. The earth is filled with your love, Lord.

Teach me your decrees. No, I can read them and learn them myself. Why would he be asking God to teach him his decrees? But then let's go further.

Let's look at Acts. Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, who's a deacon, go south to the road, the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. So he started out and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake, which means queen of the Ethiopians.

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah, the prophet. And the spirit told Philip, go to the chariot and stay near it. How did the spirit tell him that? We don't know.

Was it a doctrinal thing that would contradict the Bible? No, not at all. It was a everyday matter of fact, positional guidance, a GPS system, go and get next to that chariot. And then it turns out that the Ethiopian eunuch is reading the book of Isaiah.

And Philip says, do you know what you're reading? He says, how would I, unless, you know, someone teaches me. And he goes in there, he explains Christ, the Ethiopian eunuch receives Christ. And then he says, why can't I stop the chariot? There's some water.

Why can't I get baptized? And then he baptizes him. And then tradition tells us that's how the gospel went to Africa, through the Ethiopian eunuch, who was an official for the queen of Ethiopia. And how did the gospel get communicated? Part of it was the spirit told Philip, go and join yourself to that chariot.

Now, when Paul was converted, he was Saul of Tarsus, the apostle. First, he was an opponent of Christianity. And then as he was persecuting Christians on his way to Damascus in Syria, the Lord

revealed himself with a blinding light, even though it was noonday sun, it was brighter than the sun, knocked him to the ground.

And he ended up being blinded and led into the town, not knowing what was happening, but the Lord had spoken to him. And then the Bible tells us that a regular member of the church there in Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, Ananias.

Yes, Lord, he answered. The Lord told him, go to the house of Judas on straight street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hand on him to restore his sight.

So before the healing came and before everything happened, God already communicated it to Saul of Tarsus. And now God tells Ananias what to do. Did he read it in the Bible? No, there is no verse that says, go to a house on straight street and pray for a man who's blind.

There is no verse that says that except in relating this story. And then seven times in the book of Revelation in just chapters two and three, we find these words, whoever has ears, let them hear what the spirit says to the churches. Let's say it together.

Ready? One, two, three, whoever has ears, what the spirit is saying to the churches. So God speaks. God doesn't want you to go to church once a week on Sunday only or the prayer meeting and observe the communion observance here this Tuesday.

No, God, because he loves us and he's our father, he wants to talk to you and I every single day. And listen to me, when God speaks to you a word, I'll explain this in this moment, but trust me, when God speaks a word to us and we receive it in our hearts, it changes your life. It is sharper than any two-edged sword.

It brings power. It brings comfort. It builds faith because God is speaking to you.

You're not figuring out something in your brain. God is speaking to you. So how does God speak to us? How does God speak to us? The first way and the foremost way and the way you must observe and you must recognize is he speaks through his word.

But I want to say more than just reading your Bible. 500 years ago, Martin Luther began what is called the Protestant Reformation. And one of the main teachings that Luther had, because remember, none of the people had the Bible, the Roman Catholic clergy, the priests and the bishops and all that, they had the Bible, but they were more steeped in tradition than they were the pure, simple gospel of Jesus Christ and doing many, many things and teaching many things that are not found in the scriptures.

Luther's point was, and he later translated the scriptures into German, which was revolutionary, the average person could now read the Bible because the Bible was basically just in Latin. If you didn't understand Latin, lots of luck. You just had to hear it from someone else.

Now everyone could read. So one of the things that is so important to us is every day we can read and we must read the word of God because faith comes by hearing and hearing by this word of God. And let me mention this too.

Anyone who says, I want God to speak to me and doesn't read their Bible is tempting God and grieving God. Here he wrote all these letters to us and all these truths and you and I don't want to take time to look at them, but we want God to speak somehow mystically to us. Very, very dangerous and insulting.

And you won't know if you're going to be deceived if you don't know what he said in his book. God speaks primarily through his word, but notice what the psalmist said, teach me your word. Well, what would that mean? In other words, God, open my eyes and speak to me what that passage really means.

Before you read the Bible every day, pray and say to God, God, I'm going to read it. I have whatever IQ I have, but God speak to me through the word, make the word living, make the word penetrating, speak to me through the passage, show me what it really means through revelation in my heart, not speak to me with me hearing with this ear, with the ears of my heart, God, I will speak and I will meditate on your word. Now teach me your ways, speak them into my life.

Many people just believe because of the great anti-supernatural movement that's in evangelical churches, horrible anti anything that's supernatural. Oh no, that's too mystical for me. Listen, it's not mystical.

The psalmist wrote, teach me your word. He already had the word. Why would he need someone to teach him? He already had it because you can read it and not get a thing.

Think of the Pharisees of all the people who knew the old Testament in the days of Jesus, who knew the old Testament the best in one way, intellectually, the Pharisees. And what did they do when they saw the son of God? They crucified him on a tree. So you can know the word, but not know the word.

You can know the book, but not know the one who wrote the book and what it really means. So every day, brothers and sisters, you got to find time. We must make time to hear God speak through his word, but you got to pray.

I don't care if it's one sentence, God, I'm opening your word. Speak to me through your word in Jesus name. Amen.

And then read it and then read it. Otherwise it's just my limited IQ trying to figure out a subject, a verb and an object. But God wants to speak in his word to tyrant's heart.

And then he gives application. You not only get the meaning of the passage, he now starts to apply it to your heart in ways you never even saw. Come on, how many have ever read a passage and you read it 10 times or verse, and then you read it the 11th time and then God speaks to it and you say, I never even saw that before.

How many ever had that happen? Well, that's what God wants to do, speak through his word. But you got to take time. Can't rush through devotions.

Some I wrote in my Bible years ago, what a great writer said, the spirit of hurry kills all devotion. You can't be hurrying. If you want God to speak, it would be like going to a person and say, listen, I want to talk to you.

I want you to tell me, but say it real quick, please. I don't have much time for you. So just tell me quick.

She would say, look, look, if you don't want to talk to me, don't talk to me that. Number two, if I could add this, God speaks through the sermon often when a man or woman teaches or speaks the word of God, the

combination of the spirit, anointing the speaker and the word that God, the Holy Spirit already wrote. Many times God can speak to you through a sermon.

How many have ever had God speak to you through a sermon, lift up your hand. So that's why when we come to a service, we pray upstairs past the park, pray the powerful prayer up in my office. God not only helped pass a symbol to speak, but help the people to hear.

In other words, we need to pray before the service. When you come to church, pray and say, God opened my heart that I might hear. I know you're going to hear me.

The sound system is on, but I don't mean hear me. I mean, hear God speaking through his word. We got to pray to have a receptive heart.

Otherwise that's how church becomes just dull, dry, predictable. Just sit there and the guy drones on and you just go, yeah, and I heard the word. No, God can speak through that word.

Can he? God also speaks through the gifts of the spirit. This is not an exhaustive way of how God speaks through nature and a lot of other things. I would just want to point out a couple of things here to you.

He speaks through the gifts of the spirit. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and then again in 14, there are listed that through the message of tongues, which has to be interpreted in a service. Otherwise there's chaos.

You can't have indiscriminate people speaking in tongues without interpretation. Why? Because unless it's in English, we can't be encouraged. There can be a prophetic word.

There can be a word that will lift you. God speaking to you through an utterance from someone or a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge where God speaks to you. Now there are many people who are cessationists who believe that all the gifts of the spirit listed in the portion of scripture I just mentioned to you and in other places, that they have all ceased.

That since we have 66 books of the Bible and the canon of scripture is closed, God does not speak through those other ways, but there is no verse that says that. There is no verse anywhere in the New Testament says, I'm giving these gifts to the church, but after a while I'm going to withdraw them. There's no verse that says that.

It's a spurious attempt to say, to prove that those gifts have ceased. Now have people misused them? Have people faked them? Have people messed them up? Have people tried to make money out of fake gifts, fake prophecies, and all of that? Yes, yes, yes. And that's why you got to be full of the word of God and the spirit to be able to discern, is this really of God? And if anyone ever grabs you here in a meeting which has happened and says, I have a word from God for you.

Walk over in the corner and I want to give it to you. Never go with them. You say, fine, I'm going to get Pastor Burgos or I'm going to get one of the deacons to come with me because they want to hear what you're going to say to me, to see if it bears witness with them.

Private prophecies are basically out of order because people can set up their own little prophecy shop. And that's not a good thing. You don't want to be impolite.

You want to be open. But these things are meant to be in public so that everyone else can judge whether it's of God. Not everyone, the one who says, thus sayeth the Lord, is speaking of the Lord.

Not only it's not of the devil. I don't mean that, although it can be in certain settings. And sometimes it's just emotion.

It's just a heart that loves God stirred up and speaking truth, but it's nothing really born of the spirit of God. It's a person who is just agitated in emotions and just can't hold it in and speaking. But the gifts of the spirit were meant for God to speak.

He gives birth to them. He gives the gift. And now it can bless the church.

Many years ago when we were in the other building and I was going through a very, very difficult time, my daughter was as far away from God as she could be. And then there was financial pressure. And then my wife had female surgery and her estrogen levels went way down and she wasn't feeling well at all.

And I had terrible, terrible pressure on me. I couldn't really share it with anyone but the Lord. So one Sunday we called a day of prayer and we did the services over in the other building, but they never ended.

And I stayed in the auditorium for the entire day except to use the restroom. I never left. So one service would end.

A bunch of us, 100, 200 would stay praying. Then the next group would come in. We'd start another service like that.

So I was sitting as God is my holy witness in the front row of that church. And there were a bunch of people around me and I just saw this mountain in front of me. What I'm about to tell you is you judge it, but I'm saying it before God.

If you think I would ever lie to you in this setting, it would be pretty horrible. So I was sitting there and even while we were gathering to pray, just the clouds came in. This mountain rose up in front of me.

The church needed money. My wife isn't acting the same because she's poor thing. She's just hormonally been thrown off and Chrissy's getting worse and worse.

We don't know where she is sometimes, not living at home. And all I've sat in the front and all I could say is, God, this mountain is too big. It's too big for me.

I'm trying to fight through. You see me, but God, it's too big. Suddenly a man somewhere behind me, I never saw him before, never saw him a day after that.

He jumped up out of his seat and it was just, it was between services. He jumped up out of his seat and he ran in front of me and he said, oh mountain, who are you to stand in front of God's servant? Oh mountain, you will come down. You will come down.

Well, listen, no one else knew what that meant in its entirety, but me. Trust me, that two sentences changed everything about my life at that time. Because God knows exactly where you are.

And one word from him, it's not, listen, all these words that can come are all judged by the scripture. They can't add to scripture or contradict scripture. Anyone who contradicts scripture and says God showed me something and it contradicts scripture, they're a liar.

They're fraud. And you rebuke them and walk away from them. God is not going to change his own word.

The Holy Spirit doesn't contradict himself. How many say amen to that? He never does that. God speaks through the gifts of the Spirit.

He can. And is there a mess sometimes? And do people misuse it? And do swindlers say, yeah, the Holy Spirit told me there's five people in the building who are supposed to give \$10,000 and all of that? Yeah, I know that. That's just con.

That's a con game. And unfortunately, they've lost their conscience. And now they're going to use the Holy Spirit to get money out of people.

Finally, we have the Holy Spirit speaking in ways that we don't totally understand in the scripture. And the Spirit said to Philip, go join yourself to that chariot. Could you please tell me how that happened? We know when Paul and Barnabas went out on their first missionary journey, the Spirit spoke through the gifts of the Spirit in the assembly in front of everyone, and the assembly said, yay and amen to it.

Always remember, if you feel something from the Spirit, try to get someone you trust or a bunch of people to say the yay and amen. Don't make yourself the only judge of what you think God is saying, because all of us can be deceived, starting with the speaker. You have to have the humility to say, I could be off, but God will honor that humility.

The meek he will guide in the way that they should go. The meek. Paul and Barnabas were sent out through some utterance in the meeting, but now Philip's all alone.

And the Spirit told him, go join yourself to that chariot. Some prompting, some inner voice. I don't know where the scripture is silent.

We're silent. But one thing we know is God spoke to him, and it changed the history of African Christianity. Think of that.

The gospel went to Ethiopia, where my grandson is from, because a deacon obeyed the voice of God and joined himself to a chariot, walked next to it. Ananias is just a believer. See, God speaking has nothing to do with your title or your position in a church.

God will speak to anyone. Speak to a soprano alto tenor. Don't say, no, I'm not spiritual enough.

No, I'm not strong enough in my walk for the Lord. We don't know that Ananias was a super Christian. But the Lord spoke to him, right? Sometimes it's dreams.

Sometimes it's visions. It's Peter fell in a trance on a roof while he was praying, and the Lord spoke to him through it. But the Lord visited and spoke to these people through the Spirit.

So what's the end of the matter? You and I have to believe that God wants to speak to us. You have to be open to that. Most Christians aren't.

This is too supernatural. This is too pseudo spiritual. This is too mystical.

Look, let me just go to church, hear three points in conclusion, go home, live my life, text everyone I know every week, watch tons of hours of TV and junk coming in and out of my life, read literature I shouldn't even be reading, and looking at pictures I shouldn't even be looking at, and no thought that God wants to talk to you. Well, why wouldn't God want to talk to you? He already gave his Son for you and me. You

don't think he wants to talk to us, encourage us? He sees the mountain you're going through.

So what's the requirement? Just two. Number one, you got to ask God to give you a heart and an ear, this ear, not this ear, a heart that hears, a listening ear. Listen to what the prophet said, Isaiah, in Isaiah 50.

The sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. The prophet is saying, and this is spoken of not only of Isaiah, it's probably a prophecy of our Lord. The Lord has given me an instructed tongue to know the word, to say to people, to help them on their way.

Every day you can have that word. How did he get that word? He wakens me morning by morning. He wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

So the first thing we need is to believe what the word says and to ask God every day for a listening heart. How many believe what I preached here is from the word of God? Just say amen, okay? How many want it and are open and want to say, God speak to me? How many want that in your life? It's not always to go and join yourself to a chariot. It might be a word of an encouragement.

It might be a word of correction, of warning. You see what you're doing over there? You shouldn't be doing that. That's going to lead to something bad.

You're fooling around with social drinking. That thing is going to eat you up. Oh no, no, no.

I'm in control. God will speak to you about it. He'll convict you about things that you've been justifying by the little dances that people do nowadays.

I can drink that because there's no verse that says I can't have a scotch or a whiskey or whatever. There's no verse that says you can't smoke weed. Hey, there's no work that says you can't do Oxycontin.

There isn't. The question is, is this good for my life? Is this dangerous that it could hook me? Don't get hung up in legalism. Let God speak to you.

He'll warn you about things you can't even, you know, that unbeliever that you're starting to get friendly with. You better be careful. Don't be unequally yoked.

No, I don't want to hear that. That's why a lot of people don't want to wait and listen because they don't want to hear what God has to say because they know it's not what they want to do. You have to be submissive and say, God, speak to me.

Well, let me just leave you with this. It's not just a hearing heart, a listening ear. You got to have quiet, and that's the killer.

Now, God can speak at any time in any way. In Times Square, he can speak on New Year's Eve. But for the most part, men and women in the Bible drew away like Jesus and were alone where it was quiet.

Because how can you hear God's voice when there's 20 other voices coming at you? And is not that the battle today? TV, radio, internet, people calling, people texting, people tweeting, got to give your opinion on everything. Why? Who cares about my opinion? Who cares about your opinion? Wouldn't it be better to get alone and hear from God? Then when you would say something, you would have weight. People who wait and are with God have a weight to their words.

Their words penetrate because they've been with Jesus. They've been with God. They've been listening.

People who are just running their mouth and have not spent time with God, it's just like, yeah, it's just hot air. So those are the two battles for all of us. God, give me a listening ear.

Give me a heart that listens for you. And let me go against the whole current, not only of the culture, of the Christian culture. Most Christians, when they're done with church, which can be just noisy and combustible, then they go right back to their life of non-stop, non-stop talking, talking, listening, but everything is earth-centered.

Nothing is, speak my Lord, your servant is listening. And when you develop that in your quiet time, then you're much more receptive to God speaking to you in the course of your everyday life. How are you receiving this today? I know that you know it's the truth.

And this is not some deeper life mystical teaching. This is basic Christianity 101, but we've fallen away so far in the American Christian setting that it's just, how are you doing with the Lord? I go to the tab on Sunday. I know, but how are you doing with your walk with the Lord? I go to the tab on Sunday.

Listen, the Lord wants to talk to us. He that has an ear, she that has an ear, let them, but to listen. How are you going to hear God if you've got the volume all the way up on a thousand different things? I want us to be a church.

I want you and I to be led by God, encouraged by God, corrected by God. I want God to speak through the scripture. How many are with me on that? Say amen.

I want, no, I want the living voice of God through the scripture. I just don't want to analyze and imparse it with my limited little IQ. I want God to speak to me through that.

It means I have to meditate and chew on it and read less, but listen more, so be it. I want to be open to God speaking through the gifts of the spirit or any other way, but I want to hear from God. Why did Hudson Teller go to China and give up the nice life that he had in the UK, unless that God had spoken to him, go to China.

When nobody was going, I just read about one missionary. He went over there with seven kids. He lost four of them over there with his wife because of diseases.

Back in that day, they didn't have the antibiotics and all of that. Why would you leave everything to go there? Why? If you asked them, because God told me to do it. God told me to do it.

And the Holy Spirit still speaks. Let's bow our heads, close our eyes. If there's some people here are desperate for a word from the Lord, directional, don't know what to do in a given situation, up in the balcony downstairs, just get out of your seat and come up here and stand.

If you're in the choir, just come and stand behind me on the carpet here. Everyone here just hungry while I was speaking. Wow, how would he talk about that? I need a word from the Lord about my career, my ministry, what I'm doing.

Maybe you're a pastor visiting here and you need a word from the Lord. You need a word from God, not a word from Jim Cimbala. You need a word from God.

Or you need a word of encouragement. You need God to speak to you about a situation. Just press closer to me, choir, there's more coming down.

Come right behind me. No one else move. These people are going to come and stand here.

I'll dismiss the rest of you in a second, but I'm going to stay with these folks. Father, in the name of Jesus, starting this moment, we ask you to speak to us daily through your word. Not that we just read it, but we read it and you speak through it to us.

You give us revelation. You make it plain to us. You apply it.

From this moment on, every time we come into church on Tuesday for the communion, our hearts will be open and say, speak Lord, your servant is listening. We pray that we will be open to you speaking through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Make it real, make it alive, make it a blessing, make it edifying.

And then God, through dreams, visions, revelations, still small voices, through providence, every way, shape and form you want to lead us on a daily basis to go join ourselves to a certain subway and talk to someone. We will do it, God. Speak to us.

Lead us. Speak to us in leadership here that our church is led by God, not by computers, but by the living God, not by what other churches are doing, but by the living God. We honor you.

We bless you. Help us to have, give us a listening heart, open our ears so that we might hear what the spirit is saying to the church, to us. And now God, in the midst of a very noisy culture, give us the discipline and the wisdom to be quiet, to be quiet, to have times of the day that are just you and me, just you and me, no phone, no anything, just you and me.

With an open Bible and with an open heart, Holy Spirit, come. Let us be taught by God. Even as you promised, my people will be taught by God himself.

Thank you for your word today. Encourage us, we pray in Jesus' name. Everybody turn around, hug somebody.

Come on, choir, do it too. Brothers with brothers or however, ladies with ladies, see you Tuesday for communion.

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