

Introduction

Isaiah says that the Lord gave him the tongue of a disciple, so that he knew how to sustain the weary one with a word. He goes on to say that the Lord awakens him every morning to listen as a disciple. Isaiah learned to be a good communicator. He knew how to use his tongue wisely, and he knew how to be a good listener.

(Isaiah 50:4) "The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple."

I. Ways That God Speaks to Us

As disciples, God wants all of us to be good communicators. He wants us to learn to listen to Him. He also wants us to learn to be good communicators in our relationships with one another. He wants us to have good listening skills with Him, and with one another. This morning I want to focus on some ways that the Lord speaks to us. God speaks to us in many ways. **As disciples, we must learn to hear from God.** We must learn all the ways that He speaks to us, and then be alert and sensitive to hearing from Him. God is still wanting to speak to His disciples. He is still wanting us to make disciples, and part of discipleship is learning to hear from the Lord.

(Heb 1:1-2) "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, {2} 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."

We find an example of a boy named Samuel learning to hear from the Lord in 1 Samuel 3. He heard the Lord speaking, but he did not know that it was the Lord speaking to him. I think that many of us can identify with that. The Lord has spoken to us, and we did not recognize at the time that the Lord was speaking to us. He thought that Eli was calling for him, and he went to Eli three times. On the third time, Eli told him that it was the Lord speaking to him, and told him to say, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening." So, Samuel went and laid down again, and when the Lord called, Samuel responded and heard what the Lord was saying to him.

(1 Sam 3:1-10) "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. {2} It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), {3} and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, {4} that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." {5} Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. {6} The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." {7} Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. {8} So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. {9} And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. {10} Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

The Ear of a Disciple - Part 1

Sometimes, God sends angels to give us a message. In Hebrews 13, we find that some of us have entertained angels without even knowing it. The word angel (aggelos) means messenger. Angels are servants of the Lord who are sent to give us messages from the Lord.

(Heb 13:2) "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."

The Christmas story is full of examples of ways that the Lord speaks to us. In Luke 1, Gabriel was sent to Zacharias to bring him the good news about their future son, John. Because Zacharias did not believe his words, he was made silent and unable to speak until after the birth of John.

(Luke 1:11-20) "And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. {12} Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. {13} But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. {14} "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. {15} "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. {16} "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. {17} "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." {18} Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." {19} The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. {20} "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

The Lord also sent Gabriel to Mary to tell her that she was going to get impregnated by the Holy Spirit and give birth to Jesus. Mary's response was better than Zacharias' response. She received the word and said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."

(Luke 1:26-28) "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, {27} to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. {28} And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.... {38} And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

Once Jesus was born, the Lord also sent angels to tell the shepherds that the Messiah had been born. He told them where to find baby Jesus, and they went and found Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

(Luke 2:8-12) "In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. {9} And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. {10} But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; {11} for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. {12} "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

The Ear of a Disciple - Part 1

God speaks prophetically to us. God used prophecy during the Christmas story. After John was born, Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. God spoke to all that were present that day, but because it is part of the Scriptures, it remains as a prophetic message to all of us.

Luke 1:67-79 {67} And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: {68} "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, {69} And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— {70} As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— {71} Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; {72} To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, {73} The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, {74} To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, {75} In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. {76} "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; {77} To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, {78} Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, {79} TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

After Jesus was born, God used a prophetess named Anna to prophesy over Jesus, and about the redemption of Jerusalem. Again, because it is part of Scripture, the prophecy is also for us today.

(Luke 2:36-38) "And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, {37} and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. {38} At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

God uses thoughts and impressions to speak to us. Proverbs says that the hearts of kings are like channels of water in the hand of the Lord, He directs them wherever He wants.

(Pr 21:1) "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."

In the Christmas story, God directed the heart of Caesar Augusta to take a census. So, he sent out a decree for the census to be taken. God used this census to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. He had planned for the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. Now, He was bringing all the pieces together. This included moving on the heart of Caesar Augustus.

(Luke 2:1-4) "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. {2} This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. {3} And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. {4} Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,"

The Lord speaks to us through dreams. In the Christmas story, the Lord also used dreams to warn the magi not to return to Herod, but to return to their own country a different way.

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(Matt 2:12) “And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.”

Then, the Lord spoke to Joseph through a dream. In his dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.” So, Joseph heeded the word of the Lord that came in his dream, and they went to Egypt.

(Matt 2:13) “Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

Then, after Herod died, the Lord spoke to Joseph again through a dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in this dream also, and told him that those who wanted to take the Child’s life are dead.” So, Joseph listened to the Lord through that dream and they moved back to Israel.

(Matt 2:19-21) “But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, {20} "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." {21} So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.”

God still speaks to us today through visions, dreams, prophets, and other ways. In Joel 2, he prophesies that in the last days, God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind, and our sons and daughters will prophesy, our old men will dream dreams, and our young men will see visions. We know that the last days began after Jesus was raised up from the dead. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all mankind. We are living in those last days, and God is still speaking to us through prophesy, dreams, and visions.

(Joel 2:28-29) “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. {29} Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

Visions are similar to prophecy. Like Samuel, seers need to learn to see what the Lord is showing them. The Apostle John was a seer. He wrote the book of Revelations. He wrote down the things that the Lord showed him in visions while on the Island of Patmos. But, John probably learned to see through practice. An example of a prophet learning to see visions is Jeremiah. He was consecrated and appointed as a prophet to the nations before he was even born. God has plans for each of us. At the time of this word, he was a youth. God was teaching him as a youngster, similar to what he did for young Samuel. He tells Jeremiah to go and speak all that He commands him. Then, God asks Jeremiah, “What do you see?” Jeremiah tells the Lord that he sees a rod of an almond tree. Then, the Lord encourages him by saying, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.” Then, the Lord asks Jeremiah a second time, “What do you see?” God was allowing Jeremiah to activate and practice seeing. Most of us need to practice hearing or seeing what the Lord wants to speak to us. My son, Chad, has a musical gift. And, he is becoming better all the time. When I came home from work the other day, Karen told me that he had spent four hours playing the keyboard that day. He normally practices two hours a day. When you practice, you become more proficient at it. You develop your gifts and abilities. The same is true with hearing from the Lord.

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(Jer 1:4-17) “Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, {5} “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” {6} Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth.” {7} But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. {8} “Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD. {9} Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. {10} “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.” {11} The word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “I see a rod of an almond tree.” {12} Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.” {13} The word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” {14} Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. {15} “For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” declares the LORD; “and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah. {16} “I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. {17} “Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them.

Although many churches do not believe in prophecy today, or allow prophecy in their churches, God’s word tells us something very different. God tells us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, and especially prophecy. It is considered a greater gift because through it the church is edified.

(1 Cor 14:1-5) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. {2} For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. {3} But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. {4} One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. {5} Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”

Then, the Lord spends almost an entire chapter giving us instructions about how prophecy should be exercised in a service. Paul exhorts us for a second time to earnestly desire to prophesy, and not to forbid people from speaking in tongues. Because God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace and order, Paul concludes by telling us that all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner. God’s word encourages us to earnestly desire prophecy, not to forbid it as many churches teach and practice.

(1 Cor 14:39-40) “Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. {40} But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

Another way that the Lord speaks to us is through journaling. I have found that as I begin to write down the impressions, I begin to flow. I encourage everyone to begin writing down your insights in your quiet times. Write down the thoughts and impressions you have while reading and praying. God may use your journaling to speak to you. I also think that God wants us to record and take serious the things that He shares with us. In Jeremiah 30, He tells the prophet to write down in

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a book all the things that He has told him. Writing things down helps us keep a record. It helps us remember what He has said. It also helps us go back and pray about the things that He has shown us. I encourage everyone to begin journaling.

(Jer 30:1-2) “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, {2} "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book.'”

II. Practical Applications

Let's look at some practical applications that will help all of us learn to hear from the Lord.

1. Schedule specific times to hear from the Lord. (Hab 2:1-3)

I want us to start in the book of Habakkuk. He said, “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me.” Habakkuk was going to put himself in a position to hear from the Lord. He was going to station himself at his guard post and watch. It is a picture of a guard on a wall watching for any enemy that might approach the city. The guards took turns at their post. We must also take our turns at a post. These are scheduled times. These are appointments that we make with the Lord to hear from Him.

(Hab 2:1) “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.”

The Lord can speak to us at any time. I have heard messages from the Lord driving to work, or while sitting on an airplane. He speaks to all of us at various times. But, we need to set aside specific times to hear from Him.

2. Come well rested.

Soldiers must be alert when they are on duty. If they fall asleep and the enemy attacks while they were sleeping, it would be a dereliction of duty, and could cost him his life. It could also cost the lives of everyone else he was protecting. It was vitally important to be rested and alert when they showed up to watch.

Like soldiers, we should come well rested. If early mornings work best for you, set aside time in the early morning to hear from the Lord. If evenings work better, schedule time in the evenings. I have always been an early morning person, so that is the best time for me.

When Jesus was praying, He asked the disciples to pray with Him. When He came back from praying, He found them sleeping. He asked them, “Could you not pray with Me one hour?” Many of us fight going to sleep in prayer. One of the keys is to find a time when you are well rested.

In a perfect world, we can schedule a time when we are fresh and well rested. There are times however that we need to pray, and we may not be fresh. I have found that walking helps me to stay alert while I am praying. I am not prone to fall asleep while I am walking or pacing.

(Matt 26:40-41) “And He *came to the disciples and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? {41} Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

3. **Come prepared.**

A soldier did not take his turn at his post without coming prepared. When we take our turn at the wall and watch, we should come prepared. We should also come prepared to record the things that the Lord speaks to us. That means that we should have a pen and pad, or a journal to write in. Notice what Habakkuk says in verse two. The Lord answered me and said, ‘Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets.’” We must come prepared to write down the visions and words that the Lord gives us. I have found that when I do not write things down, it does not take long for me to forget what has been spoken to me. Some of the things that the Lord speaks to us may be for that moment, but sometimes the things that He speaks are for a future time. Habakkuk was encouraged to wait patiently and expectantly for the vision to come about.

(Hab 2:2-3) “Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. {3} For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.”

4. **Be still before the Lord.**

When Samuel was learning to hear from the Lord, he was laying down in his bed. I have found that laying down and being still before the Lord is one of the best times for me to hear from the Lord. Once I get up and am moving about, it is harder for me to sense the presence of the Lord. It is harder for me to hear from the Lord. There are lots of distractions, and they hinder my ability to focus on the Lord. Another way to get rid of distractions is to simply close your eyes while praying. When I am praying and ministering to people, I like to pray with my eyes open. But, if I am being distracted, and am just trying to hear from the Lord, closing my eyes helps me to be less distracted.

(1 Sam 3:3-4) “ and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, {4} that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am.”

In Psalm 4, David said, “tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.” I have personally found that this is the best time and way for me to meditate and to be still. I sense God’s presence, and I am able to hear from the Lord.

(Ps 4:4) “Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”

Some people fall to sleep easily while laying in bed and praying or meditating. If laying down does not work well for you, find a place to sit still before the Lord.

5. **Pray and worship unto the Lord.**

Notice that when Samuel was laying down, he was in the temple where the ark of God was. God’s presence was in the temple where the ark was. He was in the presence of the Lord when he was hearing from the Lord. We must get in the presence of the Lord.

(1 Sam 3:3) “ and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was,”

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Prayer and worship are two activities that usher in the presence of the Lord. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul warns us not to be drunk with wine for that is dissipation. Instead, he exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit. How? We get filled by singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs. Worship ushers in the presence of the Lord. Some of the prophets that I have been around, like to have soft worship songs playing while they are prophetically ministering to people.

(Eph 5:18-20) “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, {19} speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; {20} always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;”

6. Be accountable.

All of us can be deceived, and can miss it. I recommend accountability in two forms. First, we must be accountable through the word of God. See how what you have heard lines up with the word of God. If something does not line up with the word of God, you should discard it, or spend more time seeking the Lord about what you thought you heard.

The second kind of accountability is through others. Share the things that you have heard with your spouse, and/or with another spiritual partner. Allow the other person to give honest and truthful feedback. If the word gives direction in your life, share it with those in authority over you. God places people in our lives to protect us. Those in authority over us must give account for us. Therefore, we should share with them, and help them give account to God for us. If we keep things from them, we are removing part of the protection that God has set in place for our lives.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

Introduction (Isaiah 50:4)**I. Ways That God Speaks to Us**

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- God sometimes sends _____ to give us a message. (Heb 13:2, Luke 1:11-20, 26-28, 2:8-12)
- God speaks _____ to us. (Luke 1:67-79, 2:36-38)
- God uses _____ and impressions to speak to us. (Pr 21:1, Luke 2:1-4)
- The Lord speaks to us through _____. (Matt 2:12-13, 19-21)
- God still speaks to us _____ through visions, dreams, prophets, and other ways. (Joel 2:28-29, Jer 1:4-17, 1 Cor 14:1-5, 39-40)
- Another way that the Lord speaks to us is through _____. (Jer 30:1-2)

II. Practical Applications

1. Schedule specific _____ to hear from the Lord. (Hab 2:1-3)
2. Come _____ . (Matt 26:40-41)
3. Come _____. (Hab 2:2-3)
4. Be _____ before the Lord. (1 Sam 3:3-4, Ps 4:4)
5. Pray and _____ unto the Lord. (1 Sam 3:3, Eph 5:18-20)
6. Be _____. (Heb 13:17)

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