

The Spirit Said

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...” (Acts 13:2).

Every preacher has heard from God. How do you know when God is speaking to you (or He wants to speak through you)?

Roger Barrier in *Listening to the Voice of God* explains, “Have you ever had an experience where deep down inside you just knew what to do; where God gave you impressions, encouragement, and advice?”...“I call that place my ‘knower.’ Deep down in my ‘knower,’ I knew what God wanted.”

Barrier defines his ‘knower’ as “this place deep inside where I know God speaks...it is there that I have heard the voice of God.”

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, “Then God sometimes answers directly in our spirit. The prophet said, “I will wait and see what he will say in me.” God speaks to me by speaking in me...He can impress something upon our spirits in an unmistakable manner. We find ourselves unable to get away from an impression that is on our mind and heart...”

Perhaps, this is what Elijah experienced when God spoke in a “still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12).

The early preachers cultivated sensitivity to the Spirit. This is predominant throughout the Book of Acts. The Spirit spoke to them, and through them many times.

- “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29).

- “While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee” (Acts 10:19).
- “And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house” (Acts 11:12).
- “And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:28).
- “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20).
- “After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:7).
- “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem” (Acts 21:4).
- “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus” (Acts 13:2-4).

Hearing from God is not a joke.

Preachers should be careful never to have a flippant attitude about using the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord.” Some use it frequently in an

attempt to make others feel they have a special telephone line to heaven.

At times it would be more appropriate to say, "I believe the Spirit spoke to me." However, when totally confident God has spoken, tell them so.

Who is leading you?

It is important to be led by the Spirit.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

What we sense from the Spirit should be in conformity with the Word of God. The Bible is the authority. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

We hear from the Spirit when we concentrate on the things of the Spirit. We bring our thoughts into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5).

When a person focuses on the flesh, the things of the flesh come to mind. When he focuses on the Spirit, things of the Spirit come to mind.

Who is talking?

The Spirit speaks through our thoughts and mind. Four things usually speak to our minds.

- Spirit
- Self
- Satan
- World

Don Matzat in *The Lord Told Me I Think* relates hearing a British evangelist speaking on how the Holy Spirit leads.

He asked, "If you focus on worldly things, and you get an impression, could it be that the idea is worldly?" People nodded in agreement.

He went on, "If you are involved in the occult and you get an idea, could it be that the idea is from a demonic origin?"

Again all nodded in agreement. He then said, "If your mind is focused on the Lord, and you get a thought, could it be from the Holy Spirit?"

Paul taught it was important to set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

- "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).
- "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2).
- "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-17, 25).

Did you really hear from God?

As we have learned, God's voice is not the only voice that speaks to us. How can we distinguish between His voice and Satan's? Roger Barrier suggests the following checklist:

- God speaks to my innermost spirit. Satan and the flesh speak to my mind.
- God speaks with a gentle leading. (God does not push, drive, or dominate.)
- God's voice produces freedom. Satan places people in bondage.

- God tends to speak when I’m seeking Him (Jeremiah 29:12-13).
- God gives specific directions.
- When God speaks, you feel everything is under control. When flesh and Satan speak it feels as if things are out of control.
- God speaks with 100% truth that can be tested by the Word of God.
- God’s voice leads to deep peace (Philippians 4:7). Satan brings confusion.

A. W. Tozer once said if the Holy Spirit was taken from the world, most of what the church is doing would go right on, and nobody would know the difference. God is more willing to speak than many are willing to listen. How true. How sad. Do not let that stop you. You can make a difference. Hear what the Spirit is saying, obey it, and share it with your listeners.

Study Questions

1. How does Roger Barrier define his “knower”?

2. How does God answer directly to our spirit?

3. What does it mean when God speaks in a “still small voice”?

4. Write out two Scriptures that show early preachers cultivated sensitivity to the Spirit.

5. Why do some preachers carelessly use the words “Thus saith the Lord”?

6. What phrase would be more appropriate to use?

7. What we sense in the Spirit should conform to what?

8. What happens when we concentrate on things of the Spirit?

9. What four things usually speak to our minds?

10. Write one verse that shows the importance of setting our minds on things of the Spirit.

