

(c) How did they survive?

(d) Why were they driven from society?

10. In your opinion, what class(es) or group(s) of people are comparable to this in our day?

11. (a) What are commonly understood to be the causes for the separation of such persons from society?

(b) What would have to happen for them to rejoin society?

FOURTH DAY: Communicating with God Should Be the Norm

12. Read Genesis 3. Name each one who speaks in this chapter.

13. (a) Since Adam and Eve recognized the sound of the LORD God (*Jehovah Elohim*) in the garden, what does that imply about their earlier experiences?

(b) Do you think they could have had access to Him earlier for a second opinion about the serpent's statements?

14. The Bible says in several places that no man has ever seen God. However, when the Bible clearly states in some places that people *did* see God, as in this passage, whom were they seeing? (Read John 1:18 remembering what you learned about the Trinity to help with this apparent contradiction.)
15. God, being all-knowing, did not need information about what had just transpired among Eve, Adam, and the serpent, but, like a concerned parent, He asked some questions. What does this tell you about another of the purposes of God's communicating with us?
16. **PERSONAL:** God is still concerned with sin in our lives and communicates with us about it. What are the ways you have experienced "hearing" Him speak about your sins, and what is your usual response?

FIFTH DAY: A New Testament Example

17. Read Luke 22:24-34 where God the Son, like God the Father, speaks to direct, correct, and warn all His disciples in general and Peter in particular. Find some similarities from this episode with what you read in Genesis 2 and 3. (Here are some helps for your search, but you may find others.)
- (a) In both there was a tendency toward _____ on the part of those in relationship to God.
- (b) In both God had given clear guidelines which were (for Adam and Eve) _____

 and (for the disciples/Peter) _____
 _____.
- (c) Both Adam and Eve and the disciples had been given present and/or future blessings, which should have enabled them to resist temptation. What were those blessings or promises?

- (d) Both incidents included the mention of an enemy. Who was he? _____
- (e) The outcomes, in spite of the warnings of God, were _____

_____.

(See Luke 22:54-62.)

- (f) Other things you saw:

18. **PERSONAL:** Think a moment about the amazing fact that the God of all creation actually talks to you to give direction to keep you in His will and out of trouble, to show His interest in and compassion for you, to make you aware of your sins, and (as we'll see in another study) to explain the way back to Him when you fail. Write a brief note of thanks to Him about how this is affecting you right now.

19. **OPTIONAL: Dig Deeper.** For some of you, the challenge to this lesson is not the fact that God speaks, but the fact that He does *not* seem to be speaking to *you*. One of the sure, clear ways He speaks to each of us is through His written word, the Bible. Here is one very old method that many have found helpful for hearing from God on a daily basis. It is called *Lectio Divina*. The Latin words mean “divine” or “sacred” reading. Please take either the Genesis 3 or the Luke reference in question 17 (after this practice, you can choose your own verses; smaller chunks are fine) and follow these directions. First pause and ask God to speak to you during this exercise:

Below are the steps to follow as you read the same passage out loud, slowly and deliberately, four different times. Between each reading, allow for a time of silence to let the words permeate your heart.

Read: On the first reading, simply listen to the words aloud.

Reflect: On the second reading, ask, *What in the passage touches my life today?*

Respond: After the third reading, ask yourself, *What is God inviting me to do today?*

Rest: During the fourth and final reading, ask nothing; simply rest in the presence of the Lord and experience His guidance through the Word.

(The indented material above was quoted from *Be Still and Know That I Am God*, works of assorted authors compiled by Amy and Judge Reinhold, Howard Books, p.19.)

Into your mind should come ideas about the meaning or personal application of what you have read. Thank God for bringing these ideas to mind. This is one method you can use every day to hear from Him.

Think about it.

Living For God's Words *"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD"* (Deuteronomy 8:3).

People are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, speaking and being spoken to by him. God's visits to Adam and Eve in the garden, Enoch's walks with God and the face-to-face conversations between Moses and Jehovah are all commonly regarded as highly exceptional moments in the religious history of humankind. Aside from their obviously unique historical role, however, these moments are not meant to be exceptional at all. Rather they are examples of the normal human life God intended for us: God's indwelling his people through personal presence and fellowship. Given who we are by basic nature, we live—really live—only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus "by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

PRAY: Talk with God about the idea of having ongoing conversation. Tell God what truths you most need to hear from him regularly. Ask God to show you circumstances and places in which this conversation might occur most easily (praying, gardening, exercising or cleaning house).

—Dallas Willard, *Hearing God Through the Year*, week one, Monday

Notes

GOD THE COMMUNICATOR

God Speaks in Words

When we began in Genesis our quest to know “*the only true God*,” we discovered first that He is Creator of all. The second great truth presented in Genesis is that God not only reveals Himself through the glory of His creation, but He also reveals Himself through the spoken word: “*the only true God*” directly communicates with His creatures!

We must not let this truth pass us by as something obvious or insignificant. There is a great wonder in it! The Lord of all wants *us* to know *Him!* He wants us to know what He has done and what He plans to do. God created Adam and Eve with the ability to understand and communicate in words, right from the beginning. The caveman imagery we have been fed was not how man began. Sin causes people to separate from each other, as pointed out in the book of Job, and groups of outcasts can be documented in every society in every age.

(**Note:** If you want proof that the stooped posture and **Neanderthal** head-shapes we have been taught were the hallmarks of early man are not unique, take a good look around next time you are with a great mass of people in a large **venue** like a stadium or convention hall. You can still document all sorts of shapes and sizes in the appearances of humankind, some caused by genetics and some by disease. Adam and Eve were created whole and beautiful. Degeneration and disease followed because of sin.)

God’s Words Have Purpose

We noticed in the first chapters of Genesis that God spoke to inform, to direct, to comfort, and to protect the man and woman He had made. Another very important thing to be noticed is that He appeared *in person*, walking in the perfect garden environment He had made for them and talking with them in the evenings. God had given them only one restriction, permitting all else: they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had not **prohibited** it, as Satan implied, to keep them in ignorance or to withhold some good from them; He had prohibited it so that they would

come to Him when they needed true guidance. This arrangement would have guaranteed them faultless **discernment** for every situation.

The problem for us, ever since the fall, has not been that God does not communicate with us clearly; it is that we either do not listen or do not truly believe what He is saying. The main way that God speaks today is through the words of Scripture. As Creator God, He certainly has the power to superintend the writing of this one precious book. Every word of it is important, as Paul assured us in 2 Timothy 3:16,17:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Our duty is to read it and study it so that we can defend and obey it:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
(2 Timothy 2:15)

The Danger of Doubting God’s Word

What are the satanic techniques still in use that tempt us to sin?

1. Satan plants seeds of doubt in our minds as to what God actually said: “*Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’*” (Genesis 3:1). Our defense, like Jesus’ in the wilderness (Luke 4), is to know exactly what God said.

2. After twisting God’s word, Satan led Eve to add to it. God had said not to eat it; Eve added, “We can’t even touch it.”

3. Satan caused Eve to question the goodness and the generosity of God, and she lingered to

listen. When lies are being broadcast, we need to change channels.

4. Satan lied to Eve about the consequences of her decision: “*You will not surely die*” (Genesis 3:4). We need to stand firmly on God’s word every time. He always means what He says.

5. Satan deceived Eve into making her decision based on natural observations instead of calling on God for true discernment. When confused or tempted, we need to pray: “*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7).

Thomas Brooks, a **Puritan** pastor of long ago, said rightly:

Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss; he promises life, and pays with death.

Hearing, memorizing, understanding, and relying on the word of God will keep us in His will and out of many troubles.

Hearing God through His Word

On the *Fifth Day* of your questions, you were given the outline for *Lectio Divina*, a time-tested way to take a portion of Scripture on a daily basis and allow God to use it to speak to your personal situation. We study the word carefully and systematically in Explorer’s to understand fully what God meant when He said what He said, taking in the context of history and audience before making applications. However, to use the Scriptures devotionally and to hear God speak personally, smaller portions read thoughtfully will help you get a daily word from Him. Throughout the ages, the Psalms have been great resources for this method of listening to God. You might begin with them to use the *Lectio Divina* method and then move to other books of the Bible.

In whatever way you endeavor to study God’s word, pray first for His voice to penetrate your mind. Keep a notebook or journal to write down insights you receive. Follow up on clear directions He gives. Ask Him to keep you from Satan’s

deceptions or your own wishful thinking. Ask Him to make His will evident in more than one way so that you can be certain it is His voice. Then, obey what you have been told. Obedience is a sure way to test whether something is from God: “*So Jesus told them, ‘I’m not teaching you my own thoughts, but those of God who sent me. If any of you really determines to do God’s will, then you will certainly know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own’*” (John 7:16,17 LB).

Hearing God through Others

While God speaks directly to us through His word and to our minds, He is not limited to only those methods. The Bible is full of examples of His speaking to people through personal dreams or visions, angelic messengers, or the words of prophets and preachers. St. Augustine, in his book *Confessions*, wrote of his most unusual experience in hearing from God. He was in a distraught condition when he

heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, “Take up and read. Take up and read.” He wrote that he had no memory of any child’s game that used those exact words. In tears, he explained, “I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God, to open the book and read the first chapter I should find.”

He opened to Romans 13:13,14 to find verses that addressed his exact condition. He was immediately transformed.

While God can still use quite unusual methods as Augustine’s experience to get our attention (remember Balaam’s donkey?), Christians should regularly take advantage of the careful counsel of the wise and godly people in their own families, communities, or fellowships. When you are in need of counsel, ask God to give it to you and then humble yourself to receive it in any way He sends it. When someone gives you a book, recording, or other media, take the time to look at it. It may be just what you need. Humility is the key to being teachable and reachable: “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*” (1 Peter 5:5).

Not Hearing God Due to Heart Blockage

Some longtime Christians are pained to hear of the experiences of others who report hearing from God on a regular basis. If you have tried the above suggestions and still cannot “hear,” you might have a blockage. David said in Psalm 66:18: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”* If you have already been made aware of sin in your life and have not confessed and repented of it, God may not keep giving you new information. He has all the time in the world to wait for you to turn and obey Him.

Repentance and obedience bring a return of communication. In your own human relationships, you know this to be true. There cannot be much fellowship where wrong has been committed but not admitted or resolved.

If your conscience is clear before God and sin is not blocking your communication, think through the process again. God speaks through creation, through His Bible record, and through direct communication to your mind and heart. When people casually say, “God told me...,” they may not be aware that you don’t know how communication usually happens. Most often, God nudges or impresses a person with an idea or emphasizes a certain verse or passage in private study or public worship. It is only as time passes and a person acts on the idea that he realizes for sure it was God who spoke to him in the beginning.

The key to hearing from God more frequently or certainly is to take action on what you think God is saying as the conditions open up for you to do so. Here are some helpful tests for what you think you have heard:

1. What God seems to be saying to you in your mind or spirit will always be in keeping with His revealed will in Scripture. He is righteous and will not contradict Himself. He does not need you to sin to do His will.

2. What God calls you to do will meet with His provision in accordance with His timing. You don’t have to hurry or make rash decisions when God is directing you. *“Whoever believes will not act hastily”* (Isaiah 28:16c).

3. Thank Him for His idea and wait for Him to open any closed doors. Many people are given ideas from God which they hold onto in hope, and the fulfillment comes much later.

4. Seek advice from wise, godly people; their insights may help clarify or confirm what you believe you have heard. However, do not expect everyone to understand or agree with what God is asking you to do.

5. Expect the Holy Spirit to give you His peace when the leading, timing, and conditions are right for obedience.

6. Obey, apply, or just receive as comfort what you hear when you ask God to speak and expect to be trusted with more. Just as you have learned to identify a person’s voice instantly on the telephone because you have talked to him or her so often, you can grow in your ability to identify the voice of God as you spend more and more time in prayer and study of His word. You will learn to discern what He sounds like! When our God speaks, everyone should listen!

VOCABULARY

1. **discernment:** keenly selective judgment
2. **Neanderthal:** defined as an extinct subspecies of human beings that populated Europe, North Africa, and western Asia in the early Stone Age
3. **prohibited:** forbidden; prevented from being done
4. **Puritan:** a member of a group of Protestants in 16th- and 17th-century England and 17th-century America who believed in strict religious discipline and called for the simplification of acts of worship
5. **venue:** a scene or setting where an event takes place

Notes