

You Can Hear God Speak



By Isaiah and Ted Kallman

“One of the greatest blessings a true believer has is to hear and know the voice of God. It is possible to hear God’s voice today as certainly and clearly as did Abraham and Moses—as clearly as did Samuel and David—as clearly as did Paul, Peter, the apostles, and John on the isle of Patmos!”—David Wilkerson

It all began with a prayer, at a time when I wasn’t sure if I took prayer seriously. This particular prayer was in response to Psalm 42:1 “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.” As I read about David’s thirst for God I realized that even though I belonged to “the Jesus Christ Club” of Christianity, and believed myself a sold-out disciple because I did all the correct “church” things, and had once read the Bible the whole way through, I did not feel a desperate longing for God.

People often tell testimonies like this, “My life hit rock bottom, and I didn’t know what to do. Then I found Jesus. Now I have all of this joy and peace and success.” Well, it was only sort of like that for the Kallmans.

We had come to a bad place as a family when I was eleven years old. My brothers Ben and James got burned by people in the

church and it seemed like they decided to break every rule the church tried to place on them. The family business had struggled and we lived on the edge of financial failure. All of that strained Mom and Dad to heartbreaking points. I was intensely unhappy and hated myself. Once or twice I snuck into my brothers' world and see if drugs would make me happy. And of course they didn't. For me, faith was two parts habit and one part safety precaution. I knew I didn't want to go to hell, so I became a Christian, but devotion to a religion didn't seem to fix anything. I felt like I was living in hell already.

At the time, I didn't know that my father, Ted, and I were in the same place spiritually. We knew that we had accepted Christ and tried to live our lives according to His teachings, but God was this distant being to whom we paid tribute with routine. Prayer, reading the Bible, attending church, helping with church activities, Bible camp, charity, mission trips that suspiciously looked like vacations. Witnessing never seemed to do any good back then because people could probably tell that I wasn't so sure about God myself.

A part of our family's routine was to spend time together on Sunday nights. Usually it meant pizza and a movie. One Sunday night, we didn't have pizza or a movie. My brothers became angry and asked why we were just sitting around the living room with nothing to do.

"We're going to pray," my mother answered.

I figured that one of our family members or friends was in trouble, because that seemed like the only time we sat together as a family to pray. Dad said that nobody was hurt or anything. "We want to teach you children something that your mom and I have been learning together."

Ben and James looked like they wanted to leave, but knew that it would cause more trouble than they were willing to make. My

sister Etta, often hiding silently behind our couch, took it all in. I remember feeling confused and intrigued. I knew how to talk to God. Every Sunday school kid knew what prayer was, but Mom and Dad had just explained that we could listen to God talk back. It sounded like a thought, but the thought was sometimes God talking to us.

So this is usually the part of that testimony where God changes our lives and everything gets better. The family magically alters into this perfect home and all of us get along and sunshine pours out of our fingertips.

That didn't quite happen. God began to show us the areas in our lives that needed to change, and there were a lot of areas that needed change. Over time, God sometimes asked us to do strange and uncomfortable things. But when we met on Sunday night and asked God to talk to us, all of the problems we faced couldn't diminish my excitement. I had actually met God, and He met me.

The preacher in the punk band had it right.

My pastor used to have a rock and roll band called Big Fil. Their "big hit" was a song called "I'm Not Your Grandpa." In the song, God spoke to His people, asking them when they would realize that He was right in the middle of their lives. He wasn't some crazy old man that lived in the attic with flowing white hair. It's a great song. I own all of their records.

But I digress.

The point is that God wants a personal relationship with us. You've heard that before, right? I mean, He wants to be able to walk with us in the cool of the evening and talk with us, just like He did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He wants to be able to meet with us on mountains and talk directly to us like He did with Moses. This same God tore the veil in the temple from top to bottom when Jesus died. Man and God can interact freely, no priest required.

I've told lots of people that this book is all about prayer, but it's really about knowing God. When we hear His voice and obey, then see amazing things come from that obedience, we learn to trust Him. We can approach God with confidence; we can seek Him and actually find Him.

I'm going to talk about sheer madness. I'm going to talk about the best thing that ever happened to me.

Henry Ford once said whether you believe you can or cannot, you are correct. Despite its self-centered bent, there is some truth to it. Before we begin anything here, you have to understand: If you don't believe that God can or will speak to you, then you are absolutely right. This isn't a case of mind over matter, that the more affirmation you give something the truer it becomes. I'm saying that anyone can hear, but you have to make it a point to listen.

If you're somebody who really believes that the Bible is the true Word of God, that the Word is unchanging, that God is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), why wouldn't you believe He still speaks?

The book *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* gives a record of miracles, healings, signs, and wonders that were prevalent in the lives of monks along the Nile from about 100 AD to about 450 AD. It includes a direct translation of *The Historia Monachorum In Aegypto*, which tells the stories of these men and their intense pursuit of God. Listening while in prayer was a significant part of their walk.

In his book *Surprised by the Voice of God*, Jack Deere details instances in where the early Reformers heard direction from the Spirit and acted in obedience, and how God moved miraculously. This book also cites Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hadden Spurgeon with similar instances.

A.W. Tozer in his classic book *The Pursuit of God* describes the ongoing speaking nature of God in the chapter "The

Speaking Voice.”

The problem I have in teaching people about hearing God’s voice comes in the matter of incontrovertible proof. I’m not sure I could come up with a list of bibliographical sources that would satisfy critical minds. I can only present the best information that I have and give accounts of experience.

But they aren’t all just my experiences, or my family’s, or of people unknown to the public. I’ve already mentioned Jack Deere’s book, *Surprised By the Voice of God*. At the beginning of the book, Deere tells a story of God supernaturally speaking to him. A student came to speak with Deere about a paper, and the Holy Spirit told Deere that this student struggled with pornography. Deere describes his reaction. *“What is happening to me? I thought. There is no way this student is into pornography. I must be making this up. But why would I make up something I thought to be an impossibility?”* When Deere asks if the student is struggling with pornography, the young man begins to confess and repent of many different sins, including his addiction to pornography. Later that night, the student found Deere and exclaimed, “I’m a new person!”

I believe this all began with Deere relentlessly seeking God’s voice. “For months, I had been praying for God to speak to me like this, asking Him to impart to me supernatural knowledge about people so that I might minister to them more effectively.”

A high school Algebra teacher had an annoying habit of saying the same two phrases whenever I asked him a question, “it’s in the book” or “it’s in your notes.” I used to wonder why, then, I had a teacher at all. I should have just been able to read the book and look at the notes and understand how to find “X”. But I didn’t understand. I needed him to sit down with me and go over whatever impeded my comprehension. I remember muttering to myself, “No, it’s in your head.”

Growing up in my church, Sunday school teachers and youth pastors told me that God said everything He needed to say in the Bible, so He doesn't have to talk anymore. I don't buy that. I don't think they were lying to me. They just didn't know how to listen to God, so they assumed He had finished talking. I do believe that the Bible is God's word, and that it is fully true. I don't believe that it's exhaustive, though, because that would mean the eternal God limited the whole of His being to a book with a beginning and end. John said it himself in his gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written" (Jn. 21:25).

In John 16:7-15, Jesus tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to guide them after He has gone. He says that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth," and that the Spirit "will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was not exclusively for the apostles, and there was a need for guidance beyond the words written in the scriptures. Otherwise, Jesus would have left His disciples with Abraham's words from the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:29, "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'" In other words, "It's in the book. It's in your notes."

But even if that were the case, the Bible has no life apart from the Spirit's illumination. In Greek, there are two different words for "Word." The first is *logos*, which refers to the written and spoken word. The other is *rhema*, which refers specifically to the spoken word. Now, I have only studied a little bit of the Greek language (very, very little), and I don't claim to have scholarly credentials, but I take it to mean this: When I read the Bible, I read words (*logos*), but when that word takes on personal meaning, and I feel the Holy Spirit speaking directly to me through the

words, that's rhema. Logos is written and rhema is spoken or breathed. I read logos, but hear and understand rhema.

In the Catholic Church, some believers follow a practice of praying the scriptures aloud and meditating on them. There are two ways that this form of prayer is practiced, one good and the other highly suspect, but I'll talk of that later.

Even with the Word of God we need to hear His voice to gain true wisdom and understanding. If we study the Bible apart from the Spirit, we can have knowledge of the Word, but not wisdom. Wisdom can only come from having a relationship with the living God. No rhema, no wisdom.

In a letter to one of his closest friends, Francis Schaeffer discussed the "moment by moment" reality of God and how it applied to their faith and mission.

I am not thinking of this in some "mystical" area where God becomes an abstraction, but in the strenuously practical areas of history in which we walk. If we would only allow the Agent of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to lead each individual instead of living in the areas of rules which are man-made and quite apart from the absolutes laid down in Scripture. If only we would be willing to have Christ be the true Head, and be willing for the exotic leadership of the Holy Spirit in our individual and corporate lives—rather than stagnifying the Holy Spirit's leadership of yesterday, as seen in the lives of other men who lived in different historic circumstances, when the infinite eye of God would see today's history as requiring a slightly different or radically different approach; or even stagnifying how the Holy Spirit's leading of us today be what it was a year ago, when our historic circumstance is always in a flux?

Here, according to Schaeffer, to claim that God has no need or desire to guide us in our present day is to "stagnify" the Holy Spirit. It renders His power ineffective, and if it were

true, would make me wonder if His love for me were secondary.

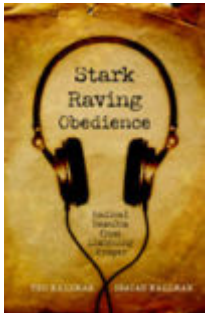
So what am I saying?

First, God still communicates directly to people. There are examples of this throughout the Bible, Christian history, and our present day.

Second, our belief impacts our ability to hear God.

Third, as the Word says in Jeremiah 29:13, that if we pursue God with our whole heart, He will be found.

We can hear through our relationships, through reading the Bible, through dreams and visions, and through the physical world we live in. More often than not, though, God speaks through thoughts. So let's look more in depth at the sources of thoughts in our heads.



Taken from [Stark Raving Obedience: Radical Results from Listening Prayer](#) by Ted and Isaiah Kallman. (C) 2009 PrayerShop Publishing. Used with Permission. This book is a simple, honest treatment on hearing God's voice.