

"How God Speaks Today"

Where do you turn for spiritual truth? Many think the Holy Spirit directly speaks to them through their thoughts and feelings. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord's Way. And today we're going to explore how God speaks to us. So stay with us!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's will for every aspect of our lives. We go to the Holy Scriptures, because we know they are from God and are true. Psalm 119:89 to 90 says, "Forever, O Lord, Your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands." I tell you, you can trust and count on God's written word! Thanks so very much for letting us into your busy life. We love hearing from you and that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Today marks the 46th anniversary of In Search of the Lord's Way. Mack Lyon spoke on the first program on September first, 1980. On behalf of those who work at SEARCH, we say thank you to all who watch this program and pray for us. We're here as servants of the Lord and of His church, and our task is to sow the seed and bring people to the Lord and His church. We love the church that belongs to Christ, the church He purchased with His own blood.

And for nearly half a century Mack Lyon and I have focused on preaching the gospel of Christ with love. We've concentrated on what the Bible says about salvation and how to follow the Lord Jesus. And no other source than the bible can accurately reveal what God teaches. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." The message they preached and recorded in Scripture in the first century is God's message today. And we trust no other message.

We offer a printed copy of our study, How God Speaks Today, free to those who ask. If you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

Larry Owsley will lead us in song, we'll read from God's Holy Word in Matthew 7:24 to 27 and explore how God speaks to us today.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 7 verses 24 to 27 and there the completing verses of the sermon on the mount.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

That's an important lesson for all of us. To listen and to do what God says. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have taught us through Your word. Help us Heavenly Father to be good listeners, to love You and to serve You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

"If you listen to religious radio or TV, you've probably heard someone say, "The Lord spoke to me and said...." or "let God speak to your heart....," suggesting that God speaks directly to people today.

Other people think their feelings are evidence of God's will for their lives. Well we're asking, how does God speak to us today? Is it through voices, through feelings, or through councils and creeds? The Bible is God's revelation of truth to us today. The Word of God says that, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 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" (Hebrews 1 verses 1 and 2).

Now because God speaks through His Son, we need to recognize the Lord Jesus as the authority in all religious matters. He has more authority than anyone, any group, or any church. Paul said that God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20 to 23). Now the church is subject to Jesus, not to any denominational headquarters.

Jesus said before He ascended into heaven that, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus does not need a representative on earth, because He himself is the head of His church on earth. John 3:35 to 36 says that, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Now God has given all things into His hand. Jesus is Lord of all, and we need to listen to Him very closely.

We will be judged one day by the words of Jesus. Jesus said in John 12:48 to 49 that, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For (Jesus says,) I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak." We will not be judged by opinion polls, by the creeds of men, or by some denominational belief. We'll be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament, so we truly need to know what the Bible says.

Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gave to His apostles the Word that His Father had given to Him. In John 14:26, Jesus told the apostles that, "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." Now God determined that the words that He had given Jesus would be taught by the Spirit to the apostles for their time and for all time. The words of Jesus were not merely for the first century but for every century as long as this world stands. God "in these last days has spoken to us by His Son." And God is speaking to us in the Bible!

Jesus promised His apostles in John 16:12 to 15, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. Now all things that the Father has are Mine; therefore (Jesus says,) I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." The apostles knew the truth of God—the whole truth of God. They were the spokesman for God in their own day and for all time.

Jude wrote in Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Now Jude who wrote sometime between 65 and 80 AD was already speaking of "the faith," that body of doctrine, which was "once for all time" handed down to the saints. What the Word said in the first century, it also says and means today. Jude wanted

Christians not only to believe that faith but also to “contend” for it, to uphold it and to keep handing it down.

Paul told Timothy, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2 verse 2). Now Paul wanted the truth to be passed down from generation to generation. And this is why Paul said in Ephesians 4:4 to 6, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” There is indeed just one faith, and we are to contend for it. When people get away from the one faith, they abandon the revealed will of God.

Now the writers of the New Testament spoke with the authority of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:12 to 13, Paul said, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” Paul said what he taught did not come from men but from the Holy Spirit. God was behind his teachings and his writings. And this is why we can say Paul said it or at the same time, say that God said it, because both statements are true. God moved Paul to say what he did.

Now Paul later deals with women publicly speaking in church. And Paul said, “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says...it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandments. But if anyone doesn’t recognize this, he is not recognized” (1 Corinthians 14 verses 34 to 38). Now Paul had spoken the Lord’s commandment.

On another occasion Paul defends himself by explaining where he got his gospel. Paul said, “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1 verses 11 and 12). Now it was because of this that he could be so sure about his gospel—that his gospel was true and right! It was actually the gospel of God! In fact, the apostle Paul warns everyone to stay with his gospel and not change it. And anyone who changes the gospel he preached risks losing his soul and the souls of those he teaches.

Galatians 1:6 to 10 says, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? (He said,) if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

God’s written Word is sacred and unchangeable. And when you get away from the Bible, you also leave God! In 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 13 says in that passage, Paul spoke well of the Thessalonians because of their faith and obedience. And he said, “For this reason we also thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.” Now God’s Word can work in our lives, when we’re willing to listen to it and apply it to our lives. And unless we humbly obey God’s message, we cannot, cannot receive its blessings.

With so many voices, so many denominations, and so many non-denominational groups teaching so many different things, they can't all speak for God, can they? When they contradict each other, are they really from God? The only sure foundation of the truth is found in the recorded, written words of our Lord Jesus and His apostles and prophets in the New Testament.

The Lord Jesus Himself distinguishes people by whether they listen and follow His Word. He said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now to continue in Jesus' word means to remain, abide, or stay there. "True" disciples do that. Some say they are disciples, but they follow teachings that never came from Jesus. Others believe they hear God directly. Some trust in their feelings, some merely follow whatever is popular and "happening." Sadly, when they get away from the Word, they leave God too.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23 that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Speaking religious language or doing religious things doesn't make us right with God. A true Christian is one that hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

These people pretended to be religious; but Jesus rejected them because they didn't follow what God commanded. They stepped outside the will of God; they were lawless. They did what they wanted or what was popular. God isn't subject to the cultural whims of anyone or any culture.

If the "true" disciples remain in the Word, how do you rate the church where you attend? Does your church stay with the Bible or does it vary from the Bible? Now we'll all be judged by the words of Jesus, not by our feelings about things. The only reliable standard is the Word of God, found in the Bible. Let's stay with what is true and right. We lose our blessing, when we substitute our ways for the Word of God. The "lawless" aren't listening to God. And aren't doing the will of God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to be devoted to Your will. To love You with a full heart and soul. To give ourselves freely and only to You. And Father help us to listen, listen to every word that You say and to be obedient in everything. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The best thing we can do is read God's Word everyday and see whether or not the things that we're hearing and practicing are so and right with God. Now don't be fooled by religious people who are not giving you God's word but their own opinions. Stay with the Bible, and stay with God! Acts 17:11 speaks of the noble Bereans: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Now if you are one day going to be judged by the words of the Lord Jesus, shouldn't you examine them for yourself?

Don't guess and don't presume when it comes to salvation. Feelings can deceive and men can be wrong, but God's Word has stood true for centuries. It says today what it said from the beginning. And you can trust it. Feelings come and go. Religious groups that change to meet the times are uncertain and unsafe. The truth of God's word doesn't change and isn't fickle.

Why not trust the gospel found in the written Word and become a Christian? And you do that by trusting and loving the Lord, turning away from sin in repentance, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God before all, and by repenting and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That's what the apostle taught in the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 and verse 38. And when you're baptized in

water, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) He'll give you newness of life (Romans 6:3 to 7). So keep studying and growing in the Word every day of your life. Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Your greatest need is to know God and to draw close to Him by listening and obeying His Word.

We hope you've been blessed by today's study. And if you want a free printed copy of this message, "How God Speaks Today," mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or e-mail us. Our address is searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now for all our viewers outside the United States, we have free programs and materials for people all over the world on our website, www.searchtv.org. And of course SEARCH is also on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs that you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week. So tell a friend about our program and let them know what we always say. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.