

Ways God Speaks

Thoughts & Hearing

Light & Strong Impressions: an internal voice or what feels like spontaneous thoughts, words, or phrases, can be either faint or booming. This is really what might be called the still small voice of God in our hearts. Sometimes His voice in our hearts is loud and clear (strong impression), other times it is faint (light impression) like when we are quietly prompted to bless someone in the grocery line.

- “Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts” Mark 2:8. Other translations say He “perceived” their thoughts. I used to think I had great intuitions, but then I started to ascribe to the Spirit the small promptings I would get.

Audible Voice: people sometimes hear the voice of God audibly or out loud.

- Samuel heard the voice of God as a child (1 Sam 3)
- Saul heard God from the blinding light in Acts 9:4
- Moses heard God on numerous occasions
- I have a personal friend who, when at a very low point in his life, before he met Christ, asked out loud if any one cared about him, and he heard audible voice behind him say, “I care”. He very soon after gave his life to the Lord.

Seeing & Images

Pictures - a still image or a sequence of images that flash through your head, almost like a photo or a painting popping into your mind.

- Jeremiah is given a picture by God and also hears God’s voice
- “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Jeremiah, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘I see an almond branch.’ Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.’” Jer 1:11-12
- “the Lord showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord. One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. And the Lord said to me, ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’ I said, ‘Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten.’ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah’” Jer 24:1-5

Inner Visions - internal movies playing in your mind. Some people call them “light” if they are short or end if they are not focused upon, and call them “strong” if they are longer or can resume when prayerfully seeking the Lord for more. The “strong” variety are what many of the Old Testament prophets describe.

- “I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me.” Dan 8:1
- “The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision” Gen 15:1
- “Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night.” Dan 2:19a

Open Visions - a vision that is so strong, the participant cannot discern the vision from the real world.

- Paul had such a vision in Acts 9:3-7, he saw and heard more than his fellow travelers, “suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to

do.' The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one."

- "And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal." The vision was so engrossing, he thought he was in another place. Dan 8:2-3
- Paul also make such a statement, "And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know" 2 Cor 12:3.
- Ezekiel, felt as though he went to Jerusalem and even sat with the elders (Ezek 8)

Seeing in the Visible World - the Lord may open our eyes to see what is happening in the spiritual world.

- "Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.' So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." II Kings 6:17
- Balaam's donkey sees an angel: "And the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand." Balaam: Num 22:31
- "Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face." Num 22:23

Trances

Trances are characterized by being awake but not fully conscious or responsive.

- Peter fell into a trance: "Peter went up on the roof to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners." Acts 10:9-11
- Paul: "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'" Acts 22: 17-18

Dreams

Divine dreams scattered throughout the Bible, let's quickly highlight a few types of dreams from the Bible.

- **Symbolic Dreams:** Joseph, both as a dreamer and as an interpreter gives many examples of symbolic dreams that were from God (Gen 37:5-10 and Gen 40-41). Much of the book of Daniel is also concerned with frightening symbolic dreams from God. Even unbelievers can have dreams from God: both Pharaoh, the King of Babylon, and even foreign warriors, Judges 7:13-15.
- **Literal Dreams:** Such dreams can be taken more or less at face value, like Paul's dream of a Macedonian man asking him to come there (Acts 16:9)
- **Angelic/Messengers in dreams:** Jacob had a dream of angel ascending a ladder (Gen 28:12), Joseph, the father of Jesus, had a dream of angels speaking to him (Matthew 1:20, Matthew 2:12-13 & Matthew 2:19)

Emotions & Physically

Physical Sensations or Emotions - our souls are meant to interface with our spirits. Sometimes God uses this avenue to speak to us. God communicating may feel a wind that is not actually there, an act of nature, a pressure of a hand on your shoulder when no person is around, tingling ear, trembling, quaking, heat or happy/sad feeling

- “But whenever he entered the Lord’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that **his face was radiant**. “Exodus 34:34-35
- “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was **shaken**, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31
- “All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and **trembles** at my word.” Isaiah 66:2
- John the Baptist **leaped** for joy in his mother’s womb when encountering Jesus. Luke 1:41

Visitation

Angelic Visitations: Abraham, Lot, Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Daniel and others all had encounters with angels

- “When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, ‘Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.’ So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face.” Dan 8:15-17
- “The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth.” Gen 19:1
- “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.” Rev 1:1
- “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Heb 13:2

Visitation of Jesus: Samson’s parents (Jud 13), fiery furnace (Dan 3), Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18)

- “And the donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?’ And he said, ‘No.’ Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face.” Num 22:30-31
- “And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.’” I Kings 19:7

Other

Caught up in the Spirit

- (Paul) “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.” II Cor 12:2-4
- John on Patmos: “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.” Rev 4:1-2

Limited Thinking

Some limits we might place on God:

- God only speaks on the big things (jobs, marriages, where to live), not the little things
- God only speaks through the pastor, or the important people, not regular people
- God only speaks through the Bible, so find a verse
- God only speaks when we are fasting, or during long prayer times
- God is not speaking anymore, except through the Bible

We see Jesus considered as a prophet and He promised us the Holy Spirit, to place words in our mouths at times. We saw in the rest of the New Testament, a church which took regular prophetic utterances as the norm, to be never extinguished or forbidden. But even as theory might encourage us that prophecy is for now, many times we still limit our expectation that God will speak to me or speak through me.

Three things that limit us from hearing from our Lord.

1. What we believe He speaks about will limit us.
2. Through whom we believe speaks
3. How we believe He speaks

First, we see nowhere in Scripture a limitation on what God may or may not speak about. He so loves His children, that he said we should have faith like a child, we could sit on His knee, just as Jesus placed a child on His. If he gathers every single prayer we utter to Him, then he may likewise answer each prayer. Either with His still small voice, the voice of a friend, or an encouragement from Scripture. But nothing is too small to seek the Lord about, nor too small for Him to respond to us.

Secondly, as we have already read, Paul hope that "especially that you would prophecy". There is no limitation to spiritual people, those in leaders, those in a certain level of maturity. No, that each in the church might prophecy. Also, Peter said it first (or really the prophet Joel did), when he stated that "in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy", Acts 2:18. The "they" is "all flesh", but in particular the sons, daughters, and servants in His Kingdom. That is all of us. Each believer with the Holy Spirit in them can expect to prophesy, because that is what the Holy Spirit does. He is constantly speaking, and desires to speak through us.