

Chapter 13

God's Voice

*And your ears shall hear a word behind you,
saying, "This is the way, walk in it,"
when you turn to the right or
when you turn to the left.*

Isaiah 30:21

God Speaks to His Children

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.

When I tell my stories I often share that God speaks to me. Some people have asked me, "How does God speak to you? Is it an audible voice? Is it an impression? Is it a whisper that you hear in your ears, or in your mind? How is it that God speaks to you and how would I ever know if he speaks to me?"

That is difficult to answer because God speaks to each one of us in different ways. It's like the story of Samuel. When Samuel was really young he heard a voice in his sleep. It was an audible voice saying "Samuel, Samuel!" When Eli, the priest, finally recognized that God was trying to speak to Samuel he told him, "The next time you hear that voice and it calls your name, answer the voice and say, 'Here am I your servant is listening.'"

Sometimes I think that we don't hear the voice of God because we're not listening for it. Many times we don't believe that God speaks today. We have become unbelieving believers, cessationists, who think that all the miracles ceased with the Apostles.

I was sharing my stories with a few pastors I was coaching. When I shared that God had spoken to me and was leading me to do something, one of the young men got very upset. As a matter fact, he literally got in my face, shook his finger at me, and shouted with a loud voice. He was like a madman, furious that I would say that God spoke to me. Then he emphatically told me that God doesn't speak anymore. God's voice stopped with the Apostles. We have the Bible and we need nothing more. There is no way that God speaks to anyone today. He went on to say anyone that says otherwise is lying.

I was taken back by that. Here I was coaching and mentoring young inexperienced pastors and one got so upset he yelled at me. I was so thankful for one of the other young men who took up his responsibility to rebuke that young man. He did so by saying, "No, you are out of order. When you say God does not speak today you are saying God is just like the gods of the pagans. He has no mouth so he cannot speak. He has no eyes, so he cannot see. He has no ears, so he cannot hear, and that is not the gospel of Jesus Christ." Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.*" He did not say, "My sheep have only the written word of God." Think about it. Who gagged God that He is not allowed to speak anymore? God is God. He speaks today as well as yesterday.

My Mom's Discernment

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

My mother had a special gift of discernment. She was able to hear from God. She was attuned to His whisper. She had the gift of intercession, that is, she knew what to pray for when there was no clue in the world what she should pray. Here's an example.

My brothers and I knew about that gift in my mother, I was going on a double date with my brother. We were going into Ohio, about two hours from home. We took the girls out to a Youth for Christ rally then stopped at a restaurant in Toledo for dessert. We had a good time.

It was late when we started back home to Monroe, Michigan. I was driving my little red six-cylinder Ford Falcon. I started to pass another car on a dark two-lane road. Suddenly, a truck came toward us out of nowhere.. It was barreling toward us at a high speed and was going to hit us head on. I couldn't pull back into my lane since the car I was passing was blocking me, and I couldn't go to the left into a deep ditch. So, I shifted the car into the second gear to get more power, and slammed on the gas. My brother was white knuckled looking at me and screaming, "We are going to die!" We barely got back into my lane by inches as that truck sped past us. I knew we should have been killed. It would have taken a miracle to get us safely back onto my side of the road. My brother Mike looked at me and said, "Mom's going to know. Mom will know this happened, you watch and see."

We got home late that night but mom wasn't up. When we got up for breakfast the next morning my little brother was sitting at the table eating a bowl of cereal and grinning. I asked what he thought was so funny. He replied, "Oh mom, she's going cuckoo. She went nuts last night. She got everyone up with her panic attacks. She said, "Mike and Dick are in trouble! Pray! Everybody plead the blood of Jesus. Oh, Lord Jesus, protect them. Oh Lord, put the angel of the Lord around them." He said she went on like this for 15 or 20 minutes, praying and pleading the blood of Jesus." Then he said, "You know, that's just mom." I asked what time that had happened. It was the exact time that we were passing the car. Mom knew. God speaks to Mom.

“Go Drive Your Car”

Acts 8:26-27

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian.

I was a young pastor in my first church in Clymer, Pennsylvania. I had specific disciplines I used to help me learn how to do ministry. I had always made it my point to ask other pastors what their disciplines were and how they found time for prayer and preparing for messages. Out of those interviews I learned a few things and began to incorporate them into my own life as my spiritual disciplines. One of those disciplines was that from 8 o'clock in the morning until noon every day I was to be in my office praying, studying and preparing my heart for the messages on Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday, and Sunday school and all the other speaking engagements that I had.

Since my study was connected to our house I instructed Marilyn that the children were not to barge into my office during those hours. My door was closed and the phone was turned off, so I would not be disturbed. When I am listening to God I am not to listen to any other voices. I only allow interruptions for emergencies.

One morning I was sitting in my office praying and studying. I was preparing a message for a Wednesday night Bible study. As I was intently looking into the word of God, writing an outline and making notes for myself, I suddenly got an impression that I needed to get in the car and drive. My immediate response was to resist that temptation. I was studying. I was before the Lord. I was in my time of prayer. I was not going to interrupt it with some emotional temptation to go for a drive in my car. A few minutes later the impression came again, but this time it seemed more like an inner voice. My immediate response was to resist the temptation as a distraction from the enemy. .

I said to myself, “No Lord, that's not You. You can't be telling me to get in the car and drive because You told me to be in my study and to give myself to prayer.”

The third time the voice came it was very clear that I was to get in the car and drive. At this point I said, “Okay Lord, I don't understand this, but I will obey. Did I not just hear You say get in the car and drive? The voice came again and said, “Yes, get in the car and drive. You know my voice.”

I obeyed. I got in the car and started driving not knowing where to go. I remember saying to myself as I drove away, “What am I doing? Why am I listening to this voice telling me to drive? There's no reason for me to go driving at this time of day.”

But the voice kept assuring me I was doing the right thing, so I kept driving. I got to the next town, which was Indiana, a much larger town than our little village of Clymer. I got to the first traffic light and the car stalled. Now I was really frustrated. Here I was in the middle of a morning, when I was supposed to be studying, and I was driving nine miles to the next town and trouble struck. I was mad at myself for listening to that voice. I told myself to never again listen to a voice telling me to do something contrary what God has already instructed me to do.

There were honking horns and cars moving around me. I tried to figure out what to do about the car. It wouldn't start, so I got out of the car and lifted the hood. As I looked at it I realized there was a gas station on the opposite corner. Evidently one of the mechanics saw this happening and came over to help to me. He helped me push the car into the gas station to get it started. He introduced himself, told me his name and I told him mine. He asked where I lived and where I worked. I told him Clymer, Pennsylvania and shared that I was pastor of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Clymer.

He looked up surprised and told me that was his granddad's church. He had grown up in that church. As we continued to converse he shared with me that he had given his life to Christ at some point in a Vacation Bible School a long time before but he was no longer walking with God.

That gave me the opportunity to witness and share Christ with him, I encouraged him to come back to church. I invited him to visit us and allow God to work in his heart. The end of that story is that eventually he did come to church with his family, got right with God and began to live for the Lord.

So once again I had to evaluate: Was God speaking at that moment or was it another voice? My answer to that is that it was clearly God's voice because God leads his dear children along.

The Word of God says, “*And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.*” — Isaiah 30:21

A Woman on the Turnpike

Luke 10:30-34

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

It was early in my ministry. I was serving in Clymer, Pennsylvania. We were traveling from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to visit Marilyn's parents. We were using the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The Pennsylvania Turnpike is a very busy toll road and I don't normally stop along a busy road to help stranded cars. There are phone stations every 100 yards or so for such emergencies. It was raining and I could see up ahead of me a car was parked on the side of the road with its trunk open. It obviously had a flat tire. Normally I would pass by and hope that they had called somebody to get help. As I passed by immediately I felt the Lord say I should stop and help the lady. The impression was strong that I needed to stop to help this lady. I did. I had passed her, so I pulled off the highway and backed up to where she was.

I got out of the car and offered my services and she was grateful. I began the process of changing her tire while she held an umbrella over me. As I changed the tire she asked me who I was. I told her who I was and that I was a pastor of a church in Clymer, Pennsylvania. That led to a conversation about her life. She shared with me many of the difficulties that she was facing. One of those difficulties was her marriage. Over a period of a half hour or so she shared with me all the troubles she was going through. I gave her my advice and showed her some Scriptures. She told me her name. I don't think I ever gave her my address, but when we finished I prayed with her and then I left.

I thought no more about that incident for more than 40 years. Then I received a letter in Grove City where we were living at the time. I thought it was a strange address and a name I did not recognize. I didn't know who was writing, but I opened the letter to find it was this woman that I helped on the turnpike some 43 years before. She had remembered me and that I had prayed and counseled her. She said she found my name and address somewhere and thought that she should write to me and let me know what happened. She shared with me how God worked in her heart and life and that the prayer that I offered was an encouragement to her. Eventually God resolved the issues of her marriage and she moved on to walk with the Lord.