

Fil-Am Community Church

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How God talks to you

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Last week we started a new series I'm calling "***Can You Hear Me Now?***" It's about hearing God speak. The Bible tells us that God wants to talk to us. In fact the Bible is full of examples, hundreds of examples of God talking to people. In fact, if God didn't talk to people we wouldn't have this book – the Bible. The whole reason we've got this is God spoke to people, told them to write it down and they did over a period of thousands of years and now we have the Bible to read what God had said to those people and wanted to say to us.

In the Bible, God uses many, many different ways to communicate. Obviously God is God. He can communicate any way He wants. If He wants to communicate through a light bulb He can do that. Because He is God so He can choose any way He wants to. Many of the ways in the Bible are quite spectacular. Some of them actually pretty bizarre. But He spoke in many different ways.

He spoke to Moses through a burning bush. He spoke to a guy named Jacob through an angel. He spoke to the entire nation of Israel through a cloud. In fact one time he spoke to a man named Balaam through a donkey.

**Job 33** “God speaks in *different ways*, and we don’t always recognize his voice.” Circle “different ways.” God has many, many different ways that He speaks to us. *He’s not limited to any single way.* The problem is we often don’t recognize it. We don’t realize that it’s God talking through that person or whatever it is, talking to us. So we have to work on the perception issue.

This morning we’re going to look at **four** of the ways that God wants to speak to you. *These are not the only ways.* There are far more than these four. But these are four very, very common ways that God speaks to us. You may not be sure God speaks to you. So today we’re going to look at four ways God speaks to you.

### **1. GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE BIBLE.**

We start with this one intentionally because it is the number one way that God speaks to us – *through His word.* It’s called the Bible. The reason we have the Bible is because God has already spoken over thousands of years and people God told to write it down and they did. He’s already written it to you. God never shuts His mouth until you shut the Bible. If you’re never opening the Bible, if you’re never reading this book, God isn’t talking to you very much. Because the number one way He speaks to us, everything you need for life is already here in this book.

Look at what the Bible says in **2 Timothy 3:16** “*Everything* in the Scriptures is God’s word. *All of it* is useful for teaching and helping people and for

*correcting them and showing them how to live.”* Why did God give us the Bible?

There are four reasons: to **teach us**, to **help us**, to **correct us**, and to **show us** how to live.

Circle “everything” and “all of it.” It says everything in the Bible is God’s word and all of it is useful. That means it’s one hundred percent reliable and it’s one hundred percent practical. You can use it in your life.

Some of the parts of the Bible are hard to understand. Some of the parts you’ll go, “Why did He say that?” And some of the parts you have to study. But it’s all there for a reason. And what’s the reason? To help you.

So the problem is not that it’s not helpful. It’s just that you just don’t understand it. It’s all there for a reason. Even the parts that don’t make sense to you. The Bible says everything in the scripture is God’s word.

As I said: God never shuts His mouth until you shut this book. This is why a daily time with God is so important. Even if it’s just five minutes.

*“Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.”* The Bible says that it is a flashlight for life. It’s a lamp to guide me and a light for my path. It’s not a high intensity beam that’s going to show you the next three years of your life. Some of you want to know all that’s going to happen in the future.

God's never going to show you that because it'd freak you out. It'd scare you to death. So you may go try to find all the future in your life but you're wasting your time. Nobody knows the future. **Nobody**. Nobody except God. And God's not going to share with you all the future because He wants you to walk by faith day by day.

That's why you need the Bible. God speaks to you every day through his word. ***You just need to open it and read it.***

God speaks through His word.

## **2. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH GODLY FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

Godly friends and family. Particularly if they're believers, He has an easier way to talk through them to you. This one we often discount. Because often we ignore those who are closest to us or we dismiss what they have to say or we discount it or we devalue it. "You're just my mom/dad/brother/sister. You're just a friend." We don't realize that God actually puts people around you and then puts ideas into their mind to say things to you all the time. You need to be careful about that because God is often speaking to you through godly friends and family members. ***Proverbs 12:26*** "The godly give good advise to their friends. The wicked lead them astray."

We all have blind spots. Some of us have bald spots and some gray spots but all of us have blind spots. You have things in your life that you're never going to see that need to be corrected in your life. ***God puts people around you to tell you the truth.*** Everybody needs somebody in their life who loves them enough to tell them the truth.

Do you have anybody like that in your life? Do you have any godly friends who don't just tell you what you want to hear. But they love you enough to level with you. They love you enough to point it out. "You know what?

You're blowing it right now. You're making a big mistake. You're full of pride. You're going the wrong direction."

If you don't have anybody in your life who has the permission to get in your face, I pity you. It means that you're making a lot of stupid mistakes that are unnecessary. Because none of us see it all clearly. I couldn't tell you the number of mistakes that I have avoided because I listened to the advice of my wife or my parents or my pastor friends or even our directors. I've got about a dozen people in my life who have permission to get in my face and say, "I don't care if you are the pastor of Fil-Am, you're blowing this."

**If you don't have anybody in your life who loves you enough to do that, you need to get them in your life.** You need to get somebody there with you who will help you in those times.

**You also need to be that kind of person.** Are you a friend to anybody like that? If you don't do that in people's lives you're not much of a friend.

If you just let people get away with it when you see them making mistakes and stuff like that and you don't say, "What are you doing? Do you realize the wrong move you're making?" then you have a problem.

**Proverbs 12:15** *"Stupid people always think they are right. Wise people listen to advise."* God wants to use you to help others grow. And God will speak through you. But it takes courage. And God wants to speak through other people to you. And that takes humility.

Some of you, you know somebody. You've got a friend or a relative or husband or father or brother or sister or somebody you work with and they are headed down the wrong path and you know it. You can see it as clear as day. They're getting involved in an affair. Or they're getting involved in some kind of an addiction. Or they're walking away from the Lord. They're doing something that's just messing up their life. If you love them it is your business to point out the danger they're in.

That's why the Bible says in **Proverbs 27:6** *"Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy."*

And in **Proverbs 28:23** *"In the end people appreciate frankness more than flattery."* You're not just kissing up to people but you love them enough to

say, “You’ve got spinach in your teeth. You love them enough to say, “This is not right!”

God speaks through godly friends and family.

### **3. THE THIRD WAY GOD SPEAKS IS THROUGH IMPRESSIONS OR IDEAS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

God speaks through ideas from the Holy Spirit. He gives you thoughts. He gives you suggestions. He puts impressions or notions or inspirations in your mind.

Actually when God talks to you in your mind **we call that *inspiration***.  
When the devil talks to you **we call that *temptation***.

When God puts a suggestion in your mind, you are inspired – you have an inspiration.

When the devil puts a suggestion in your mind to do wrong we call that a temptation. Both of them just go directly into your mind.

***John 14:26*** says this “*The Holy Spirit will be your teacher and will bring to your mind [circle “bring to your mind”] all I have said to you.*” This is Jesus talking. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit our teacher. It also calls Him our

counselor. He's like a personal coach, a personal mentor. Today I know people who spend tens of thousands of dollars for an executive coach.

**Romans 8:16** tells us *“For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.”* So when we talk about hearing from God we’re not talking about hearing an audible voice. But, of course, God can speak to us audibly if he wants to because he is God. Yet, that’s not the norm anymore. He has given us the Holy Spirit who speaks with our spirits. Deep in our hearts.

It says, “He brings it to mind.” That means there’s got to be something in there to bring out. That’s why you need to get into this book.

When you read this book and study this book and fill your mind with this book you are banking the truth in your mind and then the Holy Spirit can bring it to mind at just the right time. I can’t tell you how many times when I’ve been in stress, a problem, or a temptation I never have my Bible handy. Even if I did I wouldn’t know where to find it half the time. But instead if I’m reading the Bible on a regular basis I’m banking that truth in my mind because your mind never really forgets anything. Then the Holy Spirit can bring it to mind. He can bring it up. How many times have I thought, “I would never have thought of that on my own.” It’s the Holy Spirit bringing it to mind.



Sometimes when you read the Bible you go, “I didn’t get anything out of it today.” You don’t have to. What you’re doing is you’re banking the truth in your mind. Your mind’s filled with everything else you’ve seen – every billboard, every commercial, every bad joke, every movie. It’s all in there. You need to balance it with the truth. Then the Holy Spirit can bring it to mind in your mind. You’re banking God’s word.

*Job 33* says this “*God speaks again and again in dreams, in visions of the night as they lie on their beds. He opens their ears in times like that and gives them wisdom and instruction causing them to change their minds and keeping them from pride and from falling into some trap.*” God wants to keep you out of a lot of problems.

Why does God speak to us as we’re laying on our bed? A couple reasons. One, when you’re relaxed you can hear better. You’re less defensive. You’re less distracted. You’re more open to what God wants to say to you. So when you’re relaxed that’s the most likely time God’s going to talk to you. If you’ve got the cell phone ringing and the radio on and the television blaring and the Internet and all these things coming up in your mind you can’t hear God. ***You’ve got too much noise.***

So that’s why often when you’re just relaxing, you’re sitting in your easy chair, you’re laying on your bed – Have you ever had a thought in the shower? Why? You’re not doing much in the shower. It’s a relaxing time – God can then talk to you. In fact, I remember this Jewish guy who gave his

testimony about how he became a Christian. For a long time, he had conversations with his Christian friends about Jesus. He couldn't be convinced. Until one day, while in the shower, it seemed the Holy Spirit spoke to him and it all became clear to him and right there and then, he accepted Jesus.

Even when you're fast asleep, God can speak to you. In dreams. We all know of Joseph the Dreamer. The Bible tells us that God repeatedly showed to him the future through dreams. Let me just warn you, most of your dreams? They're wacko! They have no spiritual significance at all. If you know anything about REM sleep you know that it's just your brain reorganizing all the information – this goes here, this goes here, this goes here.... It's very easy for your brain to take a scene from a movie or a scene from a book or a scene from something here and there, you heard it, and put it all together. We've all had wacko dreams. Definitely unreliable. ***That's why you have to test and confirm impressions.***

But on the other hand – don't be afraid of this – many of the major decisions in my life God gave me an impression and then He confirmed it. I didn't just act on the impression. I waited for God's confirmation. Then I acted on it.

When I was in Australia, with a good-paying job, with a good prospect of becoming an Australian citizen, hoping to marry a blonde OZ gal, God started to speak to me about entering the ministry. It all started when I went inside a Christian bookstore. A book got my attention. It was entitled "Is that

really you, God?” I guess I became interested in that book because at the time I was struggling with a lot of issues in my life, especially spiritual issues and that book, as I looked at the front cover, talks about learning how to hear God’s voice.

I desperately wanted to hear God’s voice. As I flipped the pages of the book, I read that the author is the founder of Youth With a Mission and their school is located in Hawaii. Suddenly, I felt God speaking to my heart. He was telling me to go to Hawaii to get some missionary training. I couldn’t shake it off. But the persistent still, small voice was saying, “Go to Hawaii. Go to Hawaii.”

I remember struggling with God at the time. Most of you don’t know that when I entered college I started to have panic attacks. They were mild in the beginning but became severe and frequent as years went by. I believe this was brought on by my straying away from my Christian faith. Because of a personal setback early in college, I turned away from religion and eventually from God. The result was a nervous breakdown in the form of panic attacks. These attacks continued and followed me to Australia. I was then in my late 20’s. Somehow, I coped with my situation. Although I was in a different country, I coped because I had friends who also came from the Philippines. In fact, I was living in an apartment with two Filipinos who were my former officemates in the Philippines.

Going to Hawaii, however, was a different thing. I didn't know anyone there. I also shuddered at the thought of sitting with other Americans in a classroom. They're all good English-speakers and I was not. They might laugh at my broken English. So, I began to feel the pressure. Then, there was the question of how could I leave my job when my brothers and sister in the Philippines depended on me? What would happen to them?

Anyway, I bought the book and read it. Needless to say, God continued to speak to me despite my objections. God was saying, "Obey me and I will heal you." And so, I said, "Ok, Lord, if you really want me to go, confirm it." First, he confirmed it when my brother in the Philippines sent me a tape of music (do you still remember what a cassette tape is?) entitled "Missionary". Afterwards, I went to California to speak to my parents about my decision.

At the time, they weren't Christians and I was afraid they were going to disagree with me because I was the one sending money to my brothers and sisters in the Philippines and when I become a missionary, then that would stop. And I prayed, "Lord, if they give me their blessings, then this is your will. And they did even tho' it was hard on their part. Later, I learned that my mom spoke to her aunt, who is a strong Christian about my decision and, of course, she encouraged my mom to give me her blessing. See, God uses godly people make his will known. Anyway, those confirmations were enough for me to submit my application to YWAM. I was told that it would take only about a month and I would get a reply.

A month, two months passed, and there was no reply from YWAM. Did I really hear from you, God? I asked. Did you really speak to me? Then, one day, I got one of those panic attacks again at home.

You know, sometimes a panic attack comes even when it seems that there's nothing that sets it off. You just feel it. There were times when I was just relaxing, sitting comfortably in the living room, watching TV, when it came. It was hard and painful. There was the feeling of intense fear and discomfort. I felt tension throughout my whole body, from head to foot. I felt I couldn't move, couldn't go on. Sometimes it lasted for a few minutes but at other times, for hours, and even for days.

On that particular day, I felt it like I never felt it before. I was already in tears and I said, "Lord, I'm struggling with this pain, with these anxieties. How could I go to Hawaii with this condition? How could I become a missionary when I feel this way all the time?"

And the Lord spoke to my heart, "***Just go and I will heal you.***"

Then, I said, "If you really want me to go and you're really going to heal me, take these panic attack right now. I'll count to ten. If you take it away before I finished counting, then I know you want me to go."

I started to count, "one, two, three..." Suddenly, a feeling of warmth coursed through my body. My head started to relax, then my body, then my legs,

then my feet. The panic attack was gone. It was gone only for that moment because God wanted to show me his power. Even though I still had panic attacks after that, that episode was enough for me to know that God can heal in an instant if he wanted to. A few days after that, I received a mail from YWAM telling me that I was accepted in their school.

And the rest is history. Now, I've got myself a nice job, a good ministry, an American citizenship, and a brunette Filipino gal. The Lord works in mysterious ways.

So, God speaks to us through impressions. But here's the warning. You always have to test and confirm impressions. We're going to talk about how to do that next week.

So, God speaks through the Bible, through godly friends and family, through impressions and also

#### **4. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PAIN.**

Any of you familiar with this one? Know what I'm talking about? God loves us so much He will resort even to pain to speak to us. Sometimes pain is the only way God can get your attention in a circumstance. I'm not saying that all the pain in our lives is God trying to speak to us. But I do know that some of the painful circumstances I face, God speaks to me through those

circumstances. I think we've all seen that happen in our lives. God uses pain when He can't get us to slow down and listen.

Just standing here for a few moments thinking about how God has used pain in my life to speak to me I'm just flooded with thoughts. I can think of a time when God used a financial pain to get me to move from here to there. I would have stayed except the financial pain He got me where He wanted me to be.

I can think of a time when He used a relationship pain to get me to wake up to the fact that people are a lot more important than tasks. I can think of a time when God used a physical pain, a health pain, to say, "No, I don't want you on that project. I want you working on *that* project." I would have never thought that except God used pain to get my attention to get me to hear that.

The verse about this in the Bible is in ***Proverbs 20:30***. This is a painful verse. ***"Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways."***

We know that's true. We've all seen the truth of that verse in our lives. We change when we get desperate. It's when we hit the bottom, often when we look up.

Some of you right now, you've hit the bottom this week. God has brought you here this morning to say to you, "Look up! Look up!"

Through that painful circumstance you faced this week God wants to let you know that He loves you more than you could imagine.

The Bible says in *Psalm 119:71* "*The suffering You sent was good for me. For it taught me to pay attention to Your principles.*" Pain is often like a spiritual hearing aid in our lives.

**C. S. Lewis once said "God whispers to us in our pleasures but He shouts to us in our pain."**

God may be shouting to you right now. It might be His big *Hello!* The pain is saying, "Watch out! You keep going that direction and your life is going to get destroyed." Or the pain might be saying, "I love you. I have a different plan for your life." God speaks to us through our pain.

I don't know what kind of pain you're going through but if you'll listen quietly, God will teach you some things, you'll learn some things and God will speak to you.

God speaks through the Bible. God speaks through godly friends and family. God speaks through impressions of the Holy Spirit. He speaks through pain.



If you are looking to anything else besides God for guidance you are on thin ice. If you're seeking guidance through astrology, through Tarot cards, through crystal balls, through mediums and the like, you should stop it. Someone said, **"Don't look to the stars for guidance. Look to the one who made the stars."**

Sometimes, as we wait for guidance, God is silent. God doesn't seem to be interested. Like when I waited for two months before I got the approval from YWAM. What do you do when God is silent? You do two things.

First **Job 34** *"If God is silent what is that to you? Since He turns His face away what can you do about it? But whether silent or hidden He is there ruling."*

Here's the first thing you do. **Remember God is in control.** He's there ruling. God may not share His plan with you but it doesn't mean He doesn't have a plan. He's got one. He has a plan and purpose for your life. He loves you.

He's a good God. And He'll take care of you if you'll just wait on Him. He is in charge and you're not.

Number two, you trust Him. **Psalm 50:15** *"I want you to trust Me in your time of trouble so I can rescue you and you can give Me glory."* I think God is asking that question of you today. God is asking you, "Will you trust Me? Will you trust Me with that financial problem? Will you trust Me with that dream? Will you trust Me with that ache in your heart? Will you trust Me

with that stress? Will you trust Me with that loneliness? Will you trust Me with that health issue? Will you trust Me with your dreams and ambitions? Will you? Will you? Will you trust Me?"

That's the big issue of life. **Will you trust God?**