

Food for thought...
Daily Bible Study Series

October 2 — November 6, 2016



**What does
the Bible say
about the Bible?**

Part 2

**God is closer
than you think.**

by Doug Cameron

About the author ...

Doug grew up in a fairly traditional church environment. He was confirmed as a member of the church when he was 14 years old and in his first year of High School; but within 6 months he became an atheist. So, as he often says in jest, he was quite literally a confirmed atheist—that is, until two friends introduced him to Christ in his final year of High School.

He was ordained in 1985, and has served churches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario. Along the way, God blessed him with two daughters and one grandson, all of whom he loves very much.

Doug freely admits that his conversion was at first quite intellectual. The mind was converted; but the heart took a really long time to catch up. It has been said that the moment of our conversion begins the process of evangelizing the unbelieving parts of the believer's heart. Doug suggests that he is living proof that this process can take a long time, and he freely acknowledges that he still has a long way to go. He longs for the day when all the hardness in his heart is removed and all that remains is a pure and holy love for His Saviour and His Lord.

Doug longs to see the Christian Church truly come alive. He sees the extraordinary poverty that exists in most churches—not a poverty of finances; but a poverty of spirit. We so often do all the right things and miss the point of it all. And all too often, when God begins to show us deeper levels of faith, we become so excited about the newness of the life that we're experiencing in Christ that we stop searching and camp on the lower ranges of the mountains. But in fact God wants us to keep climbing in His strength and by His Spirit until we hit the peak.

Doug has a passion for inductive Bible Study. He has discovered the power of using ordinary observation skills to study the Bible, and he has discovered the depths of understanding that can emerge when one takes those ordinary, everyday observation skills and hones them under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. It is this passion that he brings to these Daily Bible Studies. He invites you now to join him in discovering the hidden treasures that really aren't so hidden if one takes the time to uncover them. Along the way, he hopes that you yourself will grow in your ability to study the Bible for all it's worth!

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A word about this particular Bible Study series ...

I'm always interested in receiving feedback on these Bible Studies. What worked for you? What didn't? How could it be improved?

A very good friend of mine took me up on the offer some time back. She commented that some of the questions I ask feel very basic. I believe her exact words were "like Sunday School".

In light of her comment (and the high likelihood that others may feel the same way), I thought it would be helpful to include an explanation of why those "very basic" questions are so important.

First, let's talk about bricklayers.

If you want to build a brick wall, you have to begin at the bottom of the wall, and the care that you take on the very first layer of the wall will determine the quality of the whole wall. If you work hard to ensure that the first layer of bricks is dead level, and take the same care on every other layer, you'll end up with a really good wall. But if you're not careful with that first layer,—and every subsequent layer—you won't be able to fix the mistakes when you get to the last layer of bricks.



There are four layers involved in a careful, in-depth Bible study. Like a brick wall, the care you take on the first layer determines the quality of the final product of your Bible study.

That first layer is observation. Sometimes the things that are most obvious are really not that obvious. I'm a photographer. I notice the small details in my surroundings that others sometimes miss. I see the way the light plays on that clump of mushrooms over there. I see the shadows playing on the leaves, and the curious shapes made by fallen trees. I've often joked that photography is great exercise—especially when you're hiking with a group. You spend so much time looking at and photographing the little details that you're constantly running to catch up with the others!

Just as we can miss the small details on a hike through the forest, we can miss the small details that are incredibly meaningful when we're studying the Bible. And if we miss those small details, our interpretation and application will be lacking as well.



And of course, the same holds true for the second layer of bricks—the interpretation of what we've read. We need to think deeply about the real meaning of the passage before we can accurately and faithfully apply it.



The third layer begins the process of application. This is when we sit quietly in the presence of the Lord asking Him to show us where we need to apply the truths that we've just uncovered. You don't want to rush this process. If we take the time to listen to what the Lord is saying to us, He'll put His finger on some areas in our lives that we didn't even know existed. After all, He knows our hearts better than we do! That moment of discovery can be extraordinarily life-changing!



And the fourth layer is the most critical—the moment of decision. What are we going to do with all that God has been teaching us today. The moment of decision finalizes the application of what you learned when you were so carefully observing and interpreting the Word of God.

Without those last two layers of application, the first two are pointless. It's possible to be steeped in the Bible—to know it inside out, upside down, and backwards and still be just an empty bag of wind. If we know it, and don't apply it, what good is it to us? That's like having a beautiful top of the line Rolls Royce and never driving it!

This is why some of those questions feel so basic. We're taking great care laying the foundational row of the bricks in order to ensure that our interpretation and application really are accurate and biblical.

God's Word isn't really that complicated. You don't have to be a scholar to understand it, and apply it. All you need is a close connection to the Spirit of God and a heart committed to following Him. As you draw near to God, He'll give understanding and show you how He intends you to apply what He caused to be written.

Observation, Interpretation and Application. It really is that simple!

A note about translations...

We are blessed with an extraordinary range of options when it comes to translations. I now have at least 20 different English translations of the Bible installed on my cell phone. And there are many more available. So what makes a good translation and how do you know which is the right one to use?

That depends on what you're wanting to do. Some translations are word-for-word (or as close as possible). Others are thought-for-thought (working hard to convey the meaning as a whole).

The problem with thought-for-thought translations (such as the NIV) is that there is always a significant amount of interpretation that goes into the final text. That works very well for most purposes; but that interpretation can get in the way when it comes to a careful inductive (observation-based) study of the Bible. That's why I prefer to use word-for-word translations when it comes to careful inductive Bible Studies.

There are several good word-for-word translations. The NASB, the NKJV, and the ESV (English Standard Version) are amongst the most completely word-for-word translations available today. My preference is the ESV, and for that reason, you'll find that unless otherwise indicated, all of the scriptures used, quoted or referred to in this Bible Study will be from the ESV. No translation is perfectly word-for-word. For that reason, I'll draw on others as is helpful in the course of this study. I'll be sure to let you know when I do this, and why I've done it.

May you be richly blessed as you dig deep into God's Word.

You may notice that I regularly capitalize all of my references to God. I developed this habit early on in my walk with the Lord, and I just can't seem to break it. (In fact, I don't want to break it.)

I recognize that I am very much in the minority in this, and I cast no aspersion on those who don't follow this particular convention. It's simply my quirky way of honouring the Lord in my writing.

I will, however, honour the conventions established by those whom I quote.

Before we begin . . .

Jesus told a parable of a widow who wouldn't take no for an answer. She kept hounding the judge demanding justice until he finally gave in "so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming."

And Jesus concluded, "will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

The point of the parable was prayer. He wanted them "to pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18:1)

But I've always been fascinated by His last words in this parable: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) What on earth is the connection between this parable about prayer and faith?

And to me, the answer has always been quite obvious. Prayerlessness has more to do with a lack of faith than a lack of discipline. Those who have faith will find themselves naturally praying all the time, and for them, maintaining a discipline of regular focused prayer will come much more naturally. Of course there will be opposition from the enemy of our souls, but the desire and the drive to spend time in the prayer closet will always be there.

I've often challenged those who struggle with prayer, asking them if their God is too small. Is your God too small to be able to answer the cry of your heart? Is your God too small to be able to heal you of a terminal disease such as cancer? Is your God too small to be able to breathe life into your marriage? Is your God too small?

But I wonder if that question sums it all up. What if your God is not too small? What if your God is too distant?

That's a popular heresy in the church today.

Oh, we say with our lips that God is present; but we live our lives as if He isn't.

I think of Elijah having it out with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. One prophet of the True God against 450 prophets of the false god Baal. And here was the challenge: "You build your altar for Baal, and I'll build mine for Yahweh. You prepare your sacrifice for Baal, and I'll prepare mine for Yahweh. But neither one of us will strike a match to light the fire. The real God will light the fire for us."

And then Elijah just stood back and enjoyed the scene. He watched the prophets of Baal wear themselves out from morning to night with their rituals—even to the point of cutting themselves. And at noon he mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

And when it was time for the evening sacrifice, Elijah repaired Yahweh's altar. And he put wood on the altar, and prepared the bull and placed it on the altar, and he took twelve jars with water and poured it over the burnt offering and the wood absolutely soaking the altar with water, making it humanly impossible to light. And with a simple prayer he called on Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel to answer him. "And the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" he had dug around the altar. (1 Kings 18:17-40)

The false god Baal was absent. Yahweh was present in power, and Elijah knew it beyond any shadow of a doubt. God had been watching the fun throughout the day, even as Elijah was watching and mocking the prophets of Baal. And in a flash (quite literally) He answered Elijah's prayer.

I wonder if part of the reason we struggle with prayer is that we treat God as if He was as distant as the false god Baal. And I wonder what impact this has on the way we read and study the Bible.

In fact, some have formalized the theology of an absent God. They say that God is like a watchmaker who made the watch called the universe, wound it up and set it going. And now for the most part He simply stands back and watches. Those who hold to this view would suggest that miracles rarely happen because God rarely, if ever, intervenes in this world that He has created.

There are many variations and versions of this type of theology floating around. But as we will see this month as we continue our study on what the Bible says about the Bible, the reality is that God is very involved and constantly communicating with His people ... and that includes every single one of us.

I recall a story I heard years ago about a woman (I believe) who was scheduled as a passenger on a plane. At the last minute, God told her not to get on the plane. She obeyed. The plane crashed and everyone on board was killed. Afterward, when she told her story, someone challenged her asking, "Did God only care about you? Why didn't He warn everyone else?" She replied, "I believe that He was speaking to everyone else. It's just that I was the only one listening."

The biblical witness is that this woman was absolutely correct. God has always been speaking to the people He created. He speaks through creation. He speaks to us personally. He spoke, and continues to speak to us through the Bible. He spoke to us in Jesus who is the Word made flesh. And He continues to speak to us through the Holy Spirit.

He has always been communicating His thoughts to us. It's just that we haven't been really good at listening.

This is foundational to our understanding of the Bible. And it is the context in which we must set every discussion about what the Bible is. When you take the very presence of God away from our study of the Bible, you are left with an owners manual—a set of rules and principles to obey. When you bring the presence of God into your study of the Bible, you recognize it for what it is—a personal letter to us that we can read in the very presence of the Author of that letter so that any time we have any questions about what we're reading, we can ask Him to clarify and give us a deeper and richer understanding of what He has written.

With that, let us begin our study.

03-Oct-16

Psalm 19



- On the following four pages, I've included four different translations of Psalms 19. Read through them, looking for significant differences in the wording of the translation. Make notes of all that you've discovered.



NB: Most translations have, "Their voice goes out into all the earth," or something similar in verse 4. The New King James Version has the word "line" instead of voice. The New King James Version is following the Hebrew manuscripts available to us today. The other translations are basing their translation on the ancient Greek Septuagint translation that was begun around 280 B.C. In Hebrew, the difference between "measuring line" and "voice" comes down to one letter—the letter "lamed" (pronounced "lah-med"). With the "lamed", the word means, "voice". Without the "lamed", the word means "measuring line".

The Hebrew Bible has an extraordinary record in terms of preservation. That was demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt when the dead sea scrolls were discovered in 1947 in a cave in the desert in Qumran in 1947. These scrolls were about 1,900 years old when they were first discovered—approximately 1,000 years older than the the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible that were available prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And despite 1,000 years of copying and recopying the Bible lying between them, they were almost identical. That's remarkable.

So even questioning a single letter is serious business. Nevertheless, as I've been studying Psalm 19 over the last few days, I've come to the conclusion that the word "voice" works best in verse 4. Keep your mind open, and draw your own conclusion as you continue in this study. It may seem like a small question, but asking the small question may cause you to notice things that make a big difference in your understanding of this Psalm.

- Now read through Psalms 19 one more time with this question in mind:
English poetry is typically divided into stanzas. A stanza is a collection several lines of poetry that form a unit. In common terminology, a stanza is a verse of poetry. If you were going to divide this poem into stanzas, where would you put the dividing lines? Why? [I've chosen to use the word "stanza" instead of "verse" simply because the word "verse" has a somewhat different meaning when it comes to Bible Study.]

Notes

Here's a thought to ponder: the letter "lamed" is the tallest in the Hebrew alphabet. [It's the one right in the middle of the alphabet below.] Some have suggested that it metaphorically pierces the boundary between heaven and earth. I'm struck by the idea that the absence of a letter reputed to penetrate heaven would change "a voice" into "a measuring line" [See the note about verse 4 on the previous page.]—changing a personal communication into a lifeless law to be obeyed. And I wonder if that's a metaphor for what we've done with God's Word. Have we become so distant from God that we fail to hear His voice in the words of scripture, and instead have begun to treat it like a measuring line—a lifeless law to be obeyed, rather than a personal letter to us from God?

אבגדהוזחטיכלמנעספצקרשת

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 19 - New King James Version

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
- 2 Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
- 6 Its rising is from one end of heaven,
And its circuit to the other end;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can understand his errors?
Cleanse me from secret faults.
- 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer

For the director of music. A psalm of David

Psalms 19 - New International Version

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- 2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
5 which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
- 6 It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The ordinances of the Lord are sure
and altogether righteous.
- 10 They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.
- 11 By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can discern his errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
- 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then will I be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
- 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

For the choir director: A psalm of David

- 1 The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
- 2 Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
- 3 They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
- 4 Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world.
God has made a home in the heavens for the sun.
It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding.
- 5 It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race.
- 6 The sun rises at one end of the heavens
and follows its course to the other end.
Nothing can hide from its heat.
- 7 The instructions of the Lord are perfect,
reviving the soul.
The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
- 8 The commandments of the Lord are right,
bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are clear,
giving insight for living.
- 9 Reverence for the Lord is pure,
lasting forever.
The laws of the Lord are true;
each one is fair.
- 10 They are more desirable than gold,
even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.
- 11 They are a warning to your servant,
a great reward for those who obey them.
- 12 How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
- 13 Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
- 14 May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer

For the music director; a psalm of David.

Psalm 19 - New English Translation

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the sky displays his handiwork.
 - 2 Day after day it speaks out;
night after night it reveals his greatness.
 - 3 There is no actual speech or word,
nor is its a voice literally heard.
 - 4 Yet its voice echoes throughout the earth;
its words carry to the distant horizon.
In the sky he has pitched a tent for the sun.
 - 5 Like a bridegroom it emerges from its chamber;
like a strong man it enjoys running its course.
 - 6 It emerges from the distant horizon,
and goes from one end of the sky to the other;
nothing can escape its heat.
 - 7 The law of the Lord is perfect
and preserves one's life.
The rules set down by the Lord are reliable
and impart wisdom to the inexperienced.
 - 8 The Lord 's precepts are fair
and make one joyful.
The Lord 's commands are pure
and give insight for life.
 - 9 The commands to fear the Lord are right
and endure forever.
The judgments given by the Lord are trustworthy
and absolutely just.
 - 10 They are of greater value than gold,
than even a great amount of pure gold;
they bring greater delight than honey,
than even the sweetest honey from a honeycomb.
 - 11 Yes, your servant finds moral guidance there;
those who obey them receive a rich reward.
 - 12 Who can know all his errors?
Please do not punish me for sins I am unaware of.
 - 13 Moreover, keep me from committing flagrant sins;
do not allow such sins to control me.
Then I will be blameless,
and innocent of blatant rebellion.
 - 14 May my words and my thoughts
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my sheltering rock and my redeemer.
-

04-Oct-16

Psalm 19



Hebrew poetry is very different from English poetry.

For one thing, as I stated in last month's Bible study, in English we rhyme words. In Hebrew poetry, thoughts are rhymed. Two sentences saying very much the same sort of thing are placed one after the other.

But there is a second difference, and it has to do with the way that the poetry is written. Rather than describe it, perhaps I could show you what it would look like if the English translation of Psalm 19 was written line by line the way that the Hebrew was written. (See Psalm 19 - Chart A on the next page.)

I've done this on the next page. I've used the English Standard Version for this exercise, but I had to change the ordering of the wording in verse 14 in order to accurately reflect the specifics of the way that the words were written in the original Hebrew. And I've added a symbol specific to the Hebrew Language. It looks something like a colon (׃), but it acts something like a period. That symbol shows where a thought or sentence should end, but the style of writing the poetry opens up so many more possibilities of connections between the different phrases and lines in the poem.



Take some time now to study the copy of Psalm 19 that you'll find on the next page.

Don't try to analyze it too much. [There will be a time for that later.] For now, just experience the difference, and pay attention to anything that strikes you as you're reading and meditating on Psalm 19 written this way.

Make notes below of all that you discover as you do this.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. :

The heavens declare the glory of God,
Day to day pours out speech,
There is no speech, nor are there words,
Their voice (line) goes out through all the earth,
In them he has set a tent for the sun, :
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. :
and its circuit to the end of them

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; :
rejoicing the heart;
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
and righteous altogether. :
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. :
in keeping them there is great reward. :
Declare me innocent from hidden faults. :
Let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless,
Let the words of my mouth be acceptable,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. :

and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. :
and night to night reveals knowledge. :
whose voice is not heard. :
and their words to the end of the world.
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat. :
the precepts of the Lord are right,
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; :
the rules of the Lord are true,
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
Who can discern his errors?
Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins
and innocent of great transgression. :
and the meditation of my heart also, in your sight,

Psalm 19 - Chart A

05-Oct-16

Psalm 19



I wonder if you noticed the same thing I noticed as I did the exercise that I asked you to do yesterday. You can see something of my observation in “Psalm 19 - Chart B” found on the next page. Notice the similarity in thoughts between the yellow-highlighted stanzas. [At least, I’ve interpreted them as stanzas.] Though one is about creation, and the other about the law, there seems to be an intuitive similarity in the thoughts expressed about their respective subject matter [or so it seems to me].

- Spend the day simply meditating on what you see on the next page. Turn it over in your mind and in your heart. Allow your understanding to grow as you look at this and roll it over in your heart and in your mind.
- Make notes below about anything you discover as you do this.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. :

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. :
Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. :
There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. :
Their voice (line) goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun, : which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. : Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them and there is nothing hidden from its heat. :
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; : the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; :
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether. : More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. : Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward. : Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults. : Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins
let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. :
Let the words of my mouth be acceptable, and the meditation of my heart also, in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. :

Psalm 19 - Chart B

06-Oct-16

Psalm 19

During the last few days, I've found myself returning repeatedly to the highlighted version of the Hebrew style writing of Psalm 19. As I've returned, I've noticed more about this Psalm. I offer the following observations as possibilities, and invite you to explore them, test them, and draw your own conclusions. As you do this, I invite you to use the third and final chart of Psalm 19 Hebrew style found at the end of today's study questions and identified as "Psalm 19 - Chart C".



- 1) I personally believe that there are five stanzas here, and each stanza is three lines long. The first complete stanza begins with the words, "Day to day pours out speech."
- 2) I personally believe that there are two parts to this poem—one expresses how God speaks through creation. The first line in the poem both titles and defines this particular part of the poem.
- 3) I don't believe that the phrases, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul," and "O Lord, my rock and my redeemer," are to be included in the five stanzas.

Rather, they form a split title for the second part of the poem which expresses how God speaks in and through His written word.

The title has three purposes—it tells us what this part of the poem is all about; it provides brackets to more clearly define what it is entitling or describing; and the last line prophetically points to the most perfect expression of God's heart—the Living Word of God whom we know as Jesus.

- 4) The phrases, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul," and "O Lord, my rock and my redeemer," tie beautifully into the first line in the poem as follows:
 - a) "The heavens declare the glory of God" — "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul."
 - b) "and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" — "O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

[The sky is the most immediate and tangible expression of the vastness of the heavens, just as Jesus is the most immediate and tangible expression of the infinite vastness and majesty of God.]

5) A great deal can be learned by comparing the phrases in each stanza with their corresponding phrases in the same position in the subsequent stanzas. For example, consider the following:

a) Compare the second half of the third line in each of the second and fourth stanzas:

- “and there is nothing hidden from its heat.”
- “Who can discern his errors?”

The second stanza answers the question that the fourth stanza asks. This is particularly true when you add information from the third and fifth stanzas:

- “the rules of the Lord are true,”
- “and (let) the meditation of my heart (be acceptable) in your sight”
- “Who can discern his errors?” — “the rules of the Lord”.
- “Who can discern his errors?” — I want the meditation of my heart to be acceptable to you, God.
- Nothing is hidden from the “heat” of “the rules of the Lord”.
- I can’t hide anything in my heart from God. I want even my heart’s mediation to be pleasing to Him.

b) Compare the first half of the second line in the first and third stanzas:

- “There is no speech, nor are there words,”
- “rejoicing the heart;”
- The heart processes things on a different level than does the mind. Often the heart is without words.

c) Also notice the theme of joy that can be traced in the first half of the second lines in each of the five stanzas that I’ve outlined.

d) Notice the theme of beginnings and endings that can be traced in the second half of the second line, followed by the first half of the third line in all five stanzas:

- i) The beginning is an unheard voice. The ending is a voice that goes through all the earth.
- ii) The beginning is the rising of the sun. The ending is the end of the circuit.
- iii) The beginning is the commandment of the Lord. The ending is the fear of the Lord (in the most positive sense of the word fear) that endures forever.
- iv) The beginning is the warning. The ending is the reward.
- v) The beginning is an extraordinarily deep innocence. The ending is acceptable words.

Continue to mull this Psalm over again and again, meditating on it with particular reference to the structure that I've suggested today. And continue to make notes about it throughout the day.



To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. :

The heavens declare the glory of God,

and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. :

Day to day pours out speech,

and night to night reveals knowledge. :

There is no speech, nor are there words,

whose voice is not heard. :

Their voice (line) goes out through all the earth,

and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun, :

which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,

and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. :

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,

and its circuit to the end of them

and there is nothing hidden from its heat. :

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;

the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; :

the precepts of the Lord are right,

rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; :

the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

the rules of the Lord are true,

and righteous altogether. :

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. :

Moreover, by them is your servant warned;

in keeping them there is great reward. :

Who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults. :

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins

let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless,

and innocent of great transgression. :

Let the words of my mouth be acceptable,

and the meditation of my heart also, in your sight,

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. :

Psalm 19 - Chart C

07-Oct-16

Psalm 19



Our study of Psalm 19 will not be complete unless and until we've take the time to really understand the various words that David used to describe the Bible.

- Take a few moments to read through the definitions found in Appendix A at the back of this book.
- Do any of these definitions shed any new light on the meaning of Psalm 19:7-9? Explain.

08-Oct-16 — 09-Oct-16

Psalm 19



- Enjoy meditating on Psalm 19 this weekend. Roll it over in your mind and in your heart. Periodically refer to the version of Psalm 19 written “Hebrew Style” in the preceding pages, and see what new insights emerge for you as you do so.

Make notes as you do so.

And finally answer the following questions:



- What new insights have you gained into God’s Word from this study of Psalm 19?
 - What new insights have you gained into the many ways in which all of creation declares “the glory of God”?
 - What impact will this study have on the way you relate to God?
 - What impact will this study have on the way you study the Bible?
 - What impact will this study have on the way you live your life?
-

10-Oct-16

Romans 1:16-21

I'm basing this study on the ESV text, which I've included below. I recommend that you read it first in whatever version you're studying so that you can see the context. Then answer the questions based on the ESV version.

Romans 1:16-21

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools. (ESV)



- What has God shown us? (Romans 1:19) [Be very specific in your answer.]
- How did God show us these things? (Romans 1:20)
- According to verse 20, what can be known about God through His creation? [Pay close attention to the details here.]
- How are these two characteristics of God recognized and understood?
- What is the net result for us? (Romans 1:20)
- What did unrighteous people do with the truth that God revealed to them through His creation? (Romans 1:18)
- Verse 21 is even more specific than verse 18. According to verse 21 what two things did unrighteous people fail to do?
- What two things happened as a result of this? (Romans 1:21)
- What did these people claim to be? (Romans 1:22)
- What did these people become? (Romans 1:22)

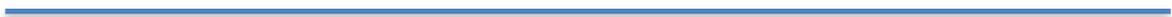


- Pause for a moment to consider our 21st century world. Can you give examples of how our thinking has become futile? Can you give examples of how our hearts have foolishly become darkened?
- Now let's get a little more personal: Ask the Lord to show you how your own thinking has become futile. Then wait on Him for a few moments, listening to whatever He brings to mind or puts in your heart.

- Then ask the Lord to show you how your own heart has been foolish and become darkened. Again, wait on Him for a few moments, listening to whatever He brings to mind or puts in your heart.



- And then, the most significant question of all: what are you going to do about this?
- Tell Him.



11-Oct-16

Romans 1:16-21

Review your notes from yesterday before continuing on in this study of Romans 1:16-21.



- How is the gospel described in verse 16?
- Who can access this power? (Romans 1:16)
- What is revealed in the gospel? (Romans 1:17)
- How is it revealed? (Romans 1:17)
- What does this mean?
- Note the difference between the way creation communicates truths about God (“... have been clearly perceived,” and the way that the gospel communicates truth about God (“... is revealed ...”)
- What else is revealed? (Romans 1:18)
- Where does this revelation come from? (Romans 1:18)
- What and who is this wrath directed against?



- Think carefully about verse 18. In the context of this passage, the phrase, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” could be interpreted to mean that God’s wrath is seen in His creation, or it could be interpreted to mean that the gospel reveals the wrath of God. Do you believe that Paul was saying that God’s creation reveals His wrath, or that the gospel reveals God’s wrath? Explain

[Be very careful here. Make sure that you are answering this question on the basis of what Paul said—not on the basis of your own opinion. When answering this question, take into consideration the use of the word “revealed” vs “clearly perceived”. Also take into consideration the placement of this verse in Paul’s discussion as a whole. The word “for” generally means that what follows “for” is an explanation of what precedes “for”.]

- How does Romans 1:16-21 echo and support the things expressed in Psalm 19?



- What have you learned these past two days about God’s willingness and desire to communicate with us?



- What needs to change in your life in order for your heart to receive these truths about God more deeply?
 - Talk to God about this, and take note of how He responds to you. [He is responding, even if you’re not able to fully hear or comprehend it.]
-

12-Oct-16

Job 11:7-10; 12:7-10

The Book of Job is generally believed to be the oldest book in the Bible. It's the story of a man who had everything one could ever want—wealth, land, servants. In fact he was “the greatest of all the people of the east.” (Job 1:3) And God was extraordinarily proud of him.

In fact, God boasted about Job to Satan.

8 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” 9 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” 12 And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. (Job 1:8-12)

So Satan did exactly what God allowed him to do. His oxen, donkeys, sheep and camels were all destroyed and all of his servants were killed along with all of his children. Job and his wife were left destitute.

But Job responded in an extraordinarily godly way.

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22)

And God boasted about him again.

3 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” 4 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” 6 And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.” (Job 2:3-6)

And Satan again, did all that he was allowed to do to Job. He “struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” (Job 2:8)

Three friends came to comfort him, but they didn't do a very good job of it. Job consistently felt attacked and misunderstood by them. And as we will see, they seriously misrepresented God. Most of the book of Job records this conversation between Job and his three friends, along with an appropriate response from a fourth man whose name was Elihu and words that God spoke directly to Job at the end of the book.

There are two passages from the Book of Job that we're going to be studying today. The first is part of a speech made by one of Job's friends by the name of Zophar. The second is part of Job's response to Zophar.

Read Job 11:7-10.



- What rhetorical question does Zophar ask? (Job 11:7) [Note that the same question is asked in two slightly different ways. This is another example of Hebrew poetry rhyming thoughts instead of words.]
- How does Zophar answer his own question? (Job 11:8-10) [What's the bottom line for Zophar? How much can we really know about God?]

Now read Job 12:7-10.

- How does Job answer Zophar? (Job 12:7-8)
- What question does Job ask Zophar? (Job 12:9)
- This is another rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is a question that has an obvious answer. What is the obvious answer that Job would offer to his own question?
- What is Job's conclusion? (Job 12:10)

Read Acts 17:24-28



- What does Paul say God hopes and intends us for us to do? (Acts 17:27)
 - What is the bottom line for Paul? (Acts 17:27-28)
 - How do Paul's words to those in the Areopagus compare to Job 12:10?
 - Compare Job 12:7-10 with Psalm 19 and Romans 1:16-22. What do you notice?
 - What is the deepest truth that God has been writing on your heart as you've been studying these passages today?
 - What do you need to do in order to more diligently and effectively "seek God, and perhaps feel (your) way toward him and find him"? [You may say that you've already found Him. In one sense this may well be true. If we have committed our lives to Christ, we can perhaps say that we have "found God". But I question whether anyone has fully probed the depths of their relationship with God. In fact, in all eternity, I believe that we will be constantly discovering more about the infinite, majestic, powerful and holy God that we love and serve.]
 - Talk to God about these things.
-

13-Oct-16

Job 37:2-13

And now we turn to a portion of Elihu's speech. Elihu held off on his comments until the very end of this discussion. He did so out of deference to Job's other three companions since they were older than him. But eventually he could hold his tongue no longer. (Job 32:2-10)

While the other three friends of Job were for the most part spouting nonsense. For the most part, Elihu is on track. For the most part, Elihu's theology a pretty accurate description of what could be known about God at that time, long before Jesus lived, died and rose again for us. This can be seen in the fact that God pronounces judgment on Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, but does not correct Elihu. (See Job 42:7-9)

Read Job 37:2-13.



- According to Elihu, what role does God play in thunderstorms? (Job 37:2-5)
- According to Elihu, is the connection between God and snow or rainstorms? (Job 37:6)
- What other weather does God control? (Job 37:9-12)
- Why does He do this? (Job 37:13)

According to the English Standard Version of the Bible (the ESV),

7 He seals up the hand of every man,
that all men whom he made may know it.
8 Then the beasts go into their lairs,
and remain in their dens.



What does it mean to “seal up the hand of every man, that all men whom he made may know it”? I puzzled over that one for a while. In the end, I believe that the New International Version gives the sense of this verse quite accurately:

7 So that all men he has made may know his work,
he stops every man from his labor.
8 The animals take cover;
they remain in their dens.

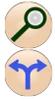
When Elihu says, “He seals up the hand of every man,” he’s effectively saying that God closes the hands of men so that they can’t work until He reopens their hands. I believe that verse 7 is tightly tied to verse 6. God tells the snow to fall on the earth, and He does the same “to the downpour, his mighty downpour.” You cannot plough the fields when it’s pouring rain. When God sends a downpour, He’s closing the hands of every farmer with crops in the field. (And in a mostly agricultural society, that means pretty well all work ceases.) That’s essentially what Elihu is saying.



- According to Elihu, why does God do this? (Job 37:7)
- What do the beasts do when it’s pouring rain? (Job 37:8)



- Does this last statement add anything to Elihu’s argument, or is it simply part of the poetry? Explain.



- Compare Job 37:1-13 with Psalm 19 and Romans 1:16-22. What do you notice?
- Ponder what impact Job 37:1-13 could have on the way that you respond to weather.
- Talk to God about these things.

14-Oct-16

Psalm 8

I've printed Psalm 8 in four different versions of the Bible on the next few pages. Read through them now. [Take your time reading through these different translations of this Psalm. Let the words sink into your heart and your mind, and enjoy feasting on God's Word.]

Psalm 8 - New King James Version

To the choirmaster:according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

- 1 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
- 4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
- 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
- 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
- 7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- 9 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

- 1 O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.
- 2 You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.
- 3 When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
- 4 what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?
- 5 Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- 6 You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
- 7 the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
- 8 the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
- 9 O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth

Psalm 8 - The Amplified Bible

- 1 O LORD, our Lord, how excellent (majestic and glorious) is Your name in all the earth!
You have set Your glory on [or above] the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouths of babes and unweaned infants You have established strength
because of Your foes, that You might silence the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I view and consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the
stars, which You have ordained and established,
- 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of [earthborn] man that You care
for him?
- 5 Yet You have made him but a little lower than God [or heavenly beings], and You have
crowned him with glory and honor.
- 6 You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things
under his feet:
- 7 All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field,
- 8 The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes along the paths of
the seas.
- 9 O Lord, our Lord, how excellent (majestic and glorious) is Your name in all the earth.

Psalm 8 - New English Translation

1 O Lord, our Lord,
how magnificent is your reputation throughout the earth!
You reveal your majesty in the heavens above!

2 From the mouths of children and nursing babies
you have ordained praise on account of your adversaries,
so that you might put an end to the vindictive enemy.

3 When I look up at the heavens, which your fingers made,
and see the moon and the stars, which you set in place,

4 Of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them?
Of what importance is mankind, that you should pay attention to them,
5 and make them a little less than the heavenly beings?
You grant mankind honor and majesty;

6 you appoint them to rule over your creation;
you have placed everything under their authority,

7 including all the sheep and cattle,
as well as the wild animals,

8 the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea
and everything that moves through the currents of the seas.

9 O Lord, our Lord,
how magnificent is your reputation throughout the earth!



- Read through Psalm 8 one more time using the ESV translation laid out the way it appears in the Hebrew Bible. You'll find this on the next page. [For a refresher on what this "Hebrew Layout" means, see the notes on October 4th.]
- Did you discover anything new as you studied this Hebrew Layout of Psalm 19? Explain.
- What sentence is repeated at both the beginning and the end of this Psalm?



- Why do you think it is repeated?
- What do you think the phrase, "how majestic is your name in all the earth" means? [For additional insight into the meaning of this phrase, review the different ways it's translated in the four versions you just read.]
- What do you think David meant when he wrote "You have set your glory above the heavens:?" [Again, for additional insight into the meaning of this phrase, review the different ways it's translated in the four versions you just read.]



- What does David see when he looks at the heavens? (Psalm 8:3)
- What question does he ask when he sees this? (Psalm 8:4)
- What observation does he make when he considers all of this? (Psalm 8:5-8)



- How do you think David felt while he was declaring verses 5-8?
- What does this study of Psalm 8 add to your understanding of how God speaks through His creation?
- Spend some time talking to God about all of this.

15-Oct-16 — 16-Oct-16

Weekend Review



- Spend time meditating on Psalm 8 this weekend. Read it frequently. Ponder it deeply.
- Make a point of noticing and enjoying the creation that surrounds you. Spend time star-gazing (if the weather cooperates.) Watch the clouds scudding across the sky. If there's a thunderstorm, relish the awesome power of the one who created the thunderstorm. And don't miss the small stuff. Notice the shape of leaves, the intricacy of a spider's web. And consider the immensity of the one who created your body that was originally designed to fit together so perfectly and so intricately and function so effectively. [If you struggle with illness or any kind of brokenness, remember that in eternity you'll receive a body that is perfect and never wears out!]



- As you observe all of this, make a point of seeing the God who created it all and declare with David, "O Lord, our lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth." Worship God in all His awesome majesty.
-

Psalm 8

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith.

O Lord, our Lord,

You have set your glory above the heavens. :

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength
to still the enemy and the avenger. :

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, :

and the son of man that you care for him? :

and crowned him with glory and honor. :

you have put all things under his feet, :

and also the beasts of the field, :

whatever passes along the paths of the seas. :

how majestic is your name in all the earth! :

A Psalm of David. :

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

because of your foes,

what is man that you are mindful of him,

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;

all sheep and oxen,

the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,

O Lord, our Lord,

(English Standard Version, modified to mimic the layout of the Hebrew)

17-Oct-16

Genesis 2:15-19,; 3:8-19

By now, it should be abundantly clear that God has designed all of creation to bear witness to Him—to proclaim His eternal power and His divine nature. (Romans 1:20)

But does He ever speak directly to us, and if so, how does He do this and how can we know that it is God speaking to us—not some figment of our imagination, or worse still, some demonic prompting?

Those are the next questions we must ask.

Some may say that I'm getting this backwards—I should be dealing with our theology about the Bible first, and tackle questions of personal inspiration and direction only after that. And in some ways they would be absolutely right. As we will see, the Bible plays a key role in discerning whether the inner prompting we're sensing comes from the Spirit of God or from some other source.

But I believe that this discussion of whether and how God speaks to His children today will be very helpful in laying a foundation for a discussion of what the inspiration of scripture is and what it really means. So bear with me if you will.

We're going to begin this part of the study by looking at how God communicated with His people in the past. Then we'll ask the question about whether He uses those same ways to communicate with His people today.

Let's start at the very beginning:

Read Genesis 2:15-19



- What do you notice about the relationship that Adam had with God? (Genesis 16-17, 19)



- Ponder what it would have been like to have been in Adam's shoes (not that he had any at that time) sharing this kind of fellowship with God.

Read Genesis 3:8-19



- Ponder verse 8. This verse simply tells of one event that happened on one occasion. "They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." There is no definite assertion in the verse itself that this happened every day, nor that it was a regular thing. What clues are contained within this sentence that *suggest* that this happened on a regular basis—perhaps every day?



- What did the man and his wife do when they heard the sound of the Lord God? (Genesis 3:8)

- What did God do when the man and his wife hid from Him? (Genesis 3:9)



- Do you think God already knew the answer to this question? Explain.
- If God did already know the answer to the question He asked, why do you think He asked it?



- How did the man answer God? (Genesis 3:10)
- What question did God ask next? (Genesis 3:11)



- Again, consider this: did God already know the answer to this question? If so, why do you think He asked it?

And of course, we know the rest of the story. It's very familiar to us. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. But notice that the serpent wasn't given a chance to defend itself. I wonder if that observation suggests something about the difference and distinction between the relationship that we are intended to have with God and the relationship that He has with every other living thing in creation.

- Take a few moments to review the answers that you just gave about the sequence of events that began when God came walking in the garden that day. Some have suggested that our intimacy with God was broken when we were banished from the Garden of Eden. According to what you've just read, when was our familiar relationship with God broken? Explain.
- Who first created the separation that we experience between ourselves and God? Explain.
- What do you think would have happened if Adam and Eve had chosen to fess up immediately and plead for forgiveness for having violated the one commandment that God gave them? Explain.

[Don't be too quick to assume that they wouldn't have faced any consequences for their behaviour, and don't be too quick to assume that they wouldn't have faced expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Remember that forgiveness and restoration of a relationship are two different (though related) things.]



- What is the greatest obstacle to your own relationship with God?
 - What responsibility do you need to take for causing the breakdown in your relationship with God? [I know of no-one who isn't still suffering at least some of the effects of the breakdown in their relationship with God, and I am privileged to know some extraordinarily godly people.]
 - What responsibility do you need to take for repairing your relationship with God?
 - What do you need God to do in order to restore your relationship with Him?
 - Talk to Him about these things, and follow through on whatever He shows you to do.
-

18-Oct-16

Genesis 3:21-24; 4:3-16

Read Genesis 3:21-24

-  • What did God do to cover the shame that Adam and Eve felt as a result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (Genesis 3:21)
-  • How do you think God obtained the skins with which to clothe Adam and Eve?
-  • Is there any record of any animal being killed before this? [Check this out by scanning through Genesis 2:19—3:20.]
-  • Some have said that this was the first record of a sacrifice being offered to God (in this case by God) in order to deal with sin. What do you think? Why?
-  • Why did God decide to banish Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 3:22-24)
 - Is there any hint here that God was severing or limiting His own relationship with Adam and Eve? Is this significant? Explain.

Did God stop talking to us once we sinned and had to be driven out of the garden? That's the next question to consider, and Cain gives us a pretty clear answer on this count.

Read Genesis 4:3-16. As you do so, pay close attention to every instance where God spoke to Cain or Cain spoke to God.

-  • What was God trying to communicate to Cain before Cain slew his brother Abel? (Genesis 4:6-7)
 - What question did God ask Cain after he slew Abel? (Genesis 4:9)
 - Did God already know the answer to His question? (Genesis 4:10)
-  • Why do you think He asked Cain this question?
-  • How did Cain answer God? (Genesis 4:9)
-  • What does this suggest to you about Cain's willingness to take responsibility for his own actions?
-  • What consequences did Cain have to live with as a direct result of his decision to murder Abel? (Genesis 4:11-12)
-  • Consider carefully: Was this a punishment, or was it simply the natural consequences of his act of murder?

[Pay attention to the comment that God made in Genesis 4:10 about "the voice of (Abel's) blood". Notice also the source of the curse that Cain carried from that time forward. How do you interpret these things?]
- Cain interpreted this judgment from God as a punishment. He blamed God for driving him away from the ground and causing the breakdown in his relationship with God. (Genesis 4:13-14) Carefully review the events that led up to this curse that Cain was now under. Was he correct? Did God punish him, or was God simply declaring the natural consequences of Cain's actions both leading up to and including the murder of his brother?

- Consider all that you have learned so far from your study of these few chapters in the book of Genesis. What have you learned about how our relationship with God broke down?
- Is there any indication so far that God no longer wanted/wants a relationship with us? Explain.
-  • On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is almost non-existent and 10 is off the charts deeply connected, how intimate and personal is your relationship with God?
- If it's anything less than perfect, ask yourself, "Who moved? Me or God?"
-  • What is God calling you to do in order to develop a closer and more personal intimacy with Himself?
- Talk to Him about these things.



19-Oct-16 — 21-Oct-16

Genesis 16:7-13; 20:1-7; 25:21-23

Numbers 22:1-38; Judges 6:11-24; 1 Samuel 3:1-14

Clearly sin is responsible for the breakdown in our relationship with God. But it also seems clear that God never gave up on us. Indeed, that is the entire message of the gospel. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Equally clear is the fact that God did not stop communicating with us just because we sinned and had to be booted out of the Garden of Eden. In fact, I would suggest that the major problem has always been on our side of the relationship and from what we’ve discovered in studying the first few chapters in the book of Genesis, it would seem that two issues in particular interfere with our ability to hear God when He is speaking to us: shame and a lack of holiness.

We could get sidetracked into an entirely separate Bible study at this point, but let’s stay focused on the main goal of determining when and how God speaks to us. And the question we’re going to tackle now is, “how normal is it for people to hear God speaking to them?”

To answer that, we’re going to do a quick survey of several people throughout the Old Testament who had conversations with God. There are several key individuals that I’m just going to ignore at this time: Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, etc. We all know that God spoke to them—some on quite a regular basis. But at this time, I’m more interested in the average Joe or Joanna. So let’s look at some of the more obscure, or seemingly less important characters who God spoke to.

It is worth defining what we mean when we say, “God speaks,” or “God spoke” to someone. We aren’t necessarily talking about hearing an audible voice. In fact, that’s probably one of the rarest experiences that people have.

When we say that God speaks to us, we are simply referring to the many different ways that He communicates with us. According to Numbers 12:1-8, there are at least four different ways in which God “speaks” to us: visions, dreams, riddles and audibly.

Bill Hybels speaks of the “whispers” that we hear in our spirit. And Hybels defines these “whispers” as an inner knowing. Sometimes we miss them entirely, and live to regret it. But we can learn to recognize them and act on them.

These are the kinds of things that we mean when we talk about God speaking to us.

Read Genesis 16:7-13



- Who did the angel of the Lord speak to?
[It is worth noting that this was an angel of the Lord, and not the Lord Himself; but in verse 13, Hagar identified the person speaking to her as God Himself. So the question is, was this an angel of the Lord or the Lord Himself? Even if it was simply an angel of the Lord, does it not suggest that God continues to be concerned for her and to reach out to her?]

- Who was Hagar?



- Is there any indication that Hagar had any prophetic gifting that would allow her to hear God more clearly than anyone else?



- What did God say to Hagar through the angel of the Lord?



- Why do you think He chose to speak to her in this way at this time?

Read Genesis 20:1-7



- Who did God speak to?
- Who was this man?
- How did God speak to him?
- Why did God choose to speak to him at that time?



- Is there any indication that Abimelech had any prophetic gifting that would allow him to hear God more clearly than anyone else?

Read Genesis 25:21-23



- Who did God speak to?
- Why did she go “to inquire of the Lord”?
- What answer did the Lord give her?



- Is there any indication that Rebekah had a prophetic gifting that would allow her to hear God more clearly than anyone else?

Read Numbers 22:1-38 (Pay particular attention to verses 8, 12-13, 18-20, 32, 35, and 38.)



- Who did King Balak summon to curse Israel? (Numbers 22:4-5)
- Why did he summon him? (Numbers 22:6)



- How do you think Balaam got this reputation for effectiveness in the blessing/cursing department?
- What does this suggest about Balaam’s ability to hear God’s voice on an ongoing basis?

-  • How did Balaam answer the messengers that King Balak sent to him? (Numbers 22:8)
- Why did he give this answer? (Numbers 22:18)
-  • What do you think tempted Balaam when the second team of princes came to ask him to curse Israel? Explain. [You may wish to consider whether some of the information in Numbers 22:17 applies.]
-  • What answer did God give Balaam the second time? (Numbers 22:20)
- How did God feel about Balaam going with those who had summoned him? (Numbers 22:22)
-  • Why do you think God was angry at Balaam for going when He Himself had given Balaam permission to go?
-  • What did Balaam declare to King Balak about what he would say when it came time to speak about the future of Israel? (Numbers 22:38)
-  • Notice that Balaam appears to have no difficulty hearing what God is saying to him, and yet, Balaam has no relationship with the nation of Israel (God's chosen people). What does this suggest to you about who God is willing to speak to?

Read Judges 6:11-24

-  • Who did God speak to? (Judges 6:14)
[Note, although the person who first spoke to Gideon is identified as “the angel of the Lord in verse 11, it is the Lord Himself who addressed Him in verse 14.]
- What did God tell Gideon to do?
- How did Gideon respond to the Lord?
-  • Is there any indication that Gideon had any prophetic gifting that would allow him to hear God more clearly than anyone else?

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-14

-  • Who did God speak to?
- What did Samuel do when God first called to Him? (1 Samuel 3:4-5)
- What did Eli say initially? (1 Samuel 3:6)
- When did Eli figure out what was going on? (1 Samuel 3:8)
- What did he tell Samuel to do then? (1 Samuel 3:9)
- What did God say to Samuel? (1 Samuel 3:11-14)
- What do you learn about the word of the Lord from verse 1?

Some of these people that we've studied were or became leaders in Israel. Some were very ordinary and obscure. Some, like Balaam, weren't even associated with Israel. And of course, as I said at the beginning of this three-day study, we haven't even begun to look at the better known individuals such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets.

I'll leave you to make up your own mind about this on the basis of your study of these passages of scripture. My sense is that throughout the Old Testament, there is an expectation that it should be normal and ordinary to hear or sense the whispers that God is speaking into your spirit. 1 Samuel 3:1 includes an interesting observation: "The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." The very existence of this comment suggests that the lack of hearing from God was abnormal. It seems to me that this comment suggests that it should be normal and expected to hear a word from the Lord. What do you think?

22-Oct-16 — 23-Oct-16

Job 33:9-18

Perhaps one of the clearest descriptions of how God spoke (at least in the Old Testament) is found in the oldest book in the Bible. It's part of Elihu's speech close to the end of the book of Job. Elihu challenges Job's assertion that God is dealing harshly with him without cause.

Read Job 33:9-18.



- According to Elihu, how does God speak to people? (Job 33:15)
- How does this affect them? (Job 33:16)



Note: there seems to be a disagreement here between the New King James Version and the New American Standard Version on the one hand and most other modern translations of the Bible on the other hand.

New King James Version:

“Then He opens the ears of men,
And seals their instruction.”

English Standard Version:

“Then he opens the ears of men
and terrifies them with warnings.”

Without going into the details of the Hebrew language, both translations are possible. The New King James Version is closer to the Hebrew Text that we have today, but if one simply makes a slight change to the way we pronounce the Hebrew word for “seals” it becomes “terrifies”. And since the Hebrew language was originally written without vowels, pronunciation is left up to the reader. (At least it was until about 900 A.D., but that's another story.)

The Amplified Bible captures both meanings:

“Then He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction [terrifying them with warnings].”



- Why does God do this? (Job 33:17-18)
- According to Elihu, what sometimes (or perhaps most often?) happens when God speaks to people in this way? (Job 33:14)



- Of course, this raises a question: We may say, “God doesn't speak to me.” But is it possible that He has been speaking to us and still is speaking to us, and we're simply not aware of it? What do you think?



- Ponder all that you've been studying this week. Let it sink in that God is deeply invested in His relationship with you. He longs to speak with you, and to hear you speaking with Him.
 - Throughout the weekend, ask God to show you what remains in you that interferes with your relationship with Him. Commit to dealing with whatever He exposes in your heart.
-

24-Oct-16

Hebrews 1:1-2; John 1:1-4, 14-18

Last week we took a very brief excursion through the Old Testament looking at just a few of the more obscure people who recognized that God was speaking to them. But what about the New Testament? Did people in the New Testament hear the voice of God as clearly and frequently or perhaps even more clearly and more frequently than they did in the Old Testament?

Let's find out.

Hebrews 1:1-2 describes the most dramatic change that took place. Read it now.



- According to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, how did God speak to His people in the past? (Hebrews 1:1)



- Is the author of this letter saying that God only spoke through the prophets? Explain. [In other words, does this contradict the conclusions that we drew from our study of the Old Testament last week?]



- How has He spoken to us now? (Hebrews 1:2)



- What does this mean?
- Is the author of this letter saying that God stopped speaking to us after Jesus' death and resurrection?

Note: I am *not* asking whether there's anyone other than Jesus through whom God may choose to speak with the same authority Jesus had. I *absolutely affirm* that Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through (Him)." (John 14:6) I also *absolutely affirm* that no-one has the authority to add to or take away from the Bible. (Revelation 22:18-19) And as we will see in future studies, I *absolutely affirm* that any word that God whispers into your heart must not contradict the scriptures.

I am not asking whether Jesus can ever be superseded by another "word" from God. *He absolutely cannot.* He is the one at whose name "every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

I'm asking whether Hebrews 1:2 can legitimately be used to prove that God stopped talking to us once Jesus died and rose again.

Read John 1:1-4, 14-18 several times.



- Who is “the Word”? [You’ll need to interpret John 1:14 in order to answer this.]



- What does it mean to say that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God”?

- How does this support the statement made by the author of the letter to the Hebrews in the first two verses of his letter?



- What else in these verses from John’s gospel is echoed in the letter to the Hebrews? (John 1:3)



- How does John 1:18 explain Hebrews 1:2?



There is a difference between what I’ll call our “credal” theology and our “functional” theology. By “credal” theology, I mean the things that we say we believe. By “functional” theology, I mean the evidence of what we believe in our hearts that leaks out in the way we live our lives.

Our lives give evidence to what we really believe in the depth of our hearts. For example, we may say that we believe the Bible is the final authority in our lives; but if we aren’t reading it and studying it on a daily basis, our words ring hollow.

With this in mind, answer the following question:



- What would change in your life if in the depths of your heart you really believed:

- a) that Jesus and the Father are one

- b) that Jesus is the living Word of God *and*

- c) that He still craves a deep relationship with you.

- Talk to Him about this.

25-Oct-16

Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-21

The first part of Joel's prophecy is a warning of the judgment that God is bringing on Israel. There follows a call to repentance and a further warning of judgment. After that, he issues a call to return to the Lord. Then follows a declaration of God's love for Israel and a promise of restoration. Joel 2:28-32 is part of that promise of restoration. Read it now.



- What does God say He will pour out? (Joel 2:28)



- What does this mean?



- Who does He say He will pour His Spirit on? (Joel 2:28-29)

- Are there any exceptions? (Joel 2:29)



- What does this mean?



- What will happen when He does this? (Joel 2:28)



- Does this suggest an answer to the question that we've been asking: "Did God stop speaking to us after Jesus' death and resurrection?"

Acts 2:1-21 contains a description of the events that unfolded on the Day of Pentecost, and the introduction to the speech that Peter made on the Day of Pentecost when God poured out His Spirit on the people gathered in the Upper Room. Read it now.



- What happened on the Day of Pentecost? (Acts 2:1-4)

- What did those in the Upper Room begin to do when this happened? (Acts 2:4)

- How did most of the people react in the crowds that gathered around them? (Acts 2:5-12)

- What accusation did some make? (Acts 2:13)

- How did Peter answer this accusation? (Acts 2:15)



- What did Peter mean when he said, "this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel"? (Acts 2:16)

- Does this suggest an answer to the question that we've been asking: "Did God stop speaking to us after Jesus' death and resurrection?"



- I am fond of quoting a friend of mine who says that the most important theological question is, "so what?" So let me ask you that question: So what? What difference does all of this make for you and I?



- On a scale of 1-10, how quickly and easily do you hear the things that God is whispering into your spirit (whether through dreams, visions, riddles, impressions etc)?



- What do you need to do in order to begin hearing God's voice more clearly and more accurately?

- Talk to God about this.
-

26-Oct-16 — 28-Oct-16

**Acts 8:26-40; 9:10-19; 10:1-23; 11:27-30; 13:1-3;
15:1-35; 16:6-10; 18:9-10; 21:8-11**

I know that this seems like a lot of scripture to cover. That's why we're taking three days to do this particular part of the study.

And we're not going to go into depth in these passages at this time. All we're going to do is observe the different ways that people in the book of Acts heard God speaking to them. And we're going to observe who heard God's voice. Did He only speak to those who were considered important or leaders in the church, or did He speak to any who would listen and obey Him?

So settle in, take your time and enjoy simply reading portions of the Bible.

Read Acts 8:26-40



- Who did God speak to?



Note: The question arises as to which "Philip" we're talking about: the apostle named Philip or the deacon named Philip. If we trace our way back to the beginning of this chapter, we find that the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1) Immediately after that, we read that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ." (Acts 8:5) A careful reading of Acts 8 makes it clear that the Philip referred to in Acts 8:5 is the same Philip referred to in Acts 8:26-40. This particular Philip, then, was a deacon, not an apostle. For our purposes, I believe that's an important observation.



- What did God tell Philip to do? (Acts 8:26, 29)
- What happened to Philip after he baptized the eunuch? (Acts 8:39-40)

Read Acts 9:10-19

- Who did God speak to? (Acts 9:10)
- How is this man described? [Was he a particularly important individual or a leader?] (Acts 9:10)
- What did He tell him to do? (Acts 9:11-12)
- What did Ananias say to God? (Acts 9:13-14)
- How did God answer Ananias? (Acts 9:15-16)
- What did Ananias do? (Acts 9:17-18)

Read Acts 10:1-23

- Who did God speak to first in this situation? (Acts 10:3)
- Who was this man? (Acts 10:1-2)
- How did God speak to him? (Acts 10:3)
- What did the angel tell him to do? (Acts 10:4-6)
- What did Cornelius do? (Acts 10:7-8)

- Who did God speak to next? (Acts 10:9)
- How did God speak to him? (Acts 10:10-16, 19-20)
- What did Peter do? (Acts 10:23)

Read Acts 11:27-30

- Who did God speak to? (Acts 11:28)
- How is he described? (Acts 11:27)
- What did God say through him? (Acts 11:28)
- How did the disciples respond? (Acts 11:29-30)

Read Acts 13:1-3

- Who did God speak to? (Acts 13:1)
- When did he speak to them? (Acts 13:2)
- What did He tell them to do? (Acts 13:2)
- What did they do? (Acts 13:3)

Read Acts 15:1-35

- What crisis arose in the church? (Acts 15:1-2)
- How did the disciples in Antioch deal with this crisis? (Acts 15:2)
- How did the apostles and elders deal with this issue? (Acts 15:6)
- What did they decide? (Acts 15:23-29)
- Now notice very carefully how the apostles described the way they made their decision. What did they say? (Acts 15:28)



- What does this mean?

Read Acts 16:6-10



- Why did Paul go through Phrygia and Galatia? (Acts 16:6)



- What does this mean?



- Why did they not go into Bithynia? (Acts 16:7)



- What does this mean?



- What happened in Troas? (Acts 16:9)
- How did Paul and his companions interpret this vision? (Acts 16:10)
- What did they do? (Acts 16:10)

Read Acts 18:9-10

- Who did God speak to? (Acts 18:9)
- What did He say? (Acts 18:9-10)

Read Acts 21:8-11

- According to Luke (the author of the book of Acts), what did Philip's daughters do? (Acts 21:9)
- Who came down from Judea? (Acts 21:10)
- How is he described? (Acts 21:10)
-  • Notice that a distinction seems to be made here between Philip's daughters and Agabus. Philip's daughters are not described as prophets, yet they prophesied. Agabus is described as a prophet. Do you think that this is significant? Explain.
-  • What did Agabus do? (Acts 21:11)
- What did he say? (Acts 21:11)
- How did the people hearing him respond to his words? (Acts 21:12)
- How did Paul respond to Agabus' words? (Acts 21:13)

Take a few moments to review your notes from all these eight separate events recounted in the book of Acts.

- Make a list of all the different types of individuals who God spoke to. [Prophets, apostles, ordinary folk, deacons, etc.]
- Make a list of all of the different reasons that God spoke to these people.

Now consider the questions we posed at the beginning of the week:

-  • Did people in the New Testament hear the voice of God as clearly and frequently or perhaps even more clearly and more frequently than they did in the Old Testament?
- Did God stop speaking to us after Jesus' death and resurrection?

And one final question ...

- Have you seen any evidence to suggest that God would ever stop speaking to His people whom He loves?
-

29-Oct-16 — 30-Oct-16

Weekend Review

I invite you, this weekend, to revisit the last two questions that I asked you last weekend.

Over these next two days ...

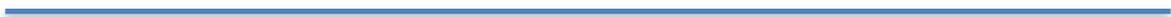


- Ponder all that you've been studying these last two weeks. Let it sink even deeper into your heart that God is deeply interested in engaging you in a relationship with Himself. He longs to converse with you if you will but listen, hear and respond.

and ...



- Ask God to show you what impedes your relationship with Him. Commit to dealing with whatever He exposes in your heart.



31-Oct-16

1 Corinthians 14:26-32; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

In chapter 14 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he's giving some instructions about how worship should be conducted.



- What does he say that everyone should do? (1 Corinthians 14:26)
- How should one decide what to share? (1 Corinthians 14:27)
- What does he say about how prophets should behave in church? (1 Corinthians 14:29-31)
- What principle does he enunciate about prophets and prophecy? (1 Corinthians 14:32)
- What does he say that "the others" should do when a prophet is speaking? (1 Corinthians 14:29)



- What does this mean?
- Who do you think these "others" are—prophets, leaders, or everyone who is hearing the prophet speak?

Chapter 5 brings Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians to an end. Naturally, Paul has a number of concluding remarks to make at the end of this chapter. I encourage you to read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 now with this in mind.



- What does Paul say we should be careful not to do with prophecies?



- What does he mean by this?



- What should we do with prophecies (and everything else)?



- What do you believe should be the basis on which we test everything we hear and everything we are taught? [We'll talk more about this in future studies in this series.]



- What do 1 Corinthians 14:26-32 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 add to our understanding of how we should respond when we think we've heard God speaking to us or whispering something into our hearts?



- What difference will today's study make in the way you build your relationship with God?
- Talk to Him about these things.

1-Nov-16 — 3-Nov-16

John 10:1-18

This is an extraordinarily powerful parable. Or perhaps, we should say that there are three parables here—all of them closely linked with one another. Let's take a look at them.

The first parable: John 10:1-6



- What picture does Jesus paint in verse 1?



- What does this mean?
- Parables are always meant to speak to us at a much deeper level than our minds. So consider this: how does your heart respond to this word-picture that Jesus paints? Who does your heart say that the thief and robber is—the one who climbs into the sheepfold by another way?



- How does the shepherd enter the sheepfold? (John 10:2)



- What does this mean?
- Again, thinking on a deeper level, who does your heart say the shepherd is—the one who enters by the door?



- How does the gatekeeper respond to the shepherd? (John 10:3)
- How do the sheep respond to the shepherd? Why? (John 10:3)
- How do the sheep respond to the stranger? Why? (John 10:5)

The second parable: John 10:7-10

- Who does Jesus say that He is? (John 10:7)
- According to Jesus, who are the thieves and robbers? (John 10:8)



- What does He mean by this?



- How did the sheep respond to them? (John 10:8)



- Does this mean that the thieves and robbers never had any followers? Explain.



- What is promised for those who enter the sheepfold through Jesus? (John 10:9)
- Why does the thief come to the sheepfold? (John 10:10)
- Why did Jesus come to the sheepfold? (John 10:10)

The third parable: John 10:11-18

- Who does Jesus say that He is? (John 10:11)
- What does the good shepherd do for the sheep? (John 10:11)
- How does the good shepherd differ from a hired hand? (John 10:12)
- Why does the hired hand behave this way? (John 10:13)
- What happens as a result of his actions? (John 10:12)
- What is true of Jesus precisely because He is the good shepherd? (John 10:14)



- What does this mean?

-  • How is Jesus' relationship with His heavenly Father similar to His relationship with His sheep? (John 10:15)
-  • What does this mean?
-  • What does Jesus do for His sheep? (John 10:15)
-  • What do you learn about Jesus sheep in verse 16?
-  • What does this mean?
-  • What is true of these other sheep? (John 10:16)
-  • What will Jesus do with these two flocks of sheep? (John 10:16)
-  • Why does the Father love Jesus? (John 10:17-18)
-  • How many times in these three closely related parables does Jesus say that the sheep know His voice, listen to Him, or follow Him?
-  • How often does Jesus say that the sheep know Him or know His voice?
-  • How is this similar to His statement that His sheep know His voice, listen to Him, or follow Him? How is it different?
-  • What does this parable suggest about whether God continues to speak to His children today? Explain.
-  • Some suggest that Jesus' statements about knowing Him and following Him in this parable are totally fulfilled when one gives one's life to Him. They would say that we follow Jesus by following the instructions that He has given in the Bible, but that it isn't possible to actually hear Him speak to you or to perceive the direction that He is giving you. Having studied this parable, how would you respond to this suggestion?
-  • If you haven't learned how to recognize God's "voice" whispering into your spirit, ask Him to teach you how to recognize His whispers. And commit to obeying Him when He directs you. [It may be wise to ask someone you trust who you know already hears God's voice clearly to mentor you in this.]
-  • If you have learned how to recognize God's voice whispering His words into your heart, ask Him to show you where you still need to grow in this area. Then commit to doing whatever He shows you that you need to do.

4-Nov-16

1 John 1:1-7

-  • What seems to be the most significant word in this passage of scripture? [Typically, though not always, the most significant word will be repeated several times.]

When you've answered this question, turn the page and continue the study.

I would suggest that the most significant word is “fellowship” You find it a total of four times with the first instance being in verse 3 and the last instance being in verse 7. So let’s look at that word more closely.



Read the definition of the word fellowship found in Appendix B at the back of this book.

- With this definition in mind, reread 1 John 1:1-7. Each time you see the word “fellowship”, pause to consider all that this word means.
 - What difference does this make you your understanding of 1 John 1:1-7?
-
- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your experience of fellowship with the Father?
-
- What needs to change in order for you to experience deeper, richer and more intimate fellowship with the Father?
 - Talk to Him about this.
-

5-Nov-16 — 6-Nov-16

Hebrews 13:8



- What does Hebrews 13:8 tell us about Jesus Christ?



- Can this same statement be applied to God? Explain.

Now consider the territory that we've covered during the last three weeks. We've taken a whirlwind tour of the entire Bible beginning in Genesis and ending in the New Testament. We did so with one goal in mind. We wanted to discover whether God still speaks to His children, and whether it is still possible to "hear" what God is saying to us.

- With Hebrews 13:8 in mind, let's return to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." (Genesis 3:8) If you read this the same way that I read it, you'll agree that this was likely a regular thing for them. Genesis 3:8 seems to suggest that God regularly walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, and perhaps many other times also.



- Ponder this weekend what Hebrews 13:8 and Genesis 3:8 suggest about whether God still wants to talk with His children.



- Continue asking God what you need to do in order to deepen your relationship with Him. Then do whatever He shows you to do.

... And now we have laid what I hope will be a solid foundation on which to build our understanding of what the Bible says about the Bible. Stay tuned for next month's study.

Appendix A
Significant Hebrew words in Psalm 19

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; (Psalms 19:7a)

Law

The word for "law" is "torah".

You'll notice that I didn't capitalize the word "torah". If the use of this word was restricted to the Law of Moses or the first five books of the Bible, it would have been appropriate to capitalize the word. But in this case, the word "torah" is being used much more broadly to refer to the law of God as a whole.

The Precept Austin website has some very helpful comments about this word. [I find this website to be an invaluable resource when it comes to really digging into the details of the Bible.] According to Precept Austin,

"Law (torah) ... is not just the scrolls of the Law which are often referred to as "The Torah" but refers to all of God's revelation which represents His instructions to His people regarding how they are to live in the midst of a godless, sin-saturated society. The law gives instruction, doctrine and direction.

"Torah derives from a word that means to shoot an arrow, "for a teacher aims to hit the target and achieve specific goals in the lives of the students." (Wiersbe)

"Adam Clarke writes that Torah is derived from... yarah, to instruct, direct, put straight, guide. It is God's system of instruction, by which men are taught the knowledge of God and themselves, directed how to walk so as to please GOD, redeemed from crooked paths, and guided in the way everlasting."

http://www.preceptaustin.org/psalm_197-14_commentary

Perfect

According to W.E. Vines, the Hebrew word that the ESV translates as perfect (verse 7) means, "perfect; blameless; sincerity; entire; whole; complete; full."

Reviving

According to Spiros Zodhiates (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), the Hebrew word that the ESV translates as "reviving" means,

"to turn, to return, to go back, to do again, to change, to withdraw, to bring back, to reestablish, ... to restore"

The Precept Austin website says this about this particular word (shuv):

"The idea in this context is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's heart. The effect of the law is to turn the soul from the ways of sin to holiness. Stated another way, shuv describes a genuine change in heart is reflected by a movement back to the place of departure spiritually speaking. The idea is turning back the soul to His Maker or bringing the prodigal back home.

"Shuv... Better than any other verb it combines in itself the two requisites of repentance: to turn from evil and to turn to the good. The basic meaning of shuv is one of movement, spatially or spiritually. It is sometimes translated 'restore' but is also translated as 'return' and 'repentance.'"

Soul

And the word "soul" ("nephesh" in the Hebrew language) also has a wide range of meanings.

"Nephesh" ("soul") can mean "breath; the inner being with its thoughts and emotions; and by extension, the whole person." (Spiros Zhodiates—The Complete Word Study Hebrew Lexicon)

Zhodiates goes on to say,

"When this word is applied to a person, it doesn't refer to a specific part of a human being. The Scriptures view a person as a composite whole, fully relating to God and not divided in any way."

NB: If my theory is correct—if the first part of verse 7 is part of a headline or a title for the last three stanzas of this poem—then it would stand to reason that the word "soul" would have been used in the most all-encompassing way possible to refer to the whole person, and all of the other words used in these verses to describe the Bible will show us some different aspect of what the Bible is. So I invite you to keep this theory in mind as you continue studying the other words used to refer to God's Word, and see if this theory pans out.

the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; (Psalms 19:7b)

Testimony

The Hebrew word for testimony means: witness; warning sign, reminder

- 1) testimony, witness
 - a) the testimony of the 10 commandments
 - b) the testimony of the ark of the covenant (which contained the tablets of the 10 commandments)
 - c) the tabernacle (which contained the ark of the covenant which in turn contained the tablets of the 10 commandments)
- 2) the code of law in general as a testimony of God
- 3) a warning sign, a reminder

This word always refers to a testimony, witness warning sign, or reminder from God. By extension it was often used to refer to the 10 commandments; the ark of the covenant which housed the tablets on which the 10 commandments were written; and the tabernacle which housed the ark of the covenant (and hence also the 10 commandments.) Again, by extension, it was sometimes used to refer to the law in general as a testimony of God.

[With notes from A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs; and A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by William L. Holladay (Editor)]

According to the Precept Austin website, the root of this word ties it strongly to the idea of someone (or some thing) being a witness to something.

Sure

According to the Precept Austin website, the word that the ESV translates as "sure" is the Hebrew word, "aman" from which we get our word "amen" which literally means, "so be it, truly". Aman "speaks of that which conveys the idea of certainty or of firmness. As such God's witness (in His Word) is dependable.

the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; (Psalm 19:8a)

Precepts

The Hebrew word for "precepts" is "piqqud". This is something which is mandated by God. ie: precept, commandment, statute. (With notes from Olive Tree Enhanced Strongs Dictionary, and Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words)

Piqqud comes from the Hebrew word, "paqad" which means "to pay attention to someone or something. So Spiros Zodhiates comments that, "The root (of this word) expresses the idea that God is paying attention to how He wants things ordered."

Right

The Precept Austin website quotes James Montgomery Boice as saying,

"Right does not mean correct as opposed to being wrong; that idea is seen more in the word trustworthy. Right means straight as opposed to being crooked and is linked to the idea of righteousness. Verse 8 teaches that walking in a straight path or in an upright manner brings joy." (Boice Expository Commentary - Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-41)

the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; (Psalm 19:8b)

Commandment

The word "commandment" is "mitsvah". It is exactly what you would expect—"an authoritative directive or order, either written or verbal".

(http://www.preceptaustin.org/psalm_197-14_commentary)

Pure

Zhodiates (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon) defines this word as meaning, "pure, clean, radiant. This term is extremely rare and occurs only in the poetic books. The word typically means purity or cleanness of heart."

the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; (Psalms 19:9a)

Fear

The Hebrew word "fear" in this Psalm is "yirah". According to Spiros Zhodiates (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), this word

"usually refers to the fear of God and is viewed as a positive quality. This fear acknowledges God's good intentions (Exodus 20:20)."

the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. (Psalms 19:9b)

Rules

The Hebrew word that the ESV translates as "rules" is actually "mishpat".

This is a word rich in meaning. It's root definition is "a decision made by arbitration". From this basic definition Mishpat came to mean "a legal decision"; then "a legal case"; then "justice, right". Hence the word Mishpat has a rich variety of meanings as outlined below.

- 1) judgment
 - act of deciding a case
 - place of judgment (such as a courtroom)
 - process of judgement (eg. legal procedures)
 - case, cause presented for judgment (eg. a lawsuit)
 - sentence, decision (of judgment)
 - execution (of judgment)
 - time (of judgment)
- 1) justice, right (attributes of God or man)
- 2) ordinance
- 3) decision (in law)
- 4) right, privilege, (legal) due, (legal) claim
- 5) proper, fitting, measure, fitness, custom, manner, plan

(With notes from A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs.)

Appendix B

Fellowship

We have absolutely no idea what the word, "fellowship" means. We have so cheapened the word that concept of fellowship has been lost as a result. We talk about "The Fellowship Hour" after church when we gather as a congregation for half an hour to sip coffee and talk about the weather and baseball or hockey (depending on the season) and the latest gossip about Aunt Mabel's big toe. All of that has absolutely nothing to do with real fellowship, in the biblical sense of the word—at least not unless you consider a half hour conversation with your husband or wife at a french fry stand by the side of the road once a week to be sufficient to define your marriage!

"Fellowship" is the way that we have translated the Greek word, "koinonia". Here's what Kenneth Wuest has to say about koinonia (fellowship).

"This Greek word is used in a marriage contract where the husband and wife agree to a joint-participation in the necessities of life. The key idea in the word is that of a partnership, a possessing things in common, a belonging in common to. For instance, "What things does light have in common with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14), or, "These things write we unto you that ye also may have joint-participation (koinonia) with us" (in our knowledge of the life of our Lord) (I John 1:3), or, "Our joint-participation (koinonia) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3), that is, the things in which Christians participate in salvation, they participate in jointly with God, a common nature, common likes and dislikes; or, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a joint-participation (which we saints have in common) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a joint-participation (which we saints have in common) in the body of Christ" (broken for us) (I Cor. 10:16)? That is, the saints participate in common with one another in the salvation benefits that proceed from the out-poured blood and the broken body of the Lord Jesus.

"The usage of the word also approaches the common usage of today, that of fellowship in the sense of companionship. In Phil. 2:1 and II Cor. 13:14 the word refers to the joint-participation of the believer and the Holy Spirit in a common interest and activity in the things of God."

Consider the following comment made on the PreceptAustin.com website:

"When one considers the secular Greek use of koinonia to describe the marriage bed, one begins to get a glimmer of the incredible privilege we as finite believers have to be in communion with the infinitely holy God (as John describes in 1Jn 1:3)! Oh Lord, open our eyes to the breadth and length and height and depth of this incredible truth, that the unsearchable riches of the truth of our partaking of the life of the Almighty might motivate us to live holy lives for the glory of the Lamb in a world which has gone 'AWOL' from God!"

http://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians_13-5.htm [accessed September 14, 2016]