

A Voice From Beyond

On Sunday, we continued our sermon series about the Holy Spirit by exploring how the Spirit speaks truth and guidance into our lives.

1. Warm up question: Some of us are copious talkers, while others of us are pretty quiet. Which are you – and how do you think you got that way?
2. Think about some of the important decisions you face at this point in your life. If you could pick only one of those situations to get clear and specific guidance from God about, which would you choose – and why?
3. Jeff told a story about a little boy who found a lost watch in the sawdust of an ice house. He found the watch by laying still and listening intently until he heard the faint sound of ticking. Hearing God is often like that. The Bible refers to “the still, small voice of God.” Do you think your life is “quiet” enough to hear God’s “still, small voice”? If not, what needs to change?
4. Jesus tells us the primary way God speaks to us is through the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13, Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you to all truth.” On Sunday, we explored four common ways the Spirit speaks guidance into our lives. The first is “Spirit intuition,” i.e., times when a thought, feeling, or idea arises inside you and you get a strong sense of resonance that “this is from God.”
 - a. Tell us about a time you’ve experienced “Spirit intuition.”
 - b. How can we tell the difference between an intuition the Holy Spirit gives us and ordinary intuition?
5. Read Genesis 37:1-28. In this passage, Joseph, as a young man, is sold into slavery by his brothers. Yet God used this tragedy to get Joseph to Egypt, where, through many ups and downs, he would eventually rise to become prime minister, and during a great famine, was able to save himself and his extended family from starvation. This illustrates a second way God’s Spirit speaks guidance into our lives – through circumstances.
 - a. If you were Joseph, how would you have felt right after you had been sold into slavery by your brothers? What was his likely state of mind?
 - b. How do you suppose Joseph managed to keep his faith?
 - c. At the end of the story of his life, Joseph tells his brothers, “It was not you who sent me to Egypt, but God. Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve many people.” Genesis 45:8 and 50:20. When in your life has God used some baffling or challenging circumstance to channel your life in a direction that later proved wonderful?

6. A third way God speaks to us is through people around us. Jeff shared the story of Greg Lucas, the father of a special-needs son. After a trying trip to the dentist, his son refused to ride the elevator. That forced Greg and a nurse to help his son down many flights of stairs. All the way, his son kept giving sloppy kisses to the nurse to thank her for helping him. Greg kept apologizing, until the nurse finally said, “Stop apologizing. You don’t know how much I needed every one of those kisses today.” Through her words, Greg had an “Aha! Moment.” He heard God saying, “Stop apologizing for your son and realize how much people need him.” When have you had a similar “Aha! Moment” triggered by something God said to you through someone else?
7. A fourth way God speaks to us is through the Scriptures. Jeff told how this past week, God spoke to him in a place of discouragement through the words of Isaiah 52:2, “Shake yourself from the dust, rise up . . . , loose the bonds from your neck [and get on with it!]” Tell us about a time recently when you heard God speaking personally to you through a passage of Scripture.
8. We’ve discussed four ways the Spirit speaks to us: Spirit intuition, circumstances, the words of others, and the words of Scripture.
 - a. Which of these four ways works best for you? And which do you feel you need to pay closer attention to?
 - b. Are there other ways the Spirit speaks to you?
9. When we talk about letting God guide our lives, and finding God’s will, many of us assume that means there is a certain perfect way God wants us to respond to each circumstance. That, in turn, can produce lots of stress because we worry that if we make a wrong decision, we’ll fall out of God’s “perfect will” and never get back.
 - a. Have you ever felt that way, i.e., worried that you made a decision that might mar the rest of your life? What happened?
 - b. Jeff suggested that maybe God’s will for our life is less prescriptive, and more interactive. He compared God to a good parent who simply wants his/her child to be good (kind and generous), to be happy, and to thrive. A good parent does not wish to dictate every important decision a child makes. A good parent recognizes there are many good options a child can choose in life and wants that child to have the freedom to make those decisions. Viewed this way, there may be many choices in life for which God says, “You pick from among the wonderful options, and I’ll work with you whichever way you go.” What do you think of this theory? Do you think “God’s will” for your life is: (a) detailed and prescriptive, (b) broad, general, and interactive, or (c) some complex combination of these two?