

Jesus said

*<sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. (John 10)*

### Basic Principles

- God is a good Father who loves us unconditionally – like any loving Father, he loves to speak to his children
- God wants us to thrive and his speaking is ALWAYS designed to that end – even if he speaks to correct us, his voice will not leave us condemned under the weight of sin and shame (if we experience that, it's almost certainly the voice of our Enemy), but free to step out from under the shadow of sin and shame

### How do we hear God speak?

#### The bible

e.g. a verse comes into your head; or as you are reading a text it speaks to your situation, as though God has highlighted the verse with a marker pen

The bible is our infallible guide to hearing God speak – all the other ways by which people hear the voice of God (including those listed below) must always be checked against his written word:  
God's NOW word can never contradict his ALWAYS Word.

Here are some of the other ways in which God speaks to people

#### 1 Creation

For some people, God speaks as they spend time in the great outdoors

#### 2 Environment

This can be a sound while you are praying, or something you can see with your physical sight

#### 3 Prophetic Words

Very occasionally people hear an audible voice (e.g. as at the baptism of Jesus or the conversion of St Paul). But more commonly, these come by way of impression or a sense of what God is saying: may be a word of knowledge or wisdom. Often, the same impression will come several times in different contexts.

#### 4 Pictures

seeing a picture in your mind or projected in front of you

In the Old Testament the lord often asks the prophets, 'What do you see?' and then explains the picture to them:

*And the Lord asked me, 'What do you see, Amos?' 'A plumb-line,' I replied. Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am setting a plumb-line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.' (Amos 7:8)*

Sometimes a visual impression may be related to healing e.g. a picture of a leg/elbow/kidney: that's what God wants to heal.

## 5 Visions

Like watching a moving picture – a series of events:

*The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Isaiah 1)*

## 6 Dreams

similar to visions but whilst you are asleep

The Old Testament Joseph had prophetic dreams (Genesis 37)

The New Testament Joseph was visited by an angel in a dream (Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19), as were the magi (Matthew 2:12)

## 7 Angelic / Demonic encounters

In the Old Testament Daniel has an encounter with an angel (Daniel 10)

Billy Graham's book – Angels, God's Secret Agents

## 8 Impressions / conscience

you just know – this must be tested

*Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their heart (Mark 2:8)*

## 9 Other mediums

TV, Film, advertising boards

## 10 Tongues

**Individual:** primarily for the believer to edify him / herself as a devotional gift. Can be used to pray when we don't know what to pray – can be the language of heaven (Glossalalia) or a language unknown to us (Xenolalia)

**Corporate:**

*When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two – or at the most three – should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. (1 Cor14: 27-28 )*

## A Final word

We should be expectant to hear God speaking to us, and open to him doing so in many different ways  
A wise friend once said: "I'm trying to never be offended by God however he chooses to speak!" – that's good advice

It is likely that we will have one or two ways in which we most commonly hear him speak

Remember that any gift of the Spirit is a tool not a jewel: they are for the service of others, not the adornment of ourselves – prophecy in particular is a gift given to strengthen, encourage and comfort

*everyone who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort  
(1 Corinthians 14:3)*