

## And God spoke...



<sup>3</sup>The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders,  
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.

<sup>4</sup>The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic. Ps 29:3-4

The voice of God thunders through the millennia, shaping history and transforming lives.

God spoke and the world came in to being.  
He spoke words of promise and destiny to a pilgrim who would become the father of many.  
He spoke out of a burning bush and delivered a captive nation.  
He spoke out of a whirlwind to a man in trouble.  
He spoke in a whisper to one who needed new hope and fresh vision.  
He spoke through dreams and visions and directed the path of history.

And He speaks to you and me today.

This month we look at how God has spoken through the years,  
to all kinds of people in all kinds of ways.

We reflect on how he has spoken to us in the past, how he might be speaking to us right now and how we  
sometimes miss his voice.

Link: <https://youtu.be/5fwnA89tU3g>

# And God spoke...

## Call to Presence

The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders,  
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning.

The voice of the Lord shakes the desert; the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever.

The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.

From Ps 29:3-11



## Prayer

We praise you, Lord, that your voice is loud and majestic;  
Break into our lives anew.

We praise you that your voice is full of light and power;  
Shatter our complacency with your brightness.

We bow before you Lord,  
and ask you to shake us into obedience and alertness  
through the strength of your voice.

Amen!

## Scripture

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light...

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water."

And it was so.

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear."

And it was so...

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it..." And it was so...

**And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so...**

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it...and every winged bird ...

**And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals..." And it was so...**

**Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness ...  
So God created mankind in his own image.**

From Genesis 1

## Song

This is the air I breathe  
This is the air I breathe  
Your holy presence living in me.

This is my daily bread  
This is my daily bread  
Your very word spoken to me.

And I, I'm desperate for you  
And I, I'm lost without you...

## Scripture

And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!"  
"Here I am," he replied. <sup>3</sup> "I am God, the God of your father," he said.  
"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.  
<sup>4</sup> I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.  
And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."

Genesis 46:2-4

## Prayer

O God of Creation, open our ears to your voice that you may create us anew.  
O Lord of the burning bush, open our ears to hear you where we least expect it.  
O God of the whirlwind, help us to hear your voice even when it may seem overwhelming.  
O Lord of the earthquake, wind and fire, open our ears to hear your still quiet whisper.  
Open our ears, Lord, that in the midst of busyness, distraction, anxiety and distress  
we will not miss the words of comfort, hope, healing or guidance you have for us.  
Speak, Lord, we are ready to listen.<sup>ii</sup>



## Reflection

*There is power in the word of God.*

*When God speaks, creation responds: new life comes into being,  
and there is healing, deliverance and freedom.  
God speaks and lives are transformed.*

*God spoke to Jacob in a dream at night, and to many others in dreams.  
He spoke to Moses out of a burning bush, to Elijah in a still whisper, to a young boy and a new king in the  
quietness of the night, and to a questioning Job out of a whirlwind.  
Each of these encounters led to significant changes of direction.*

*(Gen 46:1-4; Exodus 3:1-6; 1 Kings 19:11-13; 1 Samuel 3; 2 Chron 1:7-12; Job 38:1-7)*

*And then... the Word of God became flesh and dwelled amongst us! (John 1:14)*

*Jesus is the spoken word of God.*

*He speaks – and the wind and the waves, and demons obey.*

*He speaks a word and the blind see, the lame walk, and the dead live again.*

*God speaks in so many different ways: in a thundering roar, in a quiet whisper, through dreams and visions, through the elements of the created world, and through His Holy Spirit.*

*There is power when God speaks.*

*Reflect for a moment on how you have heard God's voice in the past...*

*What was the context?*

*How has the power of God's Word impacted the way you live out your faith?*

*In what other ways have you heard God speak?*

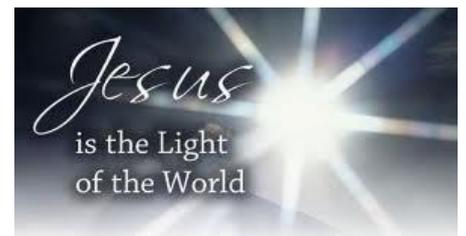
*What do you need to do to recognise the voice of God, and prepare yourself to listen?*

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Thank you, Lord, for every word of comfort and consolation you have spoken to us.  
Thank you for speaking in power into our lives and transforming and renewing us.  
We thank you for your words of guidance and direction, and for giving us clarity.

*Pause for silent thanksgiving*

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we have failed to recognise your voice or have ignored you.  
Renew our desire and expectation to hear from you directly.  
Prepare us to listen and remove each distraction that overpowers your voice.  
Teach us to recognise your voice more readily – whether it is the still quiet voice, or the roaring thunder.  
Thank you, Lord, that you still speak to your children.<sup>iii</sup>



## **Scripture**

God's Final Word: His Son

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Hebrews 1:1-3

## **Song**

From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun,  
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
Words of power, strong to save, that will never pass away,  
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
For Your covenant is sure,

And on this I am secure—  
I can stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

When I stumble and I sin, condemnation pressing in,  
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
You are faithful to forgive that in freedom I might live,  
So I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
Guilt to innocence restored,  
You remember sins no more—  
So I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice, I will listen for Your voice,  
And I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
Through this dark and troubled land  
You will guide me with Your hand  
As I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
And You've promised to complete  
Ev'ry work begun in me—  
So I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

Hope that lifts me from despair, love that casts out ev'ry fear,  
As I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
Not forsaken, not alone, for the Comforter has come,  
And I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.  
Grace sufficient, grace for me,  
Grace for all who will believe—  
We will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

### Scripture

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked.  
Mark 10:51

### Prayer

Open my eyes, Lord  
I want to see Jesus  
To reach out and touch Him  
And say that I love Him

Open my ears, Lord  
And help me to listen  
Open our eyes, Lord  
We want to see Jesus.<sup>iv</sup>



### Benediction

“Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways.  
Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it.  
Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.  
For those who find me find life and receive favour from the Lord.”

Proverbs 8:32-34

May your ears be ever open to hear the Lord, and your heart ever ready to obey.

As well as the usual section on Going Deeper, there is also a section included on “Listening to God”.

## Listening to God

He wakens me morning by morning,  
wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.  
(Isaiah 50: 4)

### HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

#### Personally

Then the LORD said, „Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD.“  
(Numbers 12:6-8)

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ... I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10: 14-16 and 27)

Acts 9:3-4

#### Through dreams and visions

And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28)

Joseph (Genesis 37); Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10); Daniel 10; Matthew 27 (Pilate’s wife), Jesus’ birth

#### Through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13)

Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. (Acts 16:6-7)

#### Through His Word

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

#### Through other believers

Trusted friends, mentors, spiritual directors, ministers

#### Through voices, angels, nature

Revelation 1:9-10; Matthew 2:13 (Joseph); Ps 8;

*„God did not finish speaking to us when the Scriptures were completed ... God is the living God, the God of today; and every day he wants us to enjoy a living relationship with him, involving a two-way conversation“. (David Watson)*

## WE ARE COMMANDED TO LISTEN

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him! (Matthew 17:5)  
He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Rev 2:7)

### God is disappointed when we don't listen

While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. Jer 7:13

### Cultivating a listening ear

Certain things enhance our ability to listen:

· A desire for intimacy

· Silence

*„God speaks to those who keep silence“ (Charles de Foucauld)*

· Obedience

*I pray, I listen, I obey  
(David Yonggi Cho, Korea, 1958)*

· Discipline

· Listening together

· Journaling

· Throughout the day

## CHECKING THINGS OUT

Recognise the source: the Holy Spirit, my own Spirit, the evil one

Know the Word: Ps 1:2

*„Try all things by the written Word and let all bow down before it“.  
John Wesley*

Check it out with a trusted Friend/Mentor

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- A time and a place
- Posture
- Dealing with distractions
- Phasing into stillness
- Preparing to listen

J. Huggett, pp 43-40

## SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is God saying?
- What is God giving (saying) to me personally?
- What is God asking me to take from this time with Him into the world?

J. Huggett, p.207

*„Listening prayer may not give us cosiness. It will bring us into wholeness, the shalom which is the integration of body, mind and spirit“.  
Joyce Huggett, p. 211*

Huggett, J. (1986). *Listening to God*. Hodder and Stoughton: London  
Watson, D. (1981). *Discipleship*. Hodder and Stoughton: London

## GOING DEEPER

Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **The Bible** records many occasions when God spoke to his people in some way, either as individuals or as a people. He speaks through dreams and visions, through creation, through prophets, through circumstances, directly through His Spirit and through his Word. His voice can be loud and clear, or quiet and mysterious. Often he speaks in unexpected ways and we might not always recognise that it is his voice. Choose a Biblical passage that describes an encounter where God speaks to one of his people.

Read the passage through slowly. Reflect on how God speaks, how it impacts the hearer and what happens next. Think about what God might be saying to you through his words.

Here are some examples: Gen 46:1-4; Exodus 3:1-6; 1 Kings 19:11-13; 1 Samuel 3; 2 Chron 1:7-12; Job 38:1-7; Acts 10:9-15; and any of the Gospel encounters with Jesus.

- **Reflect** on how God has spoken to you in the past. What was your response? What did you learn about God from this experience and how has that impacted your relationship with him? Have you noticed times when you have found it hard to hear God's voice, or when you have resisted what you heard him say to you? Is there any insight you gain from this?
- You could use one of the Bible passages or one of the songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see page 8)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Bible passage that describes someone hearing God speak to them (such as any of the above). Read it through slowly – all of it or some selected verses. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? How is God revealing himself to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, reflect on a time when you have heard God's voice in an unexpected way and find a way to express that creatively. You can create a collage of how that encounter impacted you, or draw, paint, use clay, write a poem or compose a song. Think about how he has spoken to you and the words he said, and be creative.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you notice as you walk? Do you hear the voice of God in any way around you? Listen to how he speaks through the world around him and think about how you might like to respond to what you hear. If God is silent, is there something you can learn from that? You might want to write your own psalm to go with it.
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

**Thank God** for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

**Notice** what is happening around you and in you

**Respond** to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence**. We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

# EVEN DEEPER

## LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

### Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

#### 1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

#### 2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

#### 3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

#### 4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

#### 5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

#### 6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

## THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

### 1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

### 2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

### 3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

#### Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

### 4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church [marshill.org/teaching/sp](http://marshill.org/teaching/sp)

#### SONGS:

**This is the air I breathe** – Marie Barnett. 1995 Mercy / Vineyard Publishing (Admin. by K I Publishing)

**Every Promise** - Stuart Townend (There is a Hope, Track 7) 2005 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)

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<sup>i</sup> J. Brown

<sup>ii</sup> J. Brown

<sup>iii</sup> J. Brown

<sup>iv</sup> Unknown