

WHY I DON'T PRACTICE THE PRAYER THAT LISTENS (LISTENING PRAYER)

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Job had been through many severe trials. He was depressed and confused. He wanted to know why God had allowed so many horrible things to happen in his life. His friends came and, one by one, began to explain to him the reason for his problems. Each one thought he understood why God had permitted such difficulties in Job's life.

Eliphaz said he had had a spiritual experience and that God had revealed to him that Job was suffering because he lacked holiness. Bildad was certain that Job was suffering because every action has its consequence. His idea was based on human logic, but he thought it was also God's reasoning. Zophar followed the same argument. He claimed that God does not punish the innocent. He thought it was obvious that Job had sinned and needed to repent. Elihu also said that what he was saying about Job was what God thought.

All these friends were convinced that they clearly understood the mind of God. In the end, God spoke and made it clear that they had all been wrong. They spoke thinking they represented God, but they did not. They were expressing their own words and their own thoughts.

Surely not everything they said was bad. This makes the matter even more complicated. When someone claims to speak on behalf of God and mixes God's Words with words from their own mind, it is extremely dangerous!

HOW CAN WE KNOW WHICH COMMUNICATION TRULY COMES FROM GOD?

The Bible states that God no longer speaks through direct special revelation.

Hebrews 1:1-2

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

Jude 3

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

Ephesians 2:19-22

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Revelation 22:18-19

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

WHY WOULD GOD SPEAK TO YOU DIRECTLY THROUGH A NEW AND PERSONAL REVELATION WHEN HE HAS ALREADY SAID THAT SPECIAL REVELATION HAS ENDED?

The Bible already contains all the revelation we need. Nothing more is required. God does not need to speak to us personally today through direct personal revelation. The Bible is our authority and comes directly from God. It is 100% reliable and 100% true. Our opinions, our feelings, and our experiences are not 100% reliable nor 100% true.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

John 17:17

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

Psalm 119:160

"The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."

WHY SETTLE FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN THE WORD OF GOD?

The Bible is 100% sufficient.

WHY SETTLE FOR SOMETHING THAT IS NOT 100% SUFFICIENT?

Anything outside the Bible is inferior to the Word of God.

WHY LOOK FOR A “NEW AND FRESH” MESSAGE FROM THE LORD WHEN HE HAS ALREADY GIVEN US WHAT IS 100% SUFFICIENT, 100% TRUE, 100% RELIABLE, AND 100% FROM GOD?

GOD STILL SPEAKS TO US PERSONALLY TODAY — THROUGH THE BIBLE!

God still speaks directly today, but He does it through His Word. The personal way God speaks to us today is through illumination. Dr. Charles Ryrie gives us a summary of this concept:

“... generally the concept of illumination is related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping the believer to understand the truth of the Bible.

B. The Means

Two main passages describe this ministry of the Holy Spirit:

John 16:12–15

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

1 Corinthians 2:9 – 3:2

“But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the

heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able.”

These passages teach the following facts concerning illumination:

- 1. The Spirit is the Teacher, and His presence in the believer guarantees the availability of this ministry to all believers.*
- 2. Unbelievers, therefore, cannot experience this ministry. Even though they may achieve a high level of understanding of the Bible, they consider what they know basically as foolishness.*
- 3. The Spirit’s teaching encompasses “all the truth,” including that of “things to come,” prophecy.*
- 4. Carnality in the believer can thwart this ministry.*
- 5. The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is to glorify Christ.*
- 6. The Spirit will use those who have the gift of teaching to carry out His ministry (Romans 12:7; 1 John 2:27). This includes the writings of those who, now dead, have left the results of the Spirit’s work in their lives in that written form.*

The experience of illumination is not by “direct revelation.” The canon is closed. The Spirit illumines the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the

meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one's own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine - teaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer's life. Illumination is not concerned with merely understanding facts, but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness."

— Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 116

The Spirit of God can move us. He can put something in the heart of a believer (Nehemiah 7:5). This is no longer an experience that comes from direct revelation. It is not a prophetic message that has been commissioned by God. These are experiences that come from illumination when the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to our heart and mind. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to understand the truth and to put it into practice in a specific and personal situation.

It makes no sense to replace what is 100% sufficient, 100% true, 100% reliable, and 100% from God with our subjective and imperfect experiences and thoughts.

Surely what comes from us cannot even begin to compare with the greatness of the Word of God!

HOW CAN I KNOW WHICH COMMUNICATION TRULY COMES FROM GOD?

My answer to the question is: DO NOT MOVE AWAY FROM THE WORD OF GOD! It is 100% sufficient, 100% true, 100% reliable, and 100% from God. God has provided everything I need in the Bible. I do not have to look anywhere else to find what God has said. I can be 100% certain that what is in the Bible comes from God.

Note: If someone were to claim that they have received a direct, special revelation from God, that revelation would have to be part of the Bible. The Bible states that such a thing cannot happen because the Word of God has already been delivered once for all to the saints.

The following warnings should make us think carefully before saying "God told me" apart from the Bible:

Jeremiah 23:31-32

“Behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the Lord, “who use their tongues and say, ‘The Lord declares.’”

Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” declares the Lord, “and tell them and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness, when I did not send them nor command them; nor do they profit this people at all,” declares the Lord.

Ezekiel 13:8

"Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore I am against you,” declares the Lord God."

Proverbs 30:6

"Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."