

God's Voice: Following Jesus

2 Peter 1:12-21
September 30, 2018



“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.”¹ (Psalm 119:105)

Physical light: Ever since the beginning of time, God has been giving people light. Light that helps us see in the darkness. Light that helps us to keep from stubbing our toe on our kids’ toys or from tripping and falling over the family dog in the middle of the night when we wake up to use the restroom. This is just as true in the spiritual realm as it is in the physical realm.

Spiritual light: It can be difficult to find our way in this dark world. When we choose to walk in darkness, apart from the light of God’s Word, we stumble spiritually. We fall into sin and disobedience. We lose our way spiritually. John’s Gospel tells us that people sometimes prefer darkness instead of light.²

The Apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:19, “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place...” Following Jesus means paying attention to the light of God’s Word. Put another way, we must listen for God’s voice. As we continue in our series on Following Jesus today, we’re going to learn about God’s voice.

Genesis 1:1-3 tells us, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, **darkness** was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘**Let there be light, and there was light.**’” God has been providing light for His creation since the beginning of time. Praise God for the light; the light of the sun, moon, and stars and also the light of His Word!

Peter begins the next section of his letter urging Christ-followers to...

1) Endeavor to remember God’s voice. 2 Peter 1:12-15 says, “So I will always REMIND you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to REFRESH your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to REMEMBER these things.” These verses serve as a bit of a trifecta. “I will always REMIND you; I think it is right to REFRESH your memory; and you will always be able to REMEMBER these things.” Peter is trying to drive his point home: Endeavor to remember God’s voice!³

Last week, Peter taught us that we have everything we need for living a godly life. That everything; is Jesus; knowing Jesus is everything we need for following Jesus. Because we know Jesus, we are making every effort to grow in spiritual maturity, to mature in godly character and Christian living. Peter wants them to REMEMBER all that he has already written in his letter and that which he is in the process of writing. And, to remember the truths of the gospel message and all the truths from God’s

¹ See also Proverbs 6:20-24, esp. v. 23.

² See John 3:19.

³ Deuteronomy 4:9 warns, “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” It’s often a slow fade that leads to forgetting...

Word, both Old and New Testaments, even after he dies. That's part of why he is writing down the words of this 2nd letter.⁴

Let's be sure to notice, that the Christ-followers whom Peter is reminding in verse 12, are already spiritually mature believers. Peter describes them as "...firmly established in the truth...." But, he STILL reminds them of the things they already know. In fact, in verse 13, Peter says, "I think it is right to refresh your memory." Some English translations use the phrase, "to stir you up."⁵ This is really more to Peter's point: In case any of you are a little spiritually sleepy, wake up!⁶

This makes me think of Paul's words in Philippians 3:1, "...It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."⁷ All of this suggests, that a good application for us today, is that we should encourage one another to remember God's voice. That means urging one another not only to read God's Word but to learn it and to memorize it. A friend of mine told me about a Scripture memory app you can get on your smart phone. It's called "Scripture Typer." The app is FREE but I think whatever Bible version you choose costs a one-time fee of around \$10. You can use it to read the Bible or to memorize particular verses. There's also an option to join a "Bible Memory Group" or to start your own group, so that you and a few friends can encourage each other to memorize God's Word together. This is just one of many ways that we can remember God's Word and remind other believers to do the same. Obviously, you don't need to use this particular app or really any app at all, to do something like this. Whatever we choose to do, let's endeavor to remember God's voice!



Peter then tells us that...

2) God's voice has been audible at times. 2 Peter 1:16-18 says,

"For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain." So Peter is talking here about the literal, audible voice of God which he heard at Jesus' transfiguration. In verses 16-18, Peter switches from the pronoun "I" to the pronoun "we," referring to himself, James, and John, the three who witnessed Jesus' transfiguration together. This historical event is recorded in three of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.⁸

At Jesus' transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' majesty with their own eyes.⁹ They heard the voice of God the Father, whom Peter refers to as the "Majestic

⁴ One can't help but wonder if Peter, being a Jew, may have possibly even meant that he would take steps to provide for the protection and dispersal of God's written Word. See Romans 3:2.

⁵ See NASB, NKJV, and ESV for example.

⁶ "διεγείρω" = "wake up, arouse someone who is asleep...by way of a reminder 2 Pt 1:13." Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 243). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁷ See also Romans 15:15.

⁸ The Transfiguration happened around AD 30 and prefigured Jesus' 2nd coming by revealing Jesus' majesty, honor, and glory. See Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36.

⁹ See 1 John 1:1-3.

Glory.” They did not imagine this! In other words, God’s audible voice has been heard by humans at certain times in history. This is significant for us to understand. What Peter is saying is that he has concrete, real, historical, eyewitness testimony. We could call it earwitness testimony, I suppose. Peter is not referring to some subjective experience like thinking he may have heard God’s voice in the wind or something like that. He’s saying, the three of us heard God’s voice; just as clearly as you are hear a friend’s voice when you are visiting during lunch together.

Now, please allow me to give just a brief caveat here. Peter NEVER suggests that each of us should strive to repeat his method of hearing God’s audible voice. In other words, just because Peter DESCRIBES how he heard God’s audible voice, that DOESN’T mean that he PRESCRIBES that we should do it the same way. I’m not saying that it would be impossible for someone today to hear God’s audible voice.¹⁰ But, I am saying it is NOT a common way that God speaks to His people. What is much more common is to hear God’s voice through His written Word.

This segues nicely into our final section of verses...

3) God’s voice has been written down. Peter notes in 2 Peter 1:19-21, “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

This phrase “the prophetic message” is most likely Peter’s reference to the Old Testament. However, the apostolic authority connected to Peter’s letters and the other books from the New Testament, put them on the same level as the inspired Word of God. In other words, all 66 books that make up our Bibles today are completely reliable.

The EFCA’s Statement of Faith, has a good summary about the Bible in its Article 2, “We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.”

God’s voice is recorded in the collected writings of Scripture, or what scholars call the canon. This brings to the forefront the important issue of origin. **The origin of the Bible is God Himself.** 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that the writers of the Bible, “spoke from God.” Peter makes this clear in his letter in several places. When Peter told people about Jesus, he never used what verse 16 calls “cleverly devised stories.” Rather, verse 16 clarified that Peter was testifying to an eyewitness account. When we get to 2 Peter 2:3, we’ll learn about the “fabricated stories” of the false teachers. But Peter and

¹⁰ God speaks to His people in many ways. Occasionally, God’s voice is audible. At times, God is heard through the pricking of our human consciences, through certain circumstances, through visions and dreams, or through exhortations of fellow brothers and sister in Christ. Since our hearts can be misled, any subjective message is best vetted and carefully examined by the light of Scripture and wise counsel.

the other biblical writers were not fabricating anything. As he declares in 2 Peter 1:20, "...no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things." Note that the word "Scripture" is capitalized. The Bible that you hold in your hand is a record of the voice of God. It's not just another book!

In addition to the origin of Scripture, another important issue that Peter makes clear is the METHOD of how we got our Scriptures. 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that the, "prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The Method of writing the Bible was human prophets who "were carried along by the HS." This means that human writers used words, from their own vocabulary and their own time and culture, to write as they were carried along.¹¹ The *NIV Study Bible* note gives a great explanation of verse 21: As Scripture was being written down, "both God and humans were active participants. God was the source of the content of Scripture, so that what it says is what God has said. But the human authors also spoke actively; they were more than recorders."¹² In other words, the 66 books of the Bible weren't primarily a word for word dictation or recording of God's audible voice, but rather the 66 books were the Holy Spirit bringing God's message in/through the words of human authors.¹³

I found a helpful video that I'd like to share with you. It's only three and a half minutes long and it gives a nice overview of how we got our Bible. It's called "Three Minute Theology 2.5: How did we get the Bible?" You can view it at this link on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6k-C3Kse17I>

John 5:39 is where Jesus says, "These are the very Scriptures that testify about me." At that time in history, Jesus was referring to the 39 books of the Old Testament. Today, we now also have an additional 27 books from the NT that testify about Jesus. One thing that the video doesn't mention is just how amazing it is, that all 66 of these books are in ALL agreement with each other. This is an amazing unity! It's amazing because we must consider the fact that, these 66 different books were written over a period of over 1,000 years of history. They were written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a little Aramaic), from multiple locations across the known world.

This reality gives further credence to Peter's point, the prophetic message recorded in God's word is completely reliable because it comes from God Himself. The best way to explain this amazing unity between all 66 books, is that the Holy Spirit is actually the all-encompassing author of all 66 books of our Bible. **It was He, who carried along each of these human writers as they spoke from God!**

*This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
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¹¹ See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* note on p. 2553, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015.

¹² *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2116.

¹³ Certainly, there were occasional times where portions of Scripture were direct dictation. See for example, Exodus 20:1-17.