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Experiencing God

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All right, good morning Southeast family. We're so glad that you've chosen to join us in our service and we hope that you're blessed by what you experienced with us this morning before we get moving on, this is our time in our worship where we continue worshiping God through our giving and we do that right now. The easiest way to do that is to jump online. There's a lot of different ways that you can do that. You can do it through our app that you should download. That's "Southeast Christian Church" in Parker, Colorado. You can search that in the app store and download it or you can get online, southeastcc.org/give and you can give that way or you can download the Push Pay app and you can find Southeast Christian Church there and give that way as well. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, that's totally fine. You can mail your check into the office and we'll get it that way. We really appreciate what you're doing, and we really appreciate the opportunity for us to take those resources that you're giving and help put that towards ministry in our community and helping other churches and all kinds of really amazing things. So thank you for that and that's going to be awesome. Can't wait to see how God is faithful in that process.

So today we're going to jump into the first of a two part mini series that's within this larger series called Experiencing God. And we're getting into what Nacho Libris would call the "nitty gritty." This is the guts of the series. This is kind of the like the crème de la crème, the cream of the crop. This is, it's not the best part of the series. It's all been good. But we've been laying a foundation over the last four sermons for the next two sermons and what we're specifically going to try to tackle over the next two weeks is how do we know when God is speaking to us? And so this is a massive topic and it's one of the number one questions that I get as a pastor. And so we're going to take a look at this.

We're going to begin this morning in John chapter 8, and we'll read it, and then see what we can learn. So here's what it says. "Jesus answered them. Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin and the slave does not remain in the house forever, but the Son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you'll be free, indeed." That's a massive statement that we're all slaves to sin. The problem is being a slave means that we don't get to live in that house forever. If the son of the house comes and because he gets to stay in the house forever, he gets inherited at all. If he says she set you free from being a slave, then you're free. You don't get to have a choice about that. You're free because the son sets you free.

He says, "I know that you are offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you." So Jesus has been teaching them. He's been speaking to them and he says, I know that you guys are sons of Abraham because for them, lineage is everything. They know that they're God's special people because he has their descendants of Abraham, that God made a covenant with Abraham and that covenant trickles down to them as descendants of Abraham, and so he goes, "I know that you're offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you."

I speak of what I've seen with my Father and you do what you have heard from your father. That's a weird statement to make, but the answer to him, Abraham is our father and what Jesus is going to say is "Um, no." Jesus said to them, "if you were Abraham's children, you'd be doing the works that Abraham did." Now, remember last week what we talked about. Loving God means obeying him. It means doing the works that he set out for us to do. That's Ephesians 2, it says, by grace we've been saved through faith and this not by yourselves, not by works, so that no one can boast. And then he says, because you are God's masterpiece. You're his workmanship created in him to do good works, which he prepared in

advance for you to do. So if there's no action in our faith, I mean this isn't about pushing people towards a "works righteousness" where they're earning their salvation. What this is saying is there's been works prepared for us since the creation of the world to do, and when we're part of the plan, when we're part of God's plan, those works are works that we will be doing.

And that's what Jesus says. If you were Abraham's children, you'd be doing the works that Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me. By the way, if that's true, then it'd be really good to know what were the works that Abraham did and it's incredible what Abraham did, how he loved people so well. "You want to kill me? A man who has told you the truth that I heard from God and this is not what Abraham did. You are not doing the work that your father did and they said to him, we're not born of sexual immorality." If you remember back to our sermon about Paul and Timothy, that would make them mumzers, which would make them outcast and what they're saying is, "we're not born out of sexual immorality. You better not say that somebody else's. Our father Abraham's our father," and then they take it up a notch and they say, "we have one father. Even God." Jesus said to them, "if God were your father, you would love me for I came from God and I'm here. I came not on my own accord, but he sent me, why do you not understand what I say?"

This is pretty amazing, actually, Jesus' claim here. He's like, look, if you want to believe in God. Like it, it's really simple, but if you're going to do that, you got to agree with me because I came from him. It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil. Now, that's a nice way to spur on a healthy conversation. You are of your father of the devil and your will is to do your father's desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character. Another translation says "he speaks his native language." Like lying to the devil is like speaking English for you and me. It's like speaking Hebrew for the people of that day and what he's saying is, "and he's your father." "When he lies, he speaks out of his own character. For he is a liar and the father of lies, but because I tell the truth, you do not believe me, which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God." Now that's important. Whoever's of God hears the words of God. And so we want to kind of build on that premise that Jesus says, if we're of God, then when God speaks, we're going to hear it. And I think for a lot of us, it's not that we're not hearing him speak, it's that we don't know how to hear him in. Maybe God has been speaking a lot and we just didn't know that it was happening. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

Okay. So what I want to do is, I want to pull apart four of the five major points that are set out in the workbook, Experiencing God, this week. And what we're going to do is actually take the fifth day and we're going to throw it into next week. And we're going to do next week, totally different than the workbook because there's a great book called *Whisper* by Mark Batterson that's got some great input in it about how to hear God speaking. And I like the way that he illustrates it better. So take that Henry Blackaby, no Henry Blackaby is awesome, but I just like the way that he arranges it better. And I think it makes more sense for us when we're talking about God's speaking to pull it apart the way that Mark Batterson does. So if you want to run out and grab that book on Amazon, "run out." If you want to run to the internet, and that's what running out is these days, and grab that book. Or if you want to get on audible and download it and you can listen to it. So you'll be all set for week. But that's what we're going to really focus on is what he has a six ways that God speaks to us. Blackaby talks about really four ways today. What we're going to talk about is God's primary dialect, okay?

And every one of us has one of those. We all have a primary language. Ours for the most part in the United States is English, not saying universally true in the United States. But for most of us, especially in

the area we live, our primary language is English. And so that's where we want to kind of focus on, like we're going to focus on the primary dialect that God speaks in today.

And so in order for us to understand that, the first point that we need to make is that God speaks in a lot of different ways in the Bible. God speaks in a lot of different ways. What a lot of people will say to me as they're trying to figure out what God wants for them, or just even the bigger question of "what is God's will?" and "how do I know when he's speaking?" is "why can't I just have a burning bush? I wish God would just come down and speak to me in a burning bush." Right. Well, that's a great point. That would be great if God did that. However, even in the Bible, there's only one guy that got that. Only one person that got that in all of history. And so to make that, "well, if God came down and spoke to me in a burning bush, then I would believe," to make that the standard really isn't fair.

And so what I want to do is I want to give us a list of some of the different ways that God speaks with the references that go along with those. We won't take time to read them all, but that's, but they'll be there for you to look up later if you want to. So the first one is that God speaks through angels. Genesis 16 amongst a lot of other passages, God speaks through angels. Number two, God speaks through visions and I'm not going to pull that apart too far, but God speaks in the Bible through visions and then he speaks through dreams and visions and dreams are not really the same thing. Genesis 28: 10-19 is your reference there. He speaks through the use of Urim and Thummim. And you're like, number one, I don't know what that is. And number two, that is really fun to say. Urim and Thummim, that's fun to say, but God uses it.

You can do a Google search on "Urim and Thummim" if you want to and you can figure out what that is, but God uses it to speak in Scripture. Exodus 28:30. He speaks through symbolic actions. Jeremiah 18:1-10 amongst other prophets. Jeremiah does things as a symbol of God's relationship with the people. Some of those things that the prophets are called to do are really, really crazy. They're crazy. Isaiah is told by God to go around naked in front of the people for three years like what happens is he's told to go around naked and then the verses and after three years, God let him put his clothes back on.

I'm just saying.

God speaks through a gentle whisper. 1 Kings 19:12, the still small voice. God speaks to Elijah. God speaks through miraculous signs. He does miracles to communicate and so these are some of the different ways in the Bible that God speaks. Here's the thing. If we're not careful, what we can do is get caught up in trying to find a method for God's speaking and not just understand that there's some bigger things going on. Like we want to solve the riddle of the process by which God speaks and not just build a relationship with him, because I want to be clear about something. The goal of God speaking for us isn't or to us isn't to give us a method, and I think that over the years what happens in the churches that every once in a while, God kind of has to take it in a new direction because people have been so consumed in following the method that that God gave to his people at one time that they're not worshipping him anymore. They're serving the method.

And the power of that method is not in what the method is or how strategically awesome it is. The power of it is the Holy Spirit making it live. And when we kind of cut the Holy Spirit out and we just serve the method, we miss it. God speaking to us is about relationship. It's never about methods.

Now he may speak to us and give us methods about how to do different things. I hope he does because we have questions about how to best reach our community and beyond. That's one of our 4 pillars as a church is we want to have a global impact, and I hope that God gives us methods on how we can do that. But the bottom line is when God speaks to us about those things, it's not about those things that he's concerned about. It's about building a relationship with him. And we have to know that or we're never going to understand God's speaking. Now, there are four important factors that are true every

time in the Bible that God speaks. Lots of different ways that he speaks, but there are four different factors that are always true regardless of how he speaks.

Number 1, when God spoke, it was a unique to the individual.

When God spoke, it was unique to that individual and that's important. It's important for us to know that God wasn't looking to find a way to speak to all people, all places, all times like it's not complicated to figure out why because God's goal is relationship. Think about this. If you're married or if you're not married, but you have close friends, like you have people that you're close to in relationship, you speak to them differently than you speak to people that you're not close to.

There's a unique connection that happens with people that I'm connected with that allows for me to speak in a certain kind of way that I would never speak otherwise. I'm not talking about swearing in one venue and not another or whatever. What I'm talking about is when you're connected, it's unique that that relationship takes on a unique conversation. You have inside jokes and you have all these different things that play into the conversation is unique. When God comes and speaks to people in the Bible, it's unique to that individual because God's goal is relationship. Number 2, when God spoke, the individual was sure that it was God. So the "how" of God speaking changes, but that individual knows God.

Which you know, people talk to me about this, talking to me about this topic, they get really kind of "shook" about like I don't know if it was God or it wasn't God. Like here's the thing, when God wants to get your attention, he has a good way of going about it. Like when God speaks in the Bible, the individual was sure it was God. And the third thing is the individual knew what he said. And that's probably more important than anything else that we can focus on.

However, God chooses to speak to you, he will choose to speak to you, and it will be unique. But the two things that you can hang your hat on is that when God speaks to you, you'll know it's God and you'll know what he said. Now you may then sit back and justify it away, but in the moment you will know it as God and you'll know what he said. And then the fourth thing is when God spoke in the Bible, there was no need to wait for more.

Like, God doesn't spend a ton of time convincing people. They knew that they needed to take some steps, now they didn't have the whole picture. They didn't have the whole picture, but they knew what they needed to do to get their self in motion. If you think about Moses, when he's at the burning bush, God says, "Hey, you're going to deliver my people" and Moses is like, "That is a terrible idea for me to do that. That's ridiculous," and I'm going to do a sermon one day on the whole stuttering piece. It's fascinating what's going on there, what Moses is doing, he's still wrestling with who he is and God comes to him and he's like, "look, you're going to go do it." And then if you've seen the Prince of Egypt, I love that particular scene in the movie, the cartoon movie, you know, God is whispering, "Moses..." and the smoke comes out "Moses..." and Moses keeps like, "but God but God but God." And then finally the smoke comes out and gets right in his face and goes, "who made man's mouth?" And the Moses is like, "Oh, I forgot who I was talking to." And so then he goes to, he has no idea what's in store for him. He has no idea what's in store. He doesn't know have any idea about the 10 plagues. He has no idea about 40 years in the desert. He has no idea about any of those things. He just knows what he needs to do.

So God speaks. It's unique to the individual. They knew it was God. They knew what he said, and there was no need to wait for any further instruction. And what a lot of us want to do is to wait until God gives us the whole picture before we take the first step. That's not faith. And that's not a relationship with God. We got to be willing to take the next step as God gives it.

So that's important. Now, the second point that we want to make about this topic of God speaking is this: when arrested with the question of what does God reveal when he speaks. Is he revealing, like, "and when you go fishing on Friday, here's the secrets place where the all the fish are going to hide. And

here's the lure." Is that what he's revealing, like "the Powerball numbers are..." Right? And I wish, I wish that that was it. That would be awesome. "The Powerball numbers are..." I wish that would be it, but that's what is God revealing when he's speaking. That might help us to understand when God's speaking and when he isn't.

Well, God's going to reveal three things and we're looking at a lot of scripture for each one of these things. So we're going to try to move through it pretty quickly. Number one, God is going to reveal himself, who he is. What is his character like? God wants you to know him because he wants to have a relationship with you. So the number one thing that God's going to reveal is his character. What's he like? Is he mad at you or is God for you? Is he pulling for your success? What is he revealing? Genesis 17:1 it says this, "when Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and Abraham said, paled to Abraham and said, I'm God almighty. Walk before and be blameless."

He's revealing himself. "I'm God almighty." Now, we've read that as just kind of like a name and an adjective, but for Abraham, that name is a description of his character. "I'm God almighty." Leviticus 19:1 and 2. I love this. "The Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to the people, the congregation of Israel and say to them, you shall be Holy for the Lord your God. For I the Lord your God am Holy, that you should be Holy. Why? Because I am Holy." God's revealing his character. Malachi 3 says this, "for I the Lord do not change." That's an important part of his character to know on a lot of different levels. That's important though because number one, that creates tremendous security in insecure times. God doesn't change. God never lost control. He doesn't change.

But that's also important for us to recognize when we're trying to talk ourselves *out* of doing something for God. When God comes to you and he speaks to you and he says, "Hey, you need to do this." God's not going to like magically change his mind. I remember when, when I was, gosh, 32 and been part of a church plant for about nine years and it was very successful, took off really big, all kinds of stuff, influence, you know, traveling around the country, speaking different places. It was this really big deal and God started moving on my heart. He started speaking to me about leaving and planting another church, and leaving there wasn't just about leaving that church and my friends. We loved living there and we loved the life that God had given us and we loved everything about it.

And it wasn't just about giving up that. It was about walking away from the influence that it was to be a part of that church, like the clout that that gave walking away from all of it. And it was really hard. And so the Lord started laying it on my heart and then through a series of really interesting circumstances, which if you're interested in that, take me out to lunch after this whole world reopens and I'll tell you mainly I just want free food, but I'll tell you this story. And I was like, "okay Lord, I'll fast and pray about this." And I thought that I was going to fast and pray for 40 days. I don't know why I picked the number 40.

Cause that's what Jesus did. And obviously he and I are just the same. I would have never made it to 40 but we started fasting, Kelly and I, and we had some friends that were fasting with us and we just got crazy confirmation after crazy confirmation. Like it was one thing after another thing, after another thing, after another thing, after another thing. God was like lining up all the pieces to say, I know that you're scared and I know this is a big step for you, so I'm just going to be really gentle and kind with you and just reaffirm and reaffirm and reaffirm what I have for you. And we didn't want to leave. And what I was hoping was, what I had in my mind at the time was like maybe 30 days in, I will have showed God that I'm serious and he'll let me off the hook.

So during that time in my life, I was an obsessive archery hunter. And hunting is a spiritual experience for me. You don't have to like it, but for me I touched the head and the heart of God when I'm in the woods in like, it's just, it's just a spiritual experience for me. So I'm sitting on a mountain side one morning early and I'm watching the sun come up in the Rockies. It was just gorgeous. And there's elk

bugling way down in the valley and I'm sitting there and my friends are all spread out, set up as well. And I'm just talking with the Lord. And I'd been fasting for about seven days at this point and God hit me with two things. Number one was, I said "I want to thirst and hunger for God the way that I've hungered for food over the last seven days."

Specifically chips and salsa and I don't know why. I don't know why that, but I really wanted chips and salsa. So when we broke our fast, and I'll give you the second part in a second, but when we broke our fast, we went and I got a big ol' pile of chips and salsa. So let me tell you this pro tip about fasting. Don't break a seven day fast with chips and salsa. That's bad. Second thing that God hit me with is this question: why are you still fasting? And it was one of the things about fasting is that you get this clarity in your communication with the Lord that's just incredible. About day five on, you get this amazing clarity with God. And he said to me specifically, "it's not like on day 30 I'm going to change my mind." And I was like, like "Ugh."

One of the things that we need to know about the Lord speaking to us is that when God speaks, he's not going to change. He's not going to speak to you one thing and then come down a month later and go "I was just kidding. Do this." This is really important that we recognize this for I the Lord your God, I do not change. Therefore, you or children of Jacob are not consumed. From the days of your fathers. You have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me and I'll return to use as the Lord of hosts. But you say, how shall we return?

They already knew. They already knew.

John six, I'm the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And again, I want to, uh, one of the things that I struggle with is about four or five weeks into a series, I get bored of it. And so I was working on some sermons for the next series that starts in June. And this, we're doing this series on the seven great "I AM's" of John and this is one of them, "I'm the bread of life" and I'm so excited about this series and so there's so many things that I want to say this about this passage right now. Here's what I'm going to say about it: that's another sermon for another day, but good news. That day is not very far off. It's like a month away and then we're going to do it. Then we're going to actually tear this apart. I'm the living bread that came down from heaven. If any of you eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." So he's revealing who he is. When God speaks, he reveals himself.

And the second thing that God revealed that he reveals is his purposes, what is he going to do? So God reveals himself who he is, and then God reveals his purposes. What is he going to do? Let's look at some scripture. Proverbs 19:21 says this, "many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." You can try to have great plans for your life. And we've talked about this already, but like what happens when you go like, God, look my awesome plans that I have.

And God goes, "Awww." Right, kicks it. Crumples it up. Destroys it like "your plans. Oh, they're so small."

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. And I just, it's just true. Like you can't thwart the plans of God. Psalm 33:10 and 11 it says this, "the Lord brings the council of the nations to nothing. He frustrates the plans of the peoples. It's the council of the Lord that stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations."

(Why are you struggling?)

Third thing that God reveals, God reveals his ways. How does he want us to join him? So three things that God reveals. Number one himself. What's he like? Who is he? Number two, his purposes. What is he about to do? And number three, he reveals his ways. How does he want us to join him in what he's about to do? Those are the three things that you can always expect God to deal with.

Isaiah 55: 6-9 it says, “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man, his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon for my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my are your ways my ways declares the Lord. My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways. Declares the Lord. For as far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Let me ask, well, have you ever wondered what in the world God was doing? Like God, what are you doing? How does this make any sense? God's like, I know my ways aren't your ways and my thoughts aren't your thoughts.

It is totally normal for people who've been walking with the Lord for a long time to go, “God, what in the world are you doing?” You know why? Because his ways are not our ways. He doesn't even think about things the same way we do, which makes it really important that God has been revealing himself. Because if we don't understand what he's doing, we can still understand who he is. His character doesn't change and that's important. That's important,

but he's going to reveal to us how he wants us to join him, and 99 times out of 100, we're going to go, “uh, that doesn't make any sense.” He's going, “I know you should totally talk to your neighbor about Jesus.” My neighbor's a jerk. He's like, “I know, you should totally talk to your neighbor about Jesus.” But God, you don't understand my neighbor. God's like, “I know you think that, but what you don't know is it? I've been working on that guy for years and I've been, I actually made this house close for you really easily. Remember how that was. Remember how you got a great deal and you moved in and it was really awesome. Remember how all that happened. You know why that happened cause I wanted you to move in next door to this guy that had been working on for years and he's mean right now, but you tell them about Jesus.” But God he might— “I know, they know. Tell ‘em.” That doesn't make any sense that you would make me risk that God “I know. Just do it.” So amazing.

Like it doesn't make sense always for us to do the things that God's asking us to do. It does make sense. however, to trust in who God is and be faithful.

Now, the next piece of this is that God speaks through the Holy spirit primarily in four ways. These are four ways that that black could be defined. So number one is the Bible, number two is prayer, number three is circumstances, and number four is other people. We're going to pull those second three apart next week. Okay? We're going to pull those apart next week. What I really want to close down on is this: that God speaks through his word. And here's the bottom line: You and I will never be good at hearing God speak if we're not really familiar with the word of God.

We're never going to be good at hearing God speak. If we're not super familiar with the word of God and if you're not willing to put time in on understanding that, that's his primary language, that's his primary dialect. If God's going to speak to us primarily, not universally, but primarily God's going to speak to us through his word, and if we're not familiar with his word, then we don't know how to discern any of the other ways that God would choose to speak to us. Like if God lays something on our heart, which he does sometimes, God impresses us with something, but how would you know that it was God or gas?

Maybe it was the Holy Spirit. Maybe it was tacos. Like what? How do you tell the difference? Maybe it was just that I had a bad day, or maybe it was that I had a really good day and I was just feeling extra generous. Maybe it's that, I don't know. How do we know the difference? We know the difference because the word is concrete. It's unchanging. Like the word is our anchor. The word is our space where we can always go and find connection there to the things that God has already been saying for 4,000 years. It's important for us to know that. God's never going to speak contrary to his word. No matter how he chooses to speak to you, he is never going to speak contrary to his word. And what I find

fascinating is that when we want to speak, we want to hear from God. Like we'll go to them in pairs. And there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with prayer, but we'll go to him in prayer and say, "God say something to me," but we won't go to his word. God's primary dialect is his word.

And you ought to know it. You ought to know it. Like you have the living word of God in your home and you can open it up and read it any time you want. The power that holds the universe together is contained in that book. It is living and active. The words are alive in it. They live, and Holy Spirit uses those words to communicate to us. So if we don't know if we have time for a Bible study in a day, then don't be mad when you don't hear God speaking to you. Like you're free to choose whether or not you're going to read the Bible. You're free to choose that. It's not law, but every choice has consequences. The great thing about freedom and Christ is that you get to pick the consequences you're going to live with. If you don't, like, if you want to hear God speak, get really familiar with his word,

That's where it will begin. 1 Corinthians 2, it says this, "yet among the mature we do, we do impart wisdom. Although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, what no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." These things God has revealed to us through his spirit, where? it's written down in the word "for the spirit searches everything. Even the depths of God for who knows a person's thought except the spirit of that person which is in him. So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. For now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God." And by the way, that's really important. Being able to distinguish between those two 'cause we have, we already have the spirit of the world live in us. We're already pulled towards the world's things. We need to be pulled closer and closer to God's things. And the spirit of God opens that up for us. And how do we know which one is which? Well, we know because does it does it square up with the word of God? So for example, if your Christian brothers and sisters say to you, God would want you to be happy, wouldn't he? Just do what makes you happy. Because God would want you to be happy, wouldn't he? That is not from the spirit of God. How do we know that? It doesn't square with the word. It's not what the word of God says. Your happiness is not God's decision.

God very much cares about your holiness, by the way, he really cares about your holiness, but God wouldn't want you to be happy. It's one of those nice platitudes. It's just not biblical. "Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. And we impart in this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they're spiritually discerned. The spiritual person, judges all things, but as himself to be judged by no one for who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ."

So I have some implications about this message today and we're just opening the topic and remember, I want to keep this in perspective that this week and next week are two parts of one whole and so today what we've covered is that this is God wants to speak to us. He speaks to us through his spirit. When he does, there's four things that you can know. You can know that it will be unique to the individual that they knew it was God. They knew what he said and they didn't need more instruction and that when God speaks, he reveals himself, his character, who he is. He reveals his purposes, what he's about to do in the world, and he reveals his ways, how he wants us to partner with him, and his primary dialect is the word of God. So above all else we should know it and we should know it well.

We will hear God speak much more when we pour our lives into the word of God than we will when we're just walking through nature and talking and hoping that God says something without any

boundaries for what that might be, and God probably will be speaking as you're walking through nature, hoping God that will say, but you don't know how to know that it was God because we don't know the primary dialect that God uses, which is his word.

Some implications for this.

Number one, the goal of God speaking to us as relationship. God wants us to know him. The goal of God's speaking to us isn't methods. It's not strategies. Even those may come, but the goal of God's speaking to us as a relationship with him. The goal of a speaking to speaking to him and him speaking to us is that we can know him better because the more you know God for who he really is and what he's like, you'll fall in love with him. Number two, implication: God reveals himself, his purposes, and his ways. These are the three things that you should be looking for. God reveals himself his purposes and his ways.

Okay, what does that look like practically? If you have a friend that all of a sudden is talking to you about spiritual things and they haven't before, that is God revealing to you something really significant. God's like, "here I am. I'm working over here." Remember Jesus' words? The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers.

Remember, God's working on people around us all the time. It's what John 5 says. Jesus said that. God's working around us all the time. What we have to do is have our spiritual eyes open enough to see it so that we can join him in his work. When we do, we start having all these weird conversations with people like "I never had that kind of a conversation before. It was bizarre and then all of a sudden, they said yes to Jesus. It was the weirdest thing." I know and what happens is you get to be there at the moment of God reaching somebody and really opening their heart up to who he is and it's awesome. It's like smoking crack. It is, only in a good in a good way, and what happens is that pastors vocationally, we get to be a part of those kinds of conversations a lot, which is amazing. It's like a highlight of our job, but it's also something that if pastors aren't careful, they can get really selfish with. Because it's amazing.

It's awesome to be a part of that and so we don't want to let anybody else do it. Like a really important thing about the Christian life is that's not reserved for the clergy. We should be empowering people to go out and have those conversations. Everybody. God reveals himself his purposes and his ways.

Number three, when we decide what God is saying based only on how we feel, it limits our relationship with him. Now, that doesn't mean that God doesn't use how we feel to speak to us, but it's not the primary way and it shouldn't be the foundational way that we understand him.

Number four, hearing God speak is the result of the foundation of knowing his word. If you really going to be serious about wanting to hear God speak, pouring over the word of God, that's the place that we've got to commit our lives to.

And so as we move into our communion time, I would just begin to wrestle with this like, do you want to hear God speak and do? In doing, saying yes to that question, what are you doing to help learn his voice? How are you beginning to really understand God's voice, his character? What's he like? What are his purposes in the world? What's his purpose for you, and how does he want you to partner with him? What you doing to begin and maybe coming into this time of communion where we remember that God doesn't ask us to make sacrifices he's not willing to make. Maybe we can consider that. As we wrestle through what it means to follow him more personally. Let's think about that as we move into communion.