

**by Jennifer Kathleen Phillips**

Since the beginning people have discovered that it is possible to know God intimately and this includes hearing what He has to say. According to the records we have, those who knew God, loved hearing Him speak to them. They came to highly value His words.

King David who live around 1040–970 BC said that God's words, including His commands were "sweeter than honey" and "more precious than gold" and there was a great reward in heeding them (Psalm 19).

In a book possibly written around 675 BC, Job says that "God's voice thunders in marvellous ways; He does great things beyond our understanding" (Job 37:5). Job told his friends that he treasured God's words more than his daily bread (Job 23:12). He could say this even though he had lost everything including his children.

Exekiel, who prophesied between between 593-571 BC, had a vision and said God's voice was "like the roar of rushing waters" (Ezekiel 43:2). Elijah who was a prophet in Israel in the 9th century BC described God's voice as a still, small voice (I Kings 19:12 ) and the first time Samuel (about 1100 B.C. - 1000 B.C) heard God speaking he didn't recognise Him. He thought it was a person speaking to him. Others such as Deborah (1184 BC- 1224 BC) do not tell us what God's word is like but they speak it in the counsel they give to others, in songs and prophecy.

In the first books of the New Testament, John says that the Word became flesh. He was referring to Jesus. Jesus not only spoke God's words as some of the ancient prophets did, but He also showed people what God is like. He said to his disciples, "He who sees me sees the Father" (John 14,7-14). God is "the Father". He is the perfect father. The father many wish they had but didn't. For some the word "father" is difficult to associate with God. Our language is limited in trying to communicate relationship with God who is personal but sexless in human terms.

Being the perfect father, God didn't stop speaking when the last of the ancient prophets died, or when Jesus returned to God, His Father. He still speaks to those who want that close family relationship.

Jesus told His disciples that when he left he would give them the Holy Spirit who would lead them. They were not to worry because God would still be with them. They would still be able to hear Jesus speaking to them and if you read through the Biblical book called *Acts* you will see many instances of God speaking to people through the promised Holy Spirit. For example: "*... the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'*" ( Acts 13:2).

We are told in Romans 10:8 that "*The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.*" This is possible because now Christ can be in us by the Spirit of Jesus, who is called the "Holy Spirit." This Christ is the "son" by whom God speaks to us today (Hebrews 1:2).

If you seek to know God's voice you will begin to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you too. It will take time to learn to recognise Him, but as you get to know what God is like, you will begin to discern what is the voice of God and what is not.

We can hear God speaking when we say something wise or someone else does. It comes out our mouth in conversation. Sometimes God's word is like a thought in our mind that we can miss if we are not seeking to know Him or we have too much going on in our mind. Sometimes it is like noticing something. It is like that "Ah" or "eureka" moment. It is a word, thought or knowing that "hits the mark" and makes our "heart sit down." Sometimes it comes as an impression, because we don't always think in words. Giving voice to experiences is not always that easy. Language is culturally anchored and what we sense sometimes can't be put into words that others can understand. There are many ways that God can communicate with us. In my experience I hear God less when I don't regularly read the bible or listen to sermons given or written by mature Christians who belong to recognised Christian groups. I often begin my daily bible reading by letting God know that I want to hear what He is saying to me.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus is quoted as saying, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if anyone **hears** my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*"

Hearing God's voice is part and parcel of the relationship God wants to have with people. His words are like a satisfying meal that brings contentment as well as understanding. His words bring wisdom, and bonding in the friendship.

If this is the kind of relationship you want with God then it is within your reach. Begin by telling your heavenly Father what you really want.

*References in brackets come from the Bible.*