

# How God Speaks to Us Today



## SABBATH—APRIL 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Exodus 7:1–6; Psalm 19:1–4; Romans 1:18–20; 2 Timothy 3:14–16; Hebrews 1:1–3.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “In the past, God spoke to our people through the prophets. He spoke at many times. He spoke in different ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one whom God appointed [chose] to receive all things. God made everything through him” (Hebrews 1:1, 2, NIV).

**FOR SOME PEOPLE, GOD IS A FAR-OFF POWER** who created the world a long time ago. But He is no longer involved in what happens here. That is not how God is described in the Bible. Instead, the Bible pictures Him to be a loving Father, who takes a very close interest in His people. He is the Covenant<sup>1</sup> God. He tries to establish a union between Himself and the people who were made in His image.

Words cannot describe well who and what God is. But the Bible is very clear in showing God as a good communicator (speaker) to His people.

As soon as Adam was created, God spoke to Him. Immediately after Adam sinned, God called to Adam, “‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:9, NIV). And ever since, God has spoken to humans (men, women, and children) in different ways (Hebrews 1:1). Even on the final page of the Bible, we find this to be true in God’s appeal: “The Spirit [God] and the bride [the church] say, ‘Come!’” (Revelation 22:17, NIV). This week we will look at the different ways God speaks to us today.

**A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** The God who spoke the world into life speaks to all who are willing to listen.

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1. covenant—a promise or agreement between God and His people.

**SUNDAY—APRIL 26****GOD SHOWS HIMSELF THROUGH NATURE (Psalm 19:1–4)**

**Psalm 19:1–4 and Romans 1:18–20 are two of the best examples of God speaking to His people through nature. Summarize in your own words what these two verses teach us.**

“God has surrounded us with beautiful things of nature to keep us busy and interested in life. It is God’s plan that we should connect the beauty of nature with His goodness. If we faithfully study the book of nature, we shall find it very helpful in understanding the never-ending love and power of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 144.

Those who believe in the Bible will be supported in their beliefs. For example, when they look at the starlit sky or see the giant trees in the forests and the beauty of the setting sun behind snow-covered mountaintops, they are seeing the works of a loving and powerful Creator (Jesus). When they see an eagle in the sky, admire a tulip, or think about the wonders of the human body, they see proof of God’s unseen power and agree that nature does show the glory<sup>2</sup> of God.

But the verses in the Bible take us

a step further. They also suggest that nature helps nonbelievers see God’s power that made all the wonderful things in the world. In today’s world, many people close their eyes to this truth. They have been brainwashed by evolution<sup>3</sup> and want to explain that everything was made by accident. But more and more thinkers are admitting that there is so much proof of God’s design.



**A study of nature helps us understand the love and power of God.**

**Ask yourself a simple question. What is the best reason for the beauty of life: pure chance or a planned-out Creation? Defend your answer.**

**How much do Psalm 19:1–4 and Romans 1:18–20 show God in nature? At the same time, what things about God does nature not tell us? Nature tells us a lot. But what else do we know about God that we cannot find by looking at the beauty of creation?**

2. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.

3. evolution—the belief that we became humans (men, women, or children) by slowly changing from a lower form of life to a higher form of life.

**MONDAY—APRIL 27****GOD SPEAKS THROUGH OUR CONSCIENCE<sup>4</sup> (Genesis 42:18–23)**

“Conscience” is sometimes explained as the inward principle (rule) that helps us decide between right and wrong. Even those who do not believe in God usually have some knowledge of what is right or wrong (Romans 2:14, 15). The Christian believes that God is the greatest Lawgiver and that He has put in every man a conscience. But sin has made dull this God-given tool for making wise decisions on moral issues.<sup>5</sup> In most Bible translations, we do not find the word *conscience* in the Old Testament. But it appears many times in the New Testament. But whether or not the word *conscience* is used, the idea is always in the Bible.

**Name a few stories in which we can find the influence<sup>6</sup> of the conscience on the lives of people. Read, for example, Genesis 42:18–23; John 8:1–9; Matthew 27:3–5; and Daniel 5.**

Our conscience is important. But it is not always trustworthy. We notice that people in good conscience often come to very different decisions (choices) about what to do in certain situations. Paul knew this to be true. He said in 1 Corinthians 4:4: “My conscience is clear, but that does not

make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me” (NIV). Paul also warns that we can refuse to accept the pull of our conscience. In fact, some people appear to have burned their consciences with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2, NIV) or have twisted them (Titus 1:15, NIV). But there are ways of making one’s conscience sharper. Being close to God by a regular reading of His Word and by prayer will make us more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who can speak to us through our conscience.

**How do you arrive at important moral decisions? Do you listen to your conscience? How can you be sure that your small, inner voice is not drowned out by other voices in and around you? How can you know whether or not you can trust your conscience? When was the last time you let your conscience be your guide and ended up making a wrong moral decision? What did you learn from that experience that could help you not to make the same mistake again?**

**TUESDAY—APRIL 28****GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PROPHETS (SPOKESPERSONS FOR GOD) (Exodus 7:1–6)**

Many people have a very limited

4. conscience—knowledge or sense of right or wrong with an urge to do right; moral judgment.

5. moral issues—issues that are right or wrong.

6. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

understanding of the gift of prophecy.<sup>7</sup> Prophecy is mainly seen as foretelling the future. The prophets are those who have given their names to many books in the Bible. But the facts show us they are so much more than just writers. God used prophets for more reasons than a person would think. And prophecy is not only about making prophecies. It stands for much more.

**In Exodus 7:1–6, how does the relationship between Moses and his brother Aaron show the key meaning of the word *prophet*?**

The verses of Exodus 7:1–6 show the true work of a prophet. Moses, who is spoken of as a great prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10–12), was helped by his brother, who served as his spokesperson. “Moses is like God to Aaron, who is the same as a prophet to Pharaoh. The clear idea is that prophets do not make their own speeches but only pass on what they have heard from God.”—Adapted from Jon Dybdahl, *Exodus, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1994), page 80.

A prophet is a man or a woman who speaks for God. Those words have authority (power; truth) because the message comes from God. But the prophet may choose his or her own words to give that message. God used this way of communicating

(speaking) with His people a lot. Amos pointed this out when he said, “The Lord and King never does anything without telling his servants the prophets about it” (Amos 3:7, NIV).



**A prophet is a man or woman who speaks for God.**

**What does the Bible say about the use of the gift of prophecy after Old Testament times? Look at the following examples from the New Testament. What proof do they give of its use?**

- 1. Prophets mentioned by name** (Luke 1:67; Luke 2:36; Acts 13:1)
- 2. The continuing gift** (1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:1–5)
- 3. False prophets** (2 Peter 2:1; Revelation 2:20)
- 4. A characteristic<sup>8</sup> of the remnant church** (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10)

**What has been the influence of the writings of Ellen G. White (who**

7. gift of prophecy—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

8. characteristic—what the character (who someone is) is made of; one of the many things that make you who you are, such as patience, kindness, hope, laziness, anger, and so on.

had the gift of prophecy) upon your own life? How has God spoken to you through her ministry (work)? In what ways could you make better use of the blessings of this gift?

### WEDNESDAY—APRIL 29

#### GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN IN HIS WORD (2 Timothy 3:14–16)

Many of the things God has made known through His prophets in the past have not been recorded in the Bible. But some of those messages from God were received by a few dozen people during a period of more than 1,500 years and were written down. These writings are in our Bible. Jesus and the people in His time treasured the writings in the Old Testament. Today the Bible includes also the Gospels<sup>9</sup> and the writings of other apostles from the first period of the church.



The Bible is God's messages or words to us.

Paul praised Timothy for his careful study of God's Word (Bible). Paul said that God's Word can make you wise for salvation.<sup>10</sup> How does Paul in 2 Timothy 3:14–16 further describe the influence of the Written Word (Bible) of God?

"As we think about the great things of God's Word, we look into a fountain that goes deeper than our knowledge. As we watch, the vision widens, and we see a limitless sea of knowledge. Such study has great power. The mind and heart gain new strength, new life.

"This experience is the highest proof of God as the Author of the Bible. We receive God's Word as food for the soul in the same way we receive bread as food for the body." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, page 26.

More Bibles are sold today than ever before. New versions for special groups keep showing up. We have Bible versions for beginners. And we have versions for deeper study. And this is a good thing. But that does not mean that the Bible also is more widely read. Many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, do not read the Bible. Many do not know their Bible as the people in the past once knew it. But only at our own risk can we fail to study the Word of God regularly. This neglect is sad, because the Bible has the power to speak to us afresh every time we open it.

9. Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

10. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.



God's Word (the Bible) is bread for the soul.

**How much time did you spend with your Bible during the past week? In the past month? Is Bible reading an important part in your daily schedule? If not, why not? What do you spend more time doing—reading the Bible or watching TV? What changes might you need to make?**

### **THURSDAY—APRIL 30**

#### **CHRIST—GOD COMES TO US IN PERSON (John 1:1, 2)**

Getting letters from someone on a regular basis can go a long way toward getting to know that person more closely. Receiving a picture will show another side of that person. But you will not really know that person until you have spent time face-to-face.

Because of sin, God could no longer communicate (speak) with us as He had done with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God has communi-

cated with us very well in different ways. But He wanted to give us a fuller picture of Himself. And this He has done through Jesus.

**According to John 1:1, 2; John 14:9; and Hebrews 1:1–3, how did God give us this full picture of Himself?**

The exact wording of John 1:1 is important. John does not say that God showed Himself in the flesh. John also does not say that Jesus showed up in the flesh. Rather, John says that Jesus became flesh at a certain point in time. Jesus came from above and became flesh. That means He accepted becoming a human. The fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal (forever; without end) Son of God, became flesh for our salvation is probably the basic teaching of all Christian churches.

**According to John 5:36–40, what relationship is there between the way God speaks to us in the Bible and the way He speaks to us through Jesus Christ?**

For some people the study of the Bible is a goal in itself. There are many gifted Bible thinkers who do not believe in God at all. But reading the Bible without trying to know the Lord cannot lead you to salvation any more than reading a recipe can fill your empty stomach!

Jesus Christ is the focus of the Bible. The Bible is about Him, about

what He has made known to us about who God is. The Bible does not save us. But it gives truth about the only One who can. He is Jesus of Nazareth.

**It is one thing to just read the Bible. But it is another to know the Bible. And it is another to quote verses by memory. But do you know the Lord of the Bible? What are ways in which you can read and study the Bible so that you can know God better?**

### FRIDAY—MAY 1

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “God uses many ways to make Himself known to us and bring us into fellowship [closeness] with Him. Nature speaks to our senses about God without stopping. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as shown through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications<sup>11</sup> of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the tall trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the rushing brook, the glories of the heavens speak to our hearts. They invite us to better know the God who made them all.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 85. Read this entire chapter entitled “A Knowledge of God,” in *Steps to Christ*, pages 85–91.

11. communications—the many ways God speaks to us.

12. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and get along with one another.

13. influenced—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How much does nature help us to find God? Does nature teach us anything about the God of the Bible? Or does it just tell us that there must be something or Someone out there?
- ② In class, talk about how important it is to follow one’s conscience. Then talk about the dangers that are involved. What are ways we can help others know if and when they can trust their conscience?
- ③ What part does culture<sup>12</sup> and upbringing have on the influence of your conscience? In what ways has your culture influenced<sup>13</sup> your sense of right and wrong? How can you learn to go beyond culture when you need to, especially when your culture teaches something that is against the clear teaching of the Word of God?
- ④ If the gift of prophecy is a spiritual (holy) gift to God’s church, should we expect it to play an important part in our day and age? May we expect God to raise up other prophets as He called Ellen G. White more than a hundred years ago? Discuss.
- ⑤ What are ways that we can study the Bible so we can know God better? What are ways to study the Bible without knowing God any more than when we first started reading?

**SUMMARY:** God wants to communicate with us. He does so through nature. He also speaks through our conscience. Throughout the ages He has used prophets, and He has made the prophetic gift available even for

His church today. The Bible remains God's Guidebook for our Christian journey. Its focus is on what God has done for us. He has entered this world in the Person of His Son. And the Bible confirms (supports) this fact.