

DEVOTED
“God Speaks”
January 12, 2025

INTRO.: Last week as we began our new series, *Devoted*, by sharing some of the words that come to peoples’ minds when the word is mentioned. Some of the words and phrases are: “all in,” “totally committed,” “steadfast loyalty,” “sacrifice,” “a total focus on something or someone,” “unyielding allegiance to someone or something,” “committed without hesitation,” “forever,” “dedicated, loyal,” “unconditional commitment,” and “willing to serve unconditionally.” There are actually three parts within this series relating to each of us: “*devoted to God*,” “*devoted to one another*.” BUT here’s the challenge. Nobody can possibly fulfill both of these, being devoted to God and devoted to one another, without the power, strength, and empowerment by God. So, to get to how it is possible to be devoted to God and devoted to one another God needs to come into our lives and change us from the inside out. It is because of that they we are beginning with five weeks on how God has and continues to show His devotion and commitment to us. Let me say up front that God does not need us to accomplish His will and purposes. Now this may sound a little harsh to us but it’s true. God is not dependent on anyone or anything because He’s God and as such, He is self-sufficient, all powerful, totally sovereign, and eternal. He did not need to create us to make Himself complete. Yet, in His amazing grace and mercy He created man and woman in His image for His glory, giving them meaning and purpose in life. Even when man sinned and came under God’s rightful judgment, He promised a deliverer. So, all that we will share in the next five weeks about God’s commitment to us, His creation, is evidence of His ongoing grace and mercy. This morning, we are going to look how God shows His grace and mercy with this statement, **GOD SPEAKS**. We notice from Genesis, the very first book of the Bible, and in the very first chapter that God created by just speaking.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Genesis 1:6–7 And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” **7** So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so.

Genesis 1:9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so.

Genesis 1:11–12 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. **12** The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”

Genesis 1:24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.

In verses 26-27 we read of the capstone of God’s creation: mankind.

Genesis 1:26–27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

From here forward we see some truly astounding things that God does in relation to His creation of man and woman. What we will see this morning are the following four things: **GOD SPOKE DIRECTLY**, **GOD SPOKE THROUGH THE PROPHETS**, **GOD SPOKE THROUGH JESUS**, and **GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD**. When we finish this message there should be much cause for worship and praise.

GOD SPOKE DIRECTLY

Genesis 2 goes into the detail as to how God created Adam. It is not, as some claim, a second creation account.

Genesis 2:7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

It is interesting to note that the name Adam means “man” and comes from the Hebrew word, *Adamah*, which means *earth*. Adam was created by God out of the dust of the ground. Further on in chapter 2 we have recorded what God did with Adam.

Genesis 2:15–17 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. **16** And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; **17** but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (literally “*dying you will die*”).”

After Adam and Eve sinned in disobeying God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God spoke to them again as they were attempting to hide from God.

Genesis 3:8–11 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” **10** He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” **11** And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Then God pronounced judgment on the serpent, Adam, and Eve. As He pronounced judgment on the serpent, He promised that the serpent would be defeated, that there would be a deliverer. Adam and Eve were banned from the garden and there is a change in how God speaks to mankind from that point forward. To look at how God spoke after sin entered the world we’re going to look at Hebrews 1:1-3 and Hebrews 4:12-13.

Hebrews 1:1–2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

GOD SPOKE THROUGH THE PROPHETS

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways

The fact that God continued to speak is once again a sign of His mercy and grace. God spoke in many and various ways. The author of Hebrews does not list the different ways but we find in the Old Testament that God used visions, dreams, and angelic revelations.

Isaiah had visions (Isaiah 1:1+) as did Daniel (Daniel 8). We read in other Old Testament passages about the Word of the Lord coming to the prophets.

Jeremiah 1:4–8 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, **5** “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” **6** “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” **7** But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. **8** Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

Ezekiel 12:1–2 The word of the LORD came to me: **2** “Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.

Zechariah 4:8–9 Then the word of the LORD came to me: **9** “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.

The prophets were to share the message that God had given them. They knew the message that God gave to them was from God. How did one know if they were a true prophet or a false prophet?

The Israelites were depending on God to speak through the prophets. They knew if God spoke to them directly, they would die.

Deuteronomy 18:14–22 The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. **15** The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. **16** For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb

on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.” **17** The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. **18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. **19** If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. **20** But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.” **21** You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?” **22** If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

God spoke directly to Adam and Eve before they sinned and then God spoke through the prophets. Who comes next according to the book of Hebrews?

GOD SPOKE THROUGH JESUS

Hebrews 1:2-3 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. **3** The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven

The theme of the book of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus Christ. We can see right away that this Son, Jesus Christ, is God, the second person of the trinity. God the Father made God the Son the heir of all things and He was involved in creation (“Let us make man in our image”). He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of God the Father. Not only is He Creator but He sustains all that has been created by His word. Sounds like what we read in Colossians.

Colossians 1:15–17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus Christ is God’s Word in the flesh. This is just what we celebrated during the Advent season; God became a man!!

John 1:1–4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus came as the living Word of God and spoke the Word of God. Here are some of the things He said:

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

God spoke directly to Adam and Eve and then sin caused a separation between God and man. In the Old Testament we see that God spoke through the prophets. Then God spoke through Jesus Christ and He continues to speak through Christ’s words as recorded in the Bible. That brings us to today. What is the primary way that God speaks today?

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD

What are we talking about here? God’s Word is the Bible. What do we know about the Bible? The challenge is Hebrews 4 is that people need to walk by faith, not depending on their works but resting in their faith. Someone who truly comes to faith will have their lives changed, not to earn God’s favor but because we already have God’s favor. From there the writer speaks of the Word of God. What are the attributes he lists?

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**living*: present tense, participle. God’s Word is alive which means it still speaks to us today. This (hold up the Bible) is not a dead book!

This is followed by a series of adjectives that describe God's word:

***active:** this can also mean *effective*. This is the word "energes" which sounds like our word *energy*.

Donald Guthrie: "A thing may be alive but dormant, but the nature of true life is that it springs into activity and challenges on every front those who fall short of its standards. The Word of God, in its intellectual and moral demands, pursues men and cries out for personal decision to be made in response to its exhortations."

If you seriously and prayerfully get into this book it will change your life! You can count on that! How many here have been reading the Bible and be convicted about a sin in your life that you need to repent of? How many people have read the same passage in the Bible many times and still have God speak to you through it?

Isaiah 55:10–11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, **11** so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

***sharper than any two-edged sword:**" It is sharper than any or every two-edged sword. Being a sword God's Word will make its point in your life. What does this sword do?

***penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow:**" present tense, participle.

"it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart:" This word goes so deep that it judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. I can't judge your thoughts, attitudes, or motives but the Word of God sure can.

A sword is an offensive weapon and is the only offensive piece of the spiritual armor of the believer described in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The Word of God will do battle in our lives, pointing out sin, and it will be the weapon that we need to battle against the enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. To face life without the Word of God is like going into battle unarmed.

The writer of Hebrews does not stop there in describing the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hiding from God is nothing new. Adam and Eve attempted it in the Garden of Eden, and it was a miserable failure. Everything in our lives will be laid bare before God. When somebody does something wrong and says, "Well, at least I didn't get caught," they are wrong for God sees everything.

So, I ask you, "What is the primary way that God speaks today?" Can God speak other ways? Certainly, we can't limit God, but when somebody says God spoke to them, we must ask, "Is it in harmony with the Bible?" God will NEVER contradict His Word!

SO WHAT???

What is our reaction to all of what has been shared this morning? If it wasn't for God speaking, we would have no hope of having our sins forgiven and being reconciled to God.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

God continues to speak for which we should be eternally grateful. How many of us have multiple Bibles in our homes and don't even open them regularly, let alone study, memorize, and meditate on God's Word?

[Child Walked 20 Miles to Obtain a Bible](#)

Mary Jones was about eight-years-old when she became a Christian. Having learned to read, she wanted to own a Bible in her native Welsh language. But in 1800, Bibles were expensive and hard to come by in Wales. A Bible owned by a relative of Mary's, who lived several miles from her home, was her only access.

So, she saved for six years until she had enough money to buy one of her own. When she sought out the Bible, she was told that a Mr. Charles was her best hope. The only problem was that he lived some 20 miles from Mary's home.

Undeterred, she walked the entire way, barefoot, to find Mr. Charles and fulfill her dream of owning her own Bible.

Mary's story lives on today at a visitor center in Wales dedicated to her memory.

The story of Mary Jones's Bible does not end with her. In 1802, at a meeting with church leaders in London, Mr. Charles recounted her dedication to owning her own Bible. He was there to urge a solution to the lack of affordable Bibles in Wales.

A pastor there named Joseph Hughes asked if a new society could be formed. But he went further, asking, "If for Wales, why not for the United Kingdom? And if for the Kingdom, why not for the world?"

That question was eventually answered, with the help of William Wilberforce and other members of the famous Clapham sect, by the formation of the British Foreign Bible Society. Today, it works with an international network of other Bible societies to produce and distribute millions of Bibles in hundreds of languages around the world. All of this stems from one girl's determination to own her own Bible.

Source: John D. Meade & Peter J. Gurry, Scribes & Scriptures (Crossway, 2023), pp. 17, 23

Pastor Arnold Linares from Honduras told me that one of the needs of pastors in their country is to have a study Bible in their language.

*What is my reaction when the Bible is mentioned?

Acts 17:10–12 As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. **11** Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. **12** Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

*Do I regularly thank God for His word?

There are several Scriptures on the bottom of the outline (Going Deeper section) in the bulletin insert as well as at the bottom of my notes that speak of the Psalmist's reaction to God's word/law.

*What is my goal in 2025 when it comes to time in God's Word? Have I shared that with anyone?

*Am I willing to commit to being involved in a group Bible study?

*Am I willing to set a goal for at least once a week speaking to someone about what I am learning from the Bible?

[The Secret Life of Gift Cards](#)

Gift cards make great stocking stuffers—just as long as you don't stuff them in a drawer and forget about them after the holidays. Americans are expected to spend nearly \$30 billion on gift cards this holiday season, according to the National Retail Federation. Restaurant gift cards are the most popular, making up one-third of those sales.

Most of those gift cards will be redeemed. Paytronix, which tracks restaurant gift card sales, says around 70% of gift cards are used within six months. But many cards—tens of billions of dollars' worth—wind up forgotten or otherwise unused. That's when the life of a gift card gets more complicated, with expiration dates or inactivity fees that can vary by state.

After clothing, gift cards will be the most popular present this holiday season. Nearly half of Americans plan to give them, according to the National Retail Federation. But many will remain unspent.

Gift cards get lost or forgotten, or recipients hang on to them for a special occasion. In a July survey, Bankrate found that 47% of U.S. adults had at least one unspent gift card or voucher. The average value of unused gift cards is \$187 per person, a total of \$23 billion.

While it may take gift cards years to expire, experts say it's still wise to spend them quickly. Some cards—especially generic cash cards from Visa or MasterCard—will start accruing inactivity fees if they're not used for a year, which eats away at their value. Inflation also makes cards less valuable over time. And if a retail store closes or goes bankrupt, a gift card could be worthless.

Source: Dee-Ann Durbin, "The secret life of gift cards: Here's what happens to the billions that go unspent each year," AP News (12-26-23)

Brenda and I had gift cards from one of our favorite area restaurants that went out of business. Those gift cards were then useless. This book, the Bible, is a priceless gem that has been given to us by God. Don't keep it hidden away!!

What did the Psalmist think about God's Word (Psalm 119:14, 16, 24, 35, 47-48, 70, 77, 92, 97, 103, 111, 113, 119, 127, 140, 143, 159, 163, 167, 174)?