

God Is Still Speaking (Unabridged)

**By
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May the words of my mouth and the meditations that are in all our hearts, be acceptable to Thee dear Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer.

Does God speak to us? Is it possible for us to hear Him Speak? How does God speak to us? Do we listen?

The Bible is full of times God spoke. He conversed with Adam in the garden. He told Noah to build an ark. He spoke to Moses from a burning bush. He spoke to Elijah in a mountain cave. Paul heard His voice on the way to Damascus. But does God still speak to us today? If so, how, when, and where?

C. S. Lewis once wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our despair. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

For Laity Sunday in 2005, I was asked by Rev. Kathleen if I would share with you how God speaks to me. Before calling her back the next night to say yes, I started writing notes about all the times and ways God had spoken to me. I soon had several reams of hand written notes. When I called her back the next night to say I would be delighted to participate, she informed me to keep it to just a few minutes because she had others who were also going to participate. So that day you got the short version.

Today you'll get the unabridged version. No I am not going to tell you about every time God spoke to me. But I am going to expand on four of the most meaningful conversations I have had with God. I am going to try and paint you a mental picture with my words. So feel free to close your eyes and try to envision these moments (but don't fall asleep).

It's early Monday morning in January and I groaned as I woke up an hour earlier than my normal 5 AM rise and shine time. It had been snowing all night and there was a fresh 6 inches of snow

to be cleared from the sidewalks and driveway so that Sandi and I could get to work. I don my long johns, wool socks, heavy pants, and flannel shirt then head down stairs. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, the coffee pot was set up the night before and I poured myself a cup of hot coffee on the way to the basement. There I put on my boots, winter jacket, gloves and hat then grabbed the snow shovel. As soon as I stepped outside, I was struck by the cold dry air, the kind that makes your nasal hairs bristle. I stop and notice the beauty of the fresh snow blanketing the back yard, undisturbed by man or animal. There are still a few snowflakes falling even though the storm has moved on and the bright full moon can be seen every once in a while as the storm clouds quickly move away. I looked up, opened my mouth and caught a snowflake on my tongue. A childlike thing to do and it is delightfully cold and refreshing. I stared across the back yard as a gust of wind whipped up a snow devil and I watch as it dissipated into the woods. And then it happened, He spoke and we talked.

At first I am shocked. What can God have to say so early on this cold winter morning? But I listen and he tells me to take it slow easy shoveling snow. He does not want me to hurt my back or stress my heart. He says that physical labor is like spiritual labor, not always an easy task. He says that the cold and snow are good for us. He promises that warmth and flowers will come and the earth will be renewed. He asks me to spend more time with the Bible. I thank Him for his concern about my wellbeing, tell Him that we are all looking forward to the warmer weather, and promise to spend more time with Bible, paying attention to words written in red.

It's the third Saturday in April. Yeah, spring is just starting and it's the opening day of trout season in Connecticut. I arrived at my favorite stream about 5:30 and share coffee and conversation with several other opening day fishermen before the 6 AM start time. One of them passes out plastic bags and asks us to pick up some trash before we call it a day, a good thing to do since we are all stewards of the earth. It's now mid-morning and I have two fresh trout for dinner as I wade downstream to another spot, with a full bag of trash I might add. When I get there, I find a young man with his daughter fishing this little hot spot. At first I am a little disappointed but that soon turns to sheer enjoyment as I watch her catch her first fish. She is jumping, laughing, and screaming as her father lifts a nice 10-inch rainbow from the stream. "Can we keep him?" she keeps asking over and over. Then she yells at her dad to hurry up

because she wants to catch more. I call out to them “congratulations and nice job”. The young man waves, the little girl says “thanks” as I smile and quietly continue further downstream so they can enjoy this special moment between father and daughter. I put on a worm and on my first cast hook a trout. I land a beautiful 8-inch brown trout and I admire the vibrant orange, yellow and brown spots on its side as I gently remove the hook and place him back in the stream. Ready to call it quits I climb out of the stream but before heading home I find a rock in the warm spring sun to sit on and contemplate the wonders of nature. I marvel at the smell the earth warming up after a long winter, listen to gurgling water in the stream and feel the warmth of the spring sun on my face. Then it happens, He spoke and we talked.

God tells me that spring is his favorite season. It is his way of showing us that He will never give up on us. The awakening of the plants, the warming sun, and the returning birds are his way of fulfilling his promise of eternal life to all who believe. I thank Him for his love and promise then ask why do some not believe? After a brief moment of silence God says that he loves all his children, whether they believe or not. He also asks that those of us who do believe to spread His word.

It’s a warm summer afternoon in June and I am at the American Cemetery in Coleville on the Normandy coast of France. As look around, I am totally in awe at the scene in front of me. There is the wall of the missing on which are inscribed over 1500 names. The bronze statue “Spirit of American Youth Rising from the Waves” overlooks the cemetery. Over nine thousand crosses and stars marking the graves of American men and women who gave it all to stop the spread of evil throughout Europe in the Second World War stand in amazingly straight rows, all facing west, towards the home to which they will never return. Tears roll freely down my cheeks as I say a short prayer of thanks by one of the markers. I rise from my knees and find my way to a bench along the walkway at the top of the cliff along one side of the cemetery to compose myself. I admire the contrast of the pure white marble markers with the lush green vegetation and the azure blue sky over head. The day is unbelievably peaceful with a warm sun, cool breeze and the sound the waves of the English Channel gently lapping the beaches below. Try as I might, I cannot envision the chaos of that day, June 6, 1944. I look back down towards the beach and see a solitary man in uniform walking at the edge of the water. He stops and when he

removes his hat I see the face of an elderly man with gray hair. I think that he is a WWII veteran as he kneels in red sand beach by the water's edge and bows his head in prayer. And then it happens, He spoke and we talked.

God tells me about this man, He was by his side when at the tender age of 19 he was part of the allied forces that landed on these beaches. God says He is listening to his prayer for peace and to look over his fallen comrades. God says he loves him. God says he loves all human kind. Then in a fit of what I can only perceive as anger, God tells me how much he hates war. Then he apologizes for sounding angry but says it deeply saddens him when human intolerance of our differences grows into hatred. I ask Him "what can we do?" He tells me that we need learn to respect and love each other as He does us.

It's evening, the Sunday after Thanksgiving. I am in the mountains of Pennsylvania, a place where I have spent many weeks after Thanksgiving hunting with my Dad; Uncles Bob, Ted, Kenny, and Bucky; and Cousins Ernie, Vince, and Rick. My Dad and Uncles started the Wee Five hunting in the mountains of Tioga County in the 1960s. The old hunting camp was sold, many years ago, and now Ernie has a place of his own on top of Armenia Mountain and he has invited me to hunt with him once again. This time is very special to me not only because of the hunting tradition that I grew up with, but because Ernie has been battling a very rare form of bone cancer for almost two years and one never knows... Since I arrived Friday afternoon, we have enjoyed quiet walks through the woods, did some repair work on the cabin, sat in front of the wood stove laughed at jokes and told stories about past hunts on Huckleberry Mountain, and shared some pretty good meals. It's Sunday evening now and Ernie heads off to bed early. Tomorrow is the opening day of deer season and it starts with breakfast at 4 AM. Before I retire I step outside of the cabin and walk around the pond. The cold mountain air has frozen the evening dew making the grass crunch beneath my feet. I can see my breath in the cold, clean mountain air. In the field below the pond I can make out 4 deer in the dim moonlight. I look up and admire the millions of twinkling stars that fill heavens. Then it happens, He spoke and we talked.

God tells me that he enjoys watching us having a good time, remembering the past, and celebrating the people that taught and helped us grow up. He says we should enjoy and respect the beauty of nature, His creations. He then says that He is walking with Ernie as he battles his disease and often has to carry him in His arms. I thank him for blessing me with so many fond memories. Then ask him to look over all us during tomorrows hunt and keep us safe. I also ask Him to continue to look after Ernie and who are ill physically and spiritually.

God speaks to us every day through the Bible, prayer, and conscience. We only have to learn to hear his voice and be willing to talk to Him. I have shared with you four of my most memorable conversations with Him. I hope that you were able to envision in your mind one or more of these events and maybe even recalled a similar experience. It seems to me that He has a habit of speaking to us at what seems to be the oddest times. But as I look back on these memorable conversations, I realize that they occurred at very peaceful times when I was relaxed and deep in thought. My advice to you is to be ready at any time, in every season and every day from the time you get up till the time you go to bed. Often he catches us by surprise but when you hear Him speak, listen and talk with Him. It's always something important that He wants you to know.

God and I talk about many things during our special conversations. But every time He repeats one very special message that He wants to share with the world. It's a simple but very important message. I find His word for all of us so eloquently in the last verse of George Strait's "Love without End":

Last night I dreamed I died and stood outside those pearly gates
When suddenly I realized there must be some mistake
If He knows half the things I've done
He'll never let me in
Then somewhere from the other side
I hear these words again
He said; let me tell you a secret
About a Father's love

A secret that my Daddy said
Was just between us
You see Daddy's don't just love their children
Every now and then
It's a love without end.

Amen.