



You've heard it – you've said it. We come across something we just don't understand. And out come the words - "I DON'T HAVE A CLUE, I JUST DON'T GET IT, I COULD NEVER DO THAT, IT'S TOO CLEVER FOR ME". It's not hard to find the most common objects that frustrate us – the ones we don't have a clue about, the things we feel like picking up and throwing out of the window VIDEO – the video, the computer, the mobile phone. And then of course what happens, we come across a ten year old that comes into the room and twiddles the dials like a pro and it's just easy peasy to them. The truth is, it is easy when you know how, but the learning curve is often something that puts us off. Or when things go wrong, we just leave them rather than try to work them out – like reading the instruction manual for example. HELPFUL FRIEND Of course, there is another way we can sort out our lack of knowledge, get the thing fixed and learn ourselves all at the same time – by getting someone for whom it's all just easy peasy to come and sort it all out and show us how to do it.

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK? Which brings us to the subject of my present sermon series. I've been saying a lot about needing to discern what God is saying to us, but how does He speak today? In the last couple of sermons we have explored one of the most basic concepts of the Christian faith. God speaks to us today through His written word – the Bible – the holy Scriptures. We saw how they are God-breathed.

Because they are God-breathed, the scriptures are a clear written statement of what God has revealed of Himself to the human race. That's what makes the Bible so powerful and authoritative and must stand as the key source of what we need to discover about the will and ways of God. The EA's basis of faith says this: EA BASIS OF FAITH: *The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.*

TWO PRINCIPLES However, we have a God who is alive and active in the world today, most importantly in the lives of His people through the Holy Spirit. If we are believers this morning, we already have the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit is a Person – He speaks. So we have two principles – the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Obvious, easy to grasp you'd think. I didn't call this session Easy Peasy for nothing. But you'd be surprised how people taking extremes positions on this have sown confusion in the church of God over the years.

- THE BIBLE The Reformers had a principle which was called sola scriptura. The Bible alone is the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. It was there to counter the medieval church which had added some strange ideas because they equated the authority of the church with scripture. That's good. We believe in the ultimate authority of scripture and endorse the EA. However, there are those that confuse ultimate with only – scripture is a complete record of what God wants to tell us about Himself and His will so He has no need to speak to men and women today. To put this in the words of one pro- sola scriptura supporter "there is no need for ongoing communication from God. He doesn't speak to us, we just pray and find whatever answer we can in scripture. We persuade men by argument using scripture. But where's the Holy Spirit? The ultimate positioning of this is that men make the Bible reflect wisdom. JW The JW's are one of the best examples of this gone wrong. When the Bible didn't suit what they wanted to say; they just changed the Bible to say it!
- GOD SPEAKS TODAY - That God is actively sharing of His mind and will with people today by His Spirit. As we'll see in a moment, this is something that scripture teaches. We can't do without the Spirit just as we can't do without the Bible, but unfortunately there are some people who abuse this knowledge in the same kind of way. Some of the most dangerous CULTS have been based on people who convince others that they have a unique prophetic power – even that God has given them some new revelation – which usually contradicts Scripture. Always beware anyone who claims a new or special revelation from God. If we haven't heard of it over the last 2000 years, then it's not of God.

One of the largest moves of the Spirit in the church globally in the last half century has been a renewed interest in the power and presence of the Spirit of God. It has been revitalising for many branches of God's church in this generation. God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit desires to speak to His people personally. Here's what GREG HASLAM, the Minister of Westminster Chapel says: ... *Both personal experience and the authoritative preaching of the Scriptures themselves*

*combine to lead us to a fresh realization that the work of the Holy Spirit is still alive and active in the modern world.*” Sadly, it has been abused in the same way Christians abuse the Bible and I’ve come across plenty of that over the years. But let’s not go down the road of throwing out the baby with the bathwater as has been the practice of some. I believe God wants to move powerfully through His church in this generation and the agency of the Holy Spirit is how He will achieve it.

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT SPEAK? How do we find truth in this? Let’s start off with where we left off – with scripture because it’s our ultimate authority. The passage read to us from 1 Corinthians 2 reveals much of what we need to know. There are three things I would like us to observe in this passage: SLIDE

*11 It is only our own spirit within us that knows all about us; in the same way, only God's Spirit knows all about God. 12 We have not received this world's spirit; instead, we have received the Spirit sent by God, so that we may know all that God has given us. 13 So then, we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, as we explain spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit.*

*14 Whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God's Spirit. Such a person really does not understand them, and they seem to be nonsense, because their value can be judged only on a spiritual basis. 15 Whoever has the Spirit, however, is able to judge the value of everything, but no one is able to judge him. 16 As the scripture says, "Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who is able to give him advice?" We, however, have the mind of Christ.*

◆ The Spirit gives us understanding of the things of God 1

The number of times I have preached in MRBC on this principle! How do we understand the things of God? Because the Spirit has been our teacher. He has taken words we don’t understand at a human level and made them make sense. We might not have been conscious of the Spirit speaking, but we know what He’s done to us – He’s made us understand. We have the mind of Christ and we can understand and discern spiritual things. I think sometimes we so much want to hear that voice from heaven; giving us answers, where the Holy Spirit has already moved in our spirit to understand God’s mind and will. And that’s something God has given to us all if we are believers. God has spoken through His word and by His Spirit and we understand. Do you have problems understanding the Bible? Stuck understanding how God is working in your life? Ask the Spirit to reveal it to you – but be prepared to receive the answer even if you don’t like it! It’s easy when you know how!

◆ The Spirit can empower the words we speak 2

This is amazing. Paul has already said that the words he speaks had already been taught him by the Spirit. But go back to verse *1 When I came to you, my friends, to preach God's secret truth, I did not use big words and great learning. 2 For while I was with you, I made up my mind to forget everything except Jesus Christ and especially his death on the cross. 3 So when I came to you, I was weak and trembled all over with fear, 4 and my teaching and message were not delivered with skilful words of human wisdom, but with convincing proof of the power of God's Spirit.*

Afraid of revealing that you are a Christian. Afraid that if you speak of Jesus you’ll make a fool of yourself. Do it in your strength and you will. But the Holy Spirit can make our words so different when we rely on Him to work through us and speak through us. Then be amazed. He can do that. He does do that. But be prepared to walk with Him. If you want to know more of the Spirit’s power and hear His voice clearly, you must spend time in the presence of God. There is no substitute. It’s easy when you know how!

◆ The Spirit gives gifts – and that includes the prophetic 3

*14 Whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God's Spirit.* My time is gone this morning. We’ll pick this up in another week. God speaks in and through each of us. That applies to all Christians. But the Spirit blesses the church with gifts, including where God speaks through people and we shall explore that as and when. If you come tonight, we’ll explore OT prophecy with a view to seeing how it may help us understand prophecy in the church today.

We have two tasks from this morning – first to more consciously ask God for a much clearer understanding of His words and ways and secondly make ourselves available to Him, so that the Spirit can speak through us to others.

Song as prayer: Spirit – move in me