

# *Does God Speak to You?* by Gene McCoy

If we are to believe what some people are saying, God is apparently talking to a lot of individuals these days. I don't know whether to celebrate and listen or to feel hurt for being left out of the conversation and be skeptical.

First, I want to know exactly what these people mean when they say God has spoken to them or that the Spirit (presumably the Holy Spirit) has led them. If they do not mean to imply that God speaks to them as He did to the prophets, then they need to find another way to express themselves. Such terminology certainly carries with it the connotation of inspiration!

If they do mean that God literally speaks to them in this way, then I guess I should be adding addenda to my Bible. And we should insist that everyone comply with the message, making it part of our preaching and teaching curriculum.

I rather suspect that this has become yet another careless use of Biblical terminology. If so, it needs to be consciously discontinued so that we use Bible terms in the way the Bible uses them.

Consider some of the dangerous implications if God speaks to people today.

## **INSPIRATION**

It is laying claim to divine inspiration. This would be a very bold assertion with far-reaching implications, the very least of which would place the message on a par with Scripture and the messenger on a par with the Apostles and Prophets.

## **MANIPULATION**

Historically, charlatans have manipulated sincere people by claiming to receive a message from God. Followers of Jim Jones were fatally misled by his claims to this effect. Millions are being led to

spiritual slaughter by those claiming to have a word from the Lord.

The manipulation is also subtle. When someone says, "God spoke to me," that leaves no room for discussion or non-compliance. You have people over the proverbial barrel by simply claiming that "the Holy spirit told me" such and such.

Consider, too, the unconscious attempt of manipulating God. Either God must perform accordingly or else He looks like a fool.

## **NOT BIBLICAL**

For one thing, the promises concerning being led into all truth were made to the apostles exclusively. These are not promises to be applied universally to all believers of all eras. The Holy Spirit has spoken to every Christian equally in the pages of the Bible. The leading of the Holy Spirit is not some mystical or special communication; not some sanctified intuition to which only certain people are spiritually attuned. He helps us follow the path set forth in Scripture.

It must also be noted that it is not the Holy Spirit's ministry or function to order our everyday activities and decisions. He does not lead us in terms of what cereal to eat or when to wash the car. Nor is it His function to reveal to us how much or to whom we should contribute money.

## **SETUP FOR RIDICULE**

If one claims that God has given direct sanction or initiative for an action, teaching, or program, then we would have to conclude that it will succeed, persevere, prosper and never fail. And the one making such a claim would be obligated to stick with the endeavor regardless of the outcome. But many plans claiming a direct divine order have gone

sour. What is the result? God is maligned. The church is ridiculed. The messenger's credibility is damaged. Evangelism is hampered. Oral Roberts' extortion scheme a few years ago serves as a prime illustration of this point.

## **SUBJECTIVISM SUBVERTS OBJECTIVE TRUTH**

If God does speak directly to man today, why do we need the Bible? The basis for objective truth is lost in this sphere. While no one claiming a direct communication with God allows that any such communication contradicts the Bible, neither do they have a basis upon which to deny a contradictory message another individual claims as being from God.

This theology of revelation gives to each individual authority that belongs to the Bible alone. The necessary conclusion is that the Bible is not the final word. The result is confusion, contradiction, and the elimination of objective truth. The effect is that each person becomes a god unto himself. Once the smallest step is made away from the objective truth of God's written revelation, the Bible, there is no barrier stopping the journey down the road of subjectivism and the destiny of no objective standard of truth. Apart from an appeal to the "once for all delivered" faith, there is no basis for any contention (Jude 3) with any philosophy, idea, notion, or whim that claims to have come from God. Anyone can say anything he wants, no matter how ridiculous, illogical, or downright stupid. And with the claim that "the Spirit told me," or "God has led me" affixed to it, there is absolutely no basis upon which to refute it (Titus 1:9).

Either the Bible is the final word from God or else He is still revealing truth to people. It can't

be both ways. And if the messages God is supposedly giving to people today do not contradict the Bible, then they need to quit claiming direct communication from God and cite the Biblical

injunction or principle as the authority for their action or teaching. Frankly, God must be embarrassed and even outraged when given credit for initiating the cockamamie ideas, doctrines, and

programs that defame the church and hinder His purpose.

Consider the following suggestions in light of what we have discussed.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. Unless you are claiming to be a latter-day prophet, never use the phrase, "God told me," or "God spoke to me." What is wrong with simply saying, "The Bible says . . ."
2. Unless you can support your teaching or idea with sound biblical exposition, do not implicate God by saying it is His idea.
3. Be prepared to gracefully accept the fact that everyone will not share your opinions or ideas. Don't force your ideas onto others by claiming a divine directive.
4. Consider your feelings if you were approached with an idea you could not support by someone claiming that "God gave me this idea." Don't put others in that awkward position of either feeling forced to accept an idea that doesn't make sense or telling you that you are all wet.
5. Prepare your response to the individual who has the boldness to respond, "God told me that what you said did not come from Him."
6. Be honest in your presentation by saying, "An idea has come to me that I think would benefit the Kingdom." If it works, give God glory. If it doesn't, at least God is not maligned or implicated. Don't try to obligate God to anything! He cannot be manipulated!
7. Don't wait for God to speak to you. God has spoken! Read it (the Bible) and act upon it.