

Is God Speaking to You?

I stumbled into conflict one occasion when I wrote an article on the power of the “*imagination*.” I had been recounting the fact that God desires to actually demonstrate aspects of His nature. In this and some other teachings, I had disclosed that *Jeremiah*, *Amos*, and *Zechariah* had amazing visionary experiences and how they might be a pattern for all of us to look at.

Not long after my teaching was sent out, I received an unexpected email in response to it. Upon opening it, I could immediately discern that the *responder* was bothered by my teaching and wanted to voice his disagreement. He wrote,

“I can accept some of what you’re saying about the encounters in the Bible, but I’m bothered with how some of that may be applied today. How can we tell the difference between a message from God and the bad effects of ‘greasy cooking?’ Too many think that it’s the Spirit when it’s really just the flesh.”

As I wrote back, I explained that his question was one that had come up before and that I appreciated his honest inquiry. I acknowledged that people can misappropriate and misapply things. I also recognized that some honestly don’t know how to differentiate the things of God from their own natural inclinations.

I went on to explain that the type of insight that comes from God is significantly different from everyday perceptions.

Natural thinking isn’t difficult to trace. It often has an undeviating sense of progression and development. It’s as if different pieces are coming together; forming new associations. This type of thought process has a fairly clear beginning and end. Whether recognized or not, it also has an

inner logic and clear sequence.

Writing about the processes of the mind, Psychologist Ezequiel Morsella observed that,

“It seems that, before one experiences a conscious thought, unconscious brain processes work behind the scenes to generate the thought. During this opaque process, unconscious representations and calculations seem to be involved.”¹

Similarly, researchers Newell and Simon write that,

“Concretely, human thinking is to be explained in terms of precisely specified simple mechanisms called elementary information processes. Elementary information processes are organized into complex processes – thinking, problem solving, verbal behavior by programs. Programs are long, branching sequences of elementary processes.”²

So, there is often a linear nature to our thinking that's dependent on stimuli and other direct associations. For example, insights that come from reflection, analysis, and synthesis are obviously reflective of our natural thought processes.

However, things are remarkably different when God invades the imagination. His impressions often have a random quality to them. In fact, it could be described as something of an interruption. It is typically an impression outside the natural flow of things.

We typically engage our thoughts. Yet, when God is at work, we find our thoughts engaging us.

These kinds of insights obviously don't emerge through *“rigid rationalism.”* Instead they have an intuitive quality that subtly materializes *“along the edges.”* Deep analysis certainly

has its place, but what I'm talking about is more of a spontaneous perception.

In the Book of Daniel, it is described the following way:

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his mind while on his bed" (Daniel 7:1a).

Here we get the sense that Spirit-led impressions move upon the mind, rather than the mind moving upon them. This passage is depicting an experience where God's communication is much more visceral and dynamic.

A Spirit-filled Christian really needs to pay attention when a fully formed image starts flooding the mind. This is often an indication of something from God.

Once, when ministering in Argentina, I had a vivid thought enter my mind. I envisioned a person with a severely damaged ankle. I could actually "see" the leg in a cast in my mind's eye. I wasn't sure whether I was hearing from God or not. However, since it was a sudden, developed thought, I wanted to explore it.

I called out the ailment and a woman from the back of the room responded to my declaration. She had been in a severe automobile accident and was told that she would probably never walk again. After diligent prayer, she began moving around the room without any crutches.

An image that passed through my mind spurred me to pray and speak the name of Jesus. An incredible outcome followed this unusual impression. This is a clear example of how God might speak to men and women today.

I shared some of these insights and reflections with my detractor. After delivering my response, I wasn't sure whether I would ever hear back from him.

Yet, two days later a message showed up in my inbox. In it, this man told me that he appreciated my explanation. He said that he had a lot to think about and was considering the fact that God might actually have been speaking to Him. He said, *"I think that I have been hearing from God all these years and didn't know it."*

I think that this is something that is true for all of us.

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¹ Ezequiel Morsella. "What Is A Thought?" Psychology Today, February 9, 2012.

² A. Newell, and H.A. Simon. "The Simulation Of Human Thought." (Presented at Current Trends In Technology, University of Pittsburgh: June 22, 1959)