

1: THE ORATOR

God's Commitment to Communicate

Before the day is over, a thousand voices will offer you a thousand words. Each will present its opinion, its perspective, its story of *who, what, when, where, why*, and *how*—narratives capable of influencing your thoughts, moving your emotions, and bending your will.

It's endless chatter with life-altering potential.

But among these there is One speaking—One who presents His opinion, His perspective, His story of *who, what, when, where, why*, and *how*—to Whom you ought to be listening. He is the Orator of Truth. If you choose to hear and heed His voice above the rest, He will *“instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; [He] will guide you with [His] eye”* (Psalm 32:8, NKJV). He will lead you with His counsel and afterward receive you to glory (73:23-24).

God has committed to speak clearly and directly, to make Himself, His will and ways known. He has committed to guide you along life's path (Isaiah 30:21). *You* must decide whether you will trust His voice above all others.

Do you believe God actively speaks to *all* His children? _____

Why do many fail to respond to His directives? Do *you* hear Him and obey when He speaks? Explain. _____

THE SHEPHERD

Turn to John 10 and read verses 1-5.

Take note of the *He* and *His* statements. What action is taken by the Shepherd? _____

What responsibility lies on the part of the sheep? _____

How does the Shepherd approach the sheep? Contrast this with the thief's approach. _____

What does this reveal about the manner in which God communicates? _____

The passage begins by revealing that the Shepherd enters by the door. The front and only door. He does not "*climb up some other way*", scale the fence and break in. He is not shrouded in mystery, disguised by a mask and obscured by ambiguous clothing. He does not play games that leave the sheep questioning His identity and His motives. When the Shepherd comes for His sheep, He makes Himself known. And when He speaks, He communicates clearly and directly.

Read Isaiah 52:6.

Why might a sheep fail to recognize the Shepherd when He appears before him? _____

Verse 3 states that "*the sheep hear His voice*". How are the sheep able to distinguish the Shepherd's voice from the rest? _____

The sheep know the sound of the Shepherd's voice. They are familiar with its tone and inflection, its pitch and volume. They are cognizant of His unique utterances; the words and phrases that are distinct to Him.

What means has God provided for mankind to become familiar with His nature, His will and ways, *and* His voice? _____

Why is repetitious and consistent time spent in God's Word the most important discipline of the hearer? What can we expect if we fail to be intentional? _____

God's Word contains the utterances of His heart, words written from His lips. It is through deliberate time spent in its pages that we acquire the ability to distinguish God's nature, recognize His will and ways, and discern His voice from others. If we do not know His written Word, we will not recognize God's spoken words.

As your Shepherd, the Lord will take great measures to obtain your attention, ensuring that you hear His call.

In addition to His written Word, what other methods, practical and impractical, does God employ to speak to His children? _____

Read Genesis 37:5, 40:8, 41:1, 5, 25, 32, Exodus 3:4, Numbers 22:28, 1 Kings 19:12, and Acts 16:6-10 for examples.

To what length is God willing to go to make certain you hear His instruction? _____

Why is it imperative that visions, dreams, impressions, the words of others, circumstances, and feelings align with the Word in verse and principle? _____

What danger lies in trusting “bushes and donkeys” alone, apart from the written Word? _____

Man’s great error is that he seeks God’s directive in the miraculous while neglecting Him in the everyday. Why is this hazardous? _____

According to Luke 16:27-31, why is it unlikely that the miraculous will gain the attention of one who fails to seek Him in the quiet? _____

CALLED OUT

Verse 3 of our text continues, “*He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out*” (John 10).

What does this verse reveal about God’s commitment to speak to you personally? _____

The sheep are His own: specially selected and chosen (John 15:16), bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). He has placed His brand upon them (Revelation 22:4), His dowel in their ear (Exodus 21:6), distinguishing them from the rest. They are not simply part of a flock, but individuals with their own names and personalities.

The Shepherd knows *how* to speak to the sheep so that they will respond to His voice. In the same way, He knows *how to speak to you* to elicit a response. To some, He need only to speak soft and gentle words; others need only to meet the Shepherd’s gaze. And still there are others to whom

He must speak firmly and sharply to gain their attention, repeating His instructions over and over again.

What do Psalm 100:3, 119:73, 139:1-5, 13-15 reveal about His knowledge of your nature and your ways, and the intricacies of your life? _____

Our text also states that “[He] leads them out. And when He brings out His own sheep, He goes before them” (vv.3-4). What does this communicate about God’s commitment to guide you in the way determined for you? _____

Before the Shepherd calls out to the sheep, He has marked out the path they are to travel. Read Job 13:27, 14:5, Psalm 139:16, Proverbs 5:21, Acts 17:26-28, and Ephesians 2:10. How do these verses attest to His ability to lead you without error? _____

The Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8), the Author and Finisher of your story (Hebrews 12:2), has not only determined your steps, but the very day and hour and minute you are to take each one. He knows your beginning and your end. How does this knowledge assure you that God knows *when* to speak? _____

Not only does the Shepherd know where you are going and when to speak, He knows *what* is required to bring you safely to the end. (See Philippians 1:6.)

Record Psalm 25:12. _____

How does this passage speak of the Shepherd’s commitment to prepare you for what lies ahead?

What emphasis does this place on obedience in the small? (Luke 16:10) _____

MISGIVINGS

John 10:4 continues, “the sheep follow Him for they know His voice”.

When God speaks He is looking for a response. Why must the sheep be ready to follow when the Shepherd calls? _____

What might the sheep be forfeiting if they choose to stay in the fold? _____

Unlike the thief, the Shepherd will not prod you in the back or place a noose around your neck to force you to go where you do not wish. When He speaks, you have a choice whether to follow.

Why would a sheep choose to disobey the Shepherd? _____

According to John 10:10 and Psalm 23:1-6, what is His purpose and intent? _____

It has been aptly said that “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you” (A.W. Tozer). Explain why Tozer’s statement is true. _____

Because the Shepherd is leading, it is likely that you will not see the outcome, or the destination when He calls. It is also likely that you will not understand *why* He asks you to obey. With this in mind, why is trust in the Shepherd imperative to the listener? _____

When God speaks, your beliefs about His nature, character, purposes and intents will determine *what* you hear and *how* you respond. Like the sheep who has misgivings about his Leader, you will not follow if you doubt His purposes and intents toward you.

Do you trust Him?

Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

KEPT

Finally, verse 5 of John 10 states, “*Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*”

What can be concluded if a sheep follows the voice of a stranger? _____

When God's Word is examined in its entirety, we see that God's people can be deceived. If a sheep follows a stranger, it is because he is unfamiliar with the voice of the Shepherd, or because he has chosen not to listen, but to go his own way.

Even so, what do John 6:39, 10:28, 17:12, 18:9 and Luke 15:4-7 convey about the Shepherd's commitment to His sheep, and to you? _____

The Orator of Truth, your Shepherd, is committed to communicate with you. He speaks clearly and directly, He makes His voice known, and He will lead you in the way determined for you. But you, His sheep, must be willing to listen and follow, and to *trust* that He will guide you safely into eternal fellowship with Himself.

In closing, John 10:28 says, *"My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me."*