

Jack Deere – Surprised by the voice of God

Kingsway 1996

Notes by Alison Morgan Feb 2008

'This book is about the voice of God and how to hear it'. Deere is a Vineyard pastor.

1. Surprised by the voice of God

Author's first experience of being given a word of knowledge when counselling a student (it was 'pornography').

Besides the voice of God, there are at least 3 other voices that speak to us:

- The voice of our emotions
- The voice of darkness – the devil
- The voice that comes through the pressure we feel from family, friends and others

2. The problem of the unreal bible

'After weeks of reading a miraculous Bible and attending monotonous religious services, John [Wimber] walked up to one of the lay leaders and asked, 'when do we get to do the stuff?' 'What stuff?' 'You know, the stuff here in the Bible'... 'Well, we don't do that anymore'. 'You don't?' 'No'. 'Well, what do you do?' 'What we did this morning. 'For that I gave up drugs?'

James insists miracles are normal – says Elijah was a man just like us (Jas 5.17-18). We desupernaturalise the Bible because we've been trained to read it in the light of our experience rather than in terms of the experience of the people actually in it.

3. Jesus and the voice of God

'The Bible scholars of the day never made it to the manger' – God seeing to it that no one would ever find their way to Jesus without direct, supernatural revelation.

Scripture is clear that Jesus' power come from the Holy Spirit.

- Isaiah 11.1-5, 42.1-4, 61,1-3.
- Matt 3.16; Jn 1.32. Lk 4- 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit'.
- Acts 10.38, Peter summarises Jesus' ministry 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him' – OT prophets, Jesus himself, and apostles all attribute the divine power in his ministry not to the uniqueness of his deity but to the ministry of the HS through him.

We too have received the Holy Spirit.

4. The NT church and the voice of God

There is supernatural revelation in every single chapter in Acts except chapter 17 – examples, p58. The book of Acts represents normal Christianity...

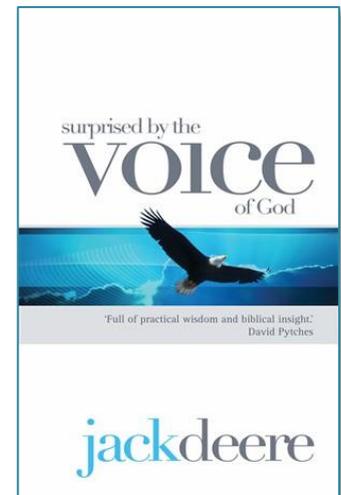
5. Presbyterian prophets?

Amazing chapter – examples of supernatural experience and Spirit-led ministry amongst the Reformation prophets.

Eg of word of knowledge – vision of Julie's childhood, p71.

We can't call people prophets who are not 100% accurate – he prefers to call them prophetically gifted.

- George Wishart, 1513-1546, regarded by pupil Knox as a prophet. He gave warnings which came true.
- John Knox, 1514-72 – prophetic warning to William Kirkaldy on deathbed
- John Welsh, 1570-1622 – warned mocking young man, who then died at the table; saved city of Ayr from plague; raised young man from the dead
- Robert Bruce, 1554-1631 – prayed for healing for epileptics
- Alexander Peden, 1626-1686 – known as prophet Peden



6. A conspiracy against the supernatural

We don't hear the stories of the reformation prophets because those who write on the reformation now are focussing on other things. But historians of the C17th tell a very different story! Robert Fleming and Samuel Rutherford give full accounts of the miraculous ministries of these men.

Question – have you ever put yourself in a place where you would fail miserably unless God spoke to you from heaven? Are you risking anything for God that requires supernatural revelation?

Charles Spurgeon, 1834-92, also had a prophetic ministry (examples).

7. God speaks through the Bible

Emmaus Rd – sermon went on for hours, beginning with Moses and all the prophets; the greatest sermon ever preached, to just 2 people! Why didn't he just tell them who he was; why take them to the scriptures? Because it is in the scriptures that we will find him.

As far as I know, the Bible does not put any emphasis at all on the intelligence of its readers as the key to its interpretation... 119. It's not about study and discipline; its message must be spiritually discerned. The other way is the way of the Pharisees. We need confidence not in our ability, or in tradition (cp Peter Acts 10 and the unclean food), or in our ability to apply it – we need confidence in the ability of the Holy Spirit to guide us and to speak to us through it.

8. God speaks through experience

The Holy Spirit speaks through:

- trials
- common events (like seeing a potter at work)
- help from anointed observers
- daily encounters. Cf Elizabeth Barrett Browning:
*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.*
- Miracles
- Experience – correcting wrong interpretations and bad behaviours

The key to life and the answer to our fear is a person. The Spirit of Truth performs 5 ministries:

1. He will teach you all things – Jn 14.26
2. He will remind you of everything I have said to you – Jn 14.26
3. He will testify about me – Jn 15.26
4. He will guide you into all truth – Jn 16.13
5. He will tell you what is yet to come – Jn 16.13

How do I read the bible – to get something; or to search for the man who wrote it?

9. God speaks through supernatural means

Deut 4.15-20 God spoke audibly. Principle – the clearer the revelation, the harder the task. In the NT, the audible voice becomes Jesus. Sometimes it's external and audible to all; sometimes to some alone (Samuel); sometimes it's internal (Ez 14.2-4). Contemporary examples of encounters with angels.

10. God speaks through natural means

Dreams, visions & trances. Impressions – become more frequent if you expect them, want them, pray for them, act on them. Many of us have trained ourselves to ignore them; we tell ourselves everything worth knowing must pass through our intellects.

11. Learning the language of the Holy Spirit

Why do you go to church? In the NT they went to meet with God through the body of Christ, and to learn the

Going to Church Today

Why do you go to church? Remember the point I made above— you're never going to grow without an honest assessment of your practice and your motives. What drives you to be there Sunday after Sunday? Some people go to church out of a sense of duty. Some go because it's the thing to do on Sunday morning—their family has always gone to church. Some go to church because they've found it's a good place to do business. It helps their image in the community. Some people go to church because they like the feeling they get when the sun comes through the stained glass windows onto the robed minister who leads them in the same formal liturgies week after week. These are the people who often comment how "beautiful" the service was on a particular Sunday. Some people go because their friends go, and the church has become the centre of their social life. Some people go to be entertained. Some go to be enlightened. Some go to hear a great speaker. Some go to learn the Bible. Some go to please their mate. Others go to find a mate. Still others go to get away from a mate. Having been a pastor for more than twenty years, I have learned there are as many reasons why people go to church today as there are people.

language of the Holy Spirit. It has to be learnt like any other language – slowly, with mistakes. The Bible is the menu, not the meal. There are those who devote themselves to its study and are still spiritually malnourished – where Bible study is an end in itself. They can tell you all about the menu. Jesus is the bread from heaven.

12. Facilitating prophetic ministry

A prophet discerns the future and the present, and tells you practical things like where your lost donkey is to be found (1 Sam 9). Discerning the present priorities of the Lord is 'forthtelling' – eg by speaking against the sins of a society. Prophets may be poor speakers, uneducated, weird; be depressive (Jeremiah), have bad attitudes (Jonah), mood swings (Elijah), be mystical (Ezekiel). They may lie (Abraham), argue with God (Habakkuk), eat and wear odd things (John B).

NT prophets never used prophetic authority as a means of control. They edified, exhorted, consoled, encouraged, strengthened (Acts 15.32, 1 Cor 14.3).

13. God told me to tell you..

1. Get permission from God to speak
2. Distinguish between revelation, interpretation and application (you may be given one not the others).
3. Give words with humility – if you use words from God to enhance your authority you are misusing his name
4. Leave the results to God.

Mostly we are given dreams, impressions and visions to prompt us to pray.

14. Prophetic pitfalls

Don't trust yourself if you are angry or jealous of the person concerned. Don't be dominated by rejection. Don't try to please people; to be awesome. Don't rationalise your mistakes. Don't make economic predictions. Don't indulge in prophetic gossip – if the Lord gave you something for a person, it's for them alone. Don't call out sins publicly. Don't say, 'God told me'..

Menu or meal?

There are people who devote themselves diligently to Bible study and are still spiritually malnourished. This frequently happens in environments where people make Bible study an end in itself. They are like people who study a menu with great precision and can tell you every detail about it: when it was first written, how it has changed over the years, how each dish is prepared, how it ought to be served, which food should come first— even why the chef has organized the menu in its present order. Perhaps they even went to schools whose major goal was to explain menus. When they graduated, the ones who were the best at explaining menus were able to build the biggest "menu clubs" where many people meet regularly just to hear a new and inspiring explanation of the menu. Yet no one grows strong from an explanation of the menu or even from first-hand study of a menu. Only those who order from the menu and eat grow strong. Don't mistake the menu for the meal. 197-8

Jesus Christ is the Bread from heaven. If our Bible study does not lead us to experience Jesus Christ, then it is leading us to spiritual malnutrition. The Bible is the menu meant to lead us to experience God in every facet of our lives. If we make Bible study our goal, we will end up just like the Pharisees who searched the Scriptures diligently but never came to Christ (John 5:39—40). They studied the menu regularly and religiously. But they never ordered. Never tasted. And that was both the irony and the tragedy. So close to the menu, yet so far from the meal.

15. Dreams and visions

Purposes – warning (Pharaoh; Job 7.14, 33.16), encouragement (Acts 18.9-10), guidance (man from Macedonia Acts 16); intimacy (Solomon 1 Kings 3); revealing future; commands (Gen 31.13 to Jacob, Matt 1 to Joseph); speaking to unbelievers.

16. God knows the proud from afar

God won't speak thus to the proud, dominating, superior, hateful Christian. Message-a-minute Christians lose credibility.

17. Confessions of a Bible deist

God used miracles and revelation to wind up the church like a clock, then left it alone.. Bible deists substitute the Bible for God –'all this also comes from the Lord Almighty [or, from the Bible, which is] wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom' (Is 28.29). They preach and teach the Bible rather than Christ. The sufficiency of scripture often in practice means the sufficiency of my explanation. Bible deists fear emotion and subjectivity – he didn't like emotions because they caused him to lose control, and if he lost control he became vulnerable. But the bible offers wisdom which doesn't come from the mind, a voice not heard with the ears. Jesus has to 'open' the scriptures to us. Bible deists use scripture not so much as sword of the Spirit as bludgeon of the bully..

18. Unbelief through theology

Mark 6, Jesus rejected in Nazareth – isn't this the carpenter's son? Unbelief can enter our hearts in many ways – even through theology. *God usually requires us to believe in the voice and the power of the carpenter before we get surprised by the Son of God.*

There isn't a single text in scripture which says God speaks only through the Bible, or that the Bible would replace the need for miracles and other supernatural revelation. We explain the teaching of the bible away – it's not normal; it's only for special people; it's only for unique situations; miracles were only for the period of the open canon. We fear collapse of divine authority. And yet NT experience is there; and we can have it now. Eg of buying a house by prophetic revelation..

19. Unbelief through magic and fear

The 2 greatest sources of joy in life are God and friends.

Unbelief through ritual. When we fall out of love with God but use the principles of the bible to make our lives successful, we are using magic. *We should never be content with any habitual religious activity where we rarely experience the presence of God. He is a Person whose presence can be felt.*

Impressions from God come as interruptions or invasions in your mind.

Unbelief through fear of intimacy.

20. The kind of people who hear the voice of God

Available ones. Ones who want to be close to God. Does God delight in speaking to us at inconvenient times in order to test our availability? And humble ones.

21. Recognizing the voice

God's voice always agrees with scripture; may contradict friends' opinions; is consistent; bears good fruit; is different from our voice; is easy to reject.

22. The power of the Word and the Spirit

Testimony of Jean. 'Many in the church today are content to live with only one parent. They live with the Word, and the Spirit only has limited visiting rights'.

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