

## "GOD WILL NOT SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH SKYWRITING"

(Christianity Today January/February 2020)

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We've all said it, either out loud or in our heads: "If God would just tell me what to do, I would do it!"

We want to follow God's will, and when we're facing a big decision, it does seem that an audible command from God—or even an emphatic hint of some sort—would be extremely helpful, not to mention efficient.

When the way forward seems opaque, we begin to ask why the heavens can't just part and impart a little direction. After all, God did that for people in the Bible. Couldn't he do it for us? But I wonder if we aren't missing a bit of obvious direction that is right beneath our noses.

It's true that the Bible contains multiple accounts of people who hear the audible voice of God telling them what to do. They receive exactly what we say we want: clear direction from the mouth of God. But rather than rush to obey, alarmingly, they often hesitate or ignore the direction outright.

Moses hesitates when God speaks to him from the burning bush, telling him explicitly to rescue Israel from slavery. Israel ignores the thundering commands of God at Sinai, despite their initial affirmation to "do all that the Lord has said." Gideon hesitates when God speaks to him on a threshing floor, asking for a series of signs as confirmation. And perhaps most famously of all, Adam and Eve receive an audible command regarding a certain fruit, which they patently ignore.

In light of the evidence, it seems doubtful that the audible voice of God would inspire belief or ensure obedience with us any more than it did with our predecessors.

Yet we persist in looking for some way to be certain of what God wants us to do. We "lay out a fleece" of some sort, thinking, "If X happens by this date, I will know God wants me to do Y." We fast from food or TV or social media hoping for clarity on a decision. We seek solitude hoping to hear a still, small voice. We look for confirmation from a friend or spouse. We squint at the sky hoping for handwriting in the clouds. *Please, Lord—just tell me what to do.*

If we are not careful, while looking for God's will for our circumstance we may overlook his will for our character. In our desire for certainty, we may become fixated on *doing* and become forgetful of *being*.

Yet God is clear that sacrifices and offerings (our doings) have never been what he desires, rather hearts (our being) that seek after him, hearts that desire holiness (Ps. 40:6-8).

God does have a will for our lives that is clearly stated: that we be sanctified, made holy, conformed to the image of Christ (1 Thess. 4:3, Eph. 5:1). When this becomes our



first concern, we can demote our searching for hints in the clouds or handwriting on the wall. Happily, such signs are not needed for determining who God would have us to be.

You will never have to lay out a fleece to know for certain that it is God's will that you live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:12).

You will never have to fast to be 100 percent certain that it is God's will that you be free of selfish ambition and vain conceit (Phil. 2:3).

You will never have to look for handwriting on the wall to know beyond all doubt that it is God's will that you set aside impurity and greed (Eph. 5:3).

You will never have to wait for confirmation from a friend or spouse that it is God's will that you be slow to anger (James 1:19).

You will never have to listen for a still small voice to know without reservation that it is God's will that you practice thankfulness (Eph. 5:4).

You will never have to search the sky for a message in the clouds to know without doubt that it is God's will that you be holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4).

God has indeed spoken to us with clarity through his Word.

For life and godliness, we heed no sign other than the life-giving sign of Jonah: Christ is raised, and that the grace we receive as a result is transforming us into his image.

We are called to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, trusting our circumstances to His sovereign care and submitting our character to his gracious will.