

God told me

“God told me.” Who can argue with, “God told me”?

Believers of all stripes claim to hear from the Lord. The manner of divine communication varies with each individual, flavored strongly by their personality, the community, and the tradition from which they hail. Still, many boldly assert, “God told me”. Are you one of them?

Here’s my story. Rarely does God directly tell me anything. To those who know me, when was the last time you heard me say, “God told me”? Probably, never. In the interest of full disclosure, I believe there was one time. At age seventeen I felt a call into ministry (I was already a born again believer at the time). One Spring night in the balcony of our small town church, through a highly subjective, personal, and definitive experience, I vividly sensed God speak to my heart. Not my ear, mind you, yet the words were specific. I can precisely quote them now. That marks my sole mystical experience. (Notice I did not say “my sole miraculous experience”.) Since then, whenever I have sensed God’s guidance, it has been primarily through reflection upon Scripture. Based upon the Word, (Notice my double emphasis upon Scripture!) a growing perception or inner sense seems to sway me. Once in a while, a specific Scripture (third emphasis) will vividly jump to my consciousness. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things”, “He will take of mine and disclose it to you” and “He will bring to your remembrance all that I have said”. I have confidence I am hearing the prompting of the Spirit when it is according to Scripture (that’s four). That’s about as close as I come to “God told me”.

One spiritually astute brother in California puts it this way, “If God has to regularly tell you stuff, it may be because you are not heeding what He has already said in His word!” (A fifth emphasis on Scripture, if you’re counting.)

I confess, and perhaps I need to grow in this way, when esteemed brothers and sisters relate “God told me”, I get squeamish. It simply is not how the Lord deals with me; but who am I to say He cannot deal with others in that manner? For sure, there are numerous biblical instances of such. Though, when you examine Scripture, you notice that as God provides His written word, direct revelation diminishes. In other words, God communicated audibly with Abraham, Moses, and Joshua, (and yes, Samuel...) but as the Old Testament progresses in real time He speaks in less personal ways. God delivered His message through the prophets (though, in fairness, He directly told *them* what to say). In the New Testament, especially after Acts, personal revelation is extremely rare. Notice much of the content of the New Testament epistles is instructive, versus encouraging us to directly listen for God’s immediate voice.

Some of my best friends even offer running dialogs between themselves and God. I envy them. They quote verbatim what they said to God *and what God responded back!* I have often heard the same from preachers. If you’re listening to hear a Divine conversation from me in a sermon, you’re going to be listening for a long time. I can’t

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help but wonder if sometimes enthusiastic preachers employ that tactic to add just a little more punch to their words. ...Shame on me for wondering.

A skillful twist of “God told me” enables sincere believers to leverage other believers for desired effect. It goes something like this, “God told me... *to tell you*”. That is a loaded gun I’ve seen go off more than once with painful results. It is easy to unintentionally confuse my opinion for God’s, especially as it applies to somebody else’s life. Usurping the Holy Spirit’s role is such sweet temptation.

I think I’ve said enough. If what I have written upsets your equilibrium; sorry. My sincere intent is merely to spur reflection and encourage spiritual substance, depth, and sensitivity amongst God’s people. If upon hearing that, you still want to argue with what I have written, then you leave me no choice but to conclude saying, “God told me”.