

## Session 3: Word Answers

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### *Key Ideas from the Video*

#### **The three main categories of prayer answers:**

- 1. Action answers**      Resolutions to our problems.
- 2. Presence answers**      Responses that give us strength and hope.
- 2. Word answers**      Replies from God

#### **Word answers are ideas sent from God that I choose to act on in order to move forward.**

Word answers can come much more quickly than action answers. However they usually don't change our situations until we follow them. Word answers bring us new insights, help us readjust our attitudes and give guidance about specific steps we can take to move in the right direction.

Through word answers, God develops a close, personal working relationship with us. Although God sends word answers to everyone, only those who listen and are willing to trust and follow them enjoy the power of this category of answers.

#### **The two ways we find word answers:**

- Helpful information received from outside sources
- Answering thoughts



### *Day 1: Rearview Mirror*

1. Describe the person or other sources you go to when you need advice.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Describe how words someone said either helped you or hurt you.

3. Describe a thought or idea you've had that seemed to come from God.

4. To you, what's the hardest part about getting thoughts and ideas from God?

## Day 2: Getting God's Directions



**Consider this:** Often God speaks to you through very natural means that are so familiar that you don't stop to think of them as answers to prayer.

God can send you ideas through any means of communication – the newspaper, the internet, a phone call, a conversation with a friend, overhearing a chance comment, the Bible, a neighbor, a street sign, a sermon, a helpful memory, remembering good advice, books, the words of a song, and even through things children say.

**Try this: Ask God for a specific word answer from a person or an outside source of information.**

**Write what happens here:**

## Day 3: Rest Stop



**Consider this:** Here are some ways to recognize answering thoughts from God.

1. They don't sound like your usual self centered thinking patterns.
2. They disregard your normal fears, worries and feelings of inadequacy.
3. They are usually quite brief. Sometimes they can be a single word like "Trust."
4. They come during prayer or meditation.
5. They agree with Scripture not only in the narrow legalistic sense but also in the spirit of what the Scriptures say about love, mercy, and God's Kingdom. (See Matthew 12:1-14, John 8:3-11)
6. They produce the heavenly qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control in your life. (Galatians 5:22-23)

**Try this: After praying listen for an answering thought.**

**Write what happens here:**



## *Day 4: Changing Direction*

**Consider this:** The old saying, “Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me” isn’t true. Words have incredible power. People can wound you, destroy your self confidence, and shut down your hopes and dreams with words and then pretend they haven’t lifted a finger to attack or hurt you. On the other hand, people can also inspire you, encourage you and impart the way of salvation through words, opening up the very gates of heaven itself.

Some examples of the types of words that can harm you:

Words of rejection, doubt, disrespect, blame, condemnation, criticism, mistrust, fear, anger, pessimism, gossip, worry, flattery, sarcasm, lies and half truths, breaches of confidentiality, excuses and rationalizations that it’s O.K. to do things that are morally wrong, false or empty promises and misleading or inaccurate information.

**Try this: Think about words that may have harmed you and ask God to tell you truthful “answering thoughts” that will heal you.**

**Write what happens here:**



## *Day 5: Scripture Signposts*

**Consider this:** Psalm 32:8-9 says “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.”

If you aren’t able to hear words from God, you are no better off than those who don’t know Him. “Being controlled by bits and bridles” is going through life guided only by circumstances such as failures and dead ends that force you to finally try something else. The word “counsel” is a very intimate, personal means of communication, going well beyond simply following general guidelines set up by religious rules of decent behavior.

**Try this: Read these Scriptures to find a personal word from God to you today.**

Genesis 1:3

Psalms 119:105

Isaiah 55:11

Matthew 8:16

Mark 4:15

Luke 4:4 (compare with Deuteronomy 8:3)

John 1:14

John 10:5, 27

Romans 10:8

Hebrews 4:12,13

James 1:22

I Peter 1:25



## Postcards from the Scenic Route



*My dear friend,*

*Have you ever thought, "Other people seem to hear from God much more clearly than I do. Why doesn't God speak to me that way?"*



I felt this way a few years back when a middle age woman who had recently become a Christian called me up and said enthusiastically, "I know you're a writer. Please come over and hear all of the amazing things God's been doing in my life."

I drove over to the woman's house and snapped on my tape recorder as she began describing how God was telling her things daily and hourly. God was giving her ideas about selling her house, even telling her the specific month it would sell! Finally I had to ask, "How do you know that it's God telling you these things?"

The woman paused a moment and said slowly, "So far I've only told you the good things. God's been talking to me about other things that I need to face up to, especially about family problems. I've ignored and rationalized about these things all of my life. If it was up to me, I wouldn't deal with them now either."

Her frank reply made sense. When you ask God to speak to you, sometimes He tells you things that you'd rather not hear. But that wasn't what was bothering me about my friend's story.

### **Why are You speaking to her and not to me?**

When I got home I went into my bedroom, closed the door, flopped down in a wicker chair and said, "OK, God. What's going on here? I've been a Christian for 15 years. Why are you speaking so specifically and unmistakably to this newcomer and not to me?"

Suddenly a very clear sentence flashed into my mind. "I have always spoken to you." I was so surprised I squirmed and the wicker chair squeaked. I asked, "When, where, how have You spoken to me?" I waited a long time but no other words came. Finally I thought, "I'd better get out my journal and write this down so I can figure out what's going on."

Then it dawned on me. God and I had indeed been talking for years. Maybe I didn't hear

voices, commands and clear sentences all of the time but whenever I sat down to write in my journal something always happened between God and me. If I had a problem, an idea, a disappointment or a dream I opened a spiral notebook and wrote my thoughts and feelings. Sometimes scriptures came directly into my mind. Other times I got out a concordance and searched for a scripture that fit my situation. Some days I flipped back through my journal looking at how I'd handled things in the past. It was amazing how many times I came to a helpful conclusion by the time I finished writing. Even when I spent the whole time describing my problems it felt like part of an ongoing conversation because I ended the passage by writing, "God, please help me." And He always did.

### **Does God use a loudspeaker?**

I realized that the reason I'd been unsure that God had been speaking to me was because I thought that hearing from God had to have a "wow factor" to it. I thought God spoke to other people like thundering announcements on a loudspeaker, such as the time He told Noah, "Build an ark and make it out of cypress wood and make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high." (See Genesis 6:14 -15)

Even Elijah, one of the greatest prophets in the Bible, tried hard to hear from God through what seemed like "wow factor" experiences - a gale force wind that split rocks off the mountains, an earthquake and even a wild fire. The Bible says, "But the Lord was not in the wind...not in the earthquake...not in the fire." (1 Kings 19:11-12) Then the Bible goes on, "And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:12-13)

Maybe you haven't heard God talking to you over a loudspeaker, but you've heard a gentle whisper quietly asking, "What are you doing?" You're hearing the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 Jesus says, "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you of everything I have said to you." Jesus said a lot of amazing things, too many to remember. But His words will come back when you need them if you listen for the small inner whispering of His gentle Spirit.

### **Learning to interpret words from God.**

Once you become familiar with how to hear God's voice, there's another skill that's absolutely vital. You need to be able to interpret what God is saying. The word interpret means to explain the correct meaning of something. Sometimes there's no question about what God has said to you. But if you're like me, there may be times when you hear something and then put your own spin on it that isn't exactly what God had in mind.

It happened to me back when I was a beginning writer. I was in the middle of nowhere driving home from a writer's workshop on I-26 in South Carolina. I was halfway between Charleston and Columbia when out of the blue God seemed to speak to me. "You're going to be like Catherine Marshall."

Me, be like Catherine Marshall? I was ecstatic. The late Catherine Marshall touched millions with her writings, including my own mother. Her success was stratospheric! My

thoughts galloped off in all sorts of wild directions, “Oh, this is so wonderful! I’ll never have my writing rejected again!” By the time I got home I had a whole lifetime of fame and fortune cooked up in my mind, starting with the miraculous overnight success that would arrive any day.

You already know that I was absolutely mistaken. It took another 13 years before my first book was published. It only sold a few thousand copies. I personally sold about 500 books myself driving all over creation on a women’s club speaking circuit.

And the assumption that my writing would never be rejected again? That was really crazy. I was lucky to place one or two magazine articles a year. I must have held the title of Rejection Queen.

**You can tell if a word’s from God if it comes true.**

One of the ways to tell if a word is from God is to see whether or not it comes true. As far as success and fame go, my life and career have been totally opposite to Catherine’s. What God was trying to tell me was that our callings were similar. Catherine was a faith experimenter. She wrote a book *Adventures in Prayer* that told practical ways get in touch with God through prayer. When Catherine wrote about her amazing healing from tuberculosis or the way God helped her during the dark days of widowhood she opened us up to the possibilities of God’s direct interaction in our own lives. She said, “I’m just an ordinary person. I don’t think I’m an exception.”

So I’m like Catherine after all, although in a very different way than I so wildly imagined years ago. Back then I focused on my own grand ideas about popularity and success. Instead God was really calling me to develop an inquisitive spirit so that one day in the distant future I’d be ready to try recording 100 answered prayers in my own life even though I didn’t really know how to do it. My run of the mill, ordinary life was really God’s masterful stroke of genius. He wanted to demonstrate that if I can get to know Him through prayer, if I could find 100 answers, anyone can.

Looking back I see that the message I received on I-26 was true in a way I never imagined. It was my assumptions about what it meant that turned out to be all wrong. Don’t make the mistake I made of measuring God’s words and promises using things that can be added up on a calculator and written down on ledgers – job titles, salaries, popularity, total sales, and the amount of things accumulated. Instead ask God to open His heavenly ledger and let you see what His words really mean. He’ll show you how He enriches your life through growth that comes through struggles, the genius of your ordinary life lived with extraordinary faith, and the strength and wisdom that come from following Him one small step at a time.

*Hoping to hear a good word from you soon,*

*Love,  
Karen*