

What Is *The Way* God Talks?

[Job 33:14 For God does speak - now one way, now another - though man may not perceive it.](#)

The way God talks to mankind, in terms of the normal way, or in the most common manner, is through stumbling blocks.

That is the reason the unrepentant will not listen, stop, or change their ways. It is the reason we reject God's teachers, preachers, and saints. Because we seek to avoid the stumbling blocks of God, we talk around the ways of God. It is the stubbornness of a wicked heart that refuses to be tripped up. We will gladly give God and man lip service to reform, or to apologize, for our questionable wrongs if it gives us the delusion that we can over-step the stumbling blocks.

When we are tripped, it is how we respond at the time, at that instant, that determines the spiritual outcome. Do we respond like Lot's wife, the second her head began to turn, or do we have the courage of Shadrach long before the fiery furnace was heated up? The stumbling blocks are sent long before we fall into Satan's jaws or rise in the righteousness of Christ.

It was Peter's surrender to being rebuked by Jesus and equated with Satan that made him Saint Peter.

When someone stumbles the first thing they do is look around to see if anyone else saw the trip. Pride before feeling pain, pride before the cross, and pride before Christ is what angels so often behold in and out of church buildings. A man or woman who feels the need to explain why they tripped over a stumbling block deserves the most laughter. They are the kind most easily manipulated by others and you can be sure they will trip all over again.

Those who quietly ignore their stumble on the staircase, going on their way as if it never happened, are rudely turning their backs on the loving God who placed the stumbling block in their path. The godly saint that is tripped up, falls to the ground, breaks in true humility from the Holy Spirit, and waits for help to be picked up by God, is, well, a saint in Christ.

[1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.](#)

To define the way God talks is to deal with the overwhelming majority of His communication. For example, it was a tidal wave of persecution that sent the first church out to preach the gospel. Like a tsunami whose power builds unseen in the ocean depths, so too God empowers His stumbling stones. It isn't until it is too late for some that the waves rise and devastate.

In one day the church was "destroyed" in Jerusalem, but the result was new life to those who proved faithful in preaching the gospel wherever they fled. God used, or allowed, persecution to begin His first great missionary effort. So much for church missionary committees!

It is too late to purchase oil when the bridegroom comes, as it is too late to get ready on the day of holy scattering. We read of the faithful in Acts 8:4, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

In one day the church went from daily fellowship with one another to no physical contact. All were scattered and; "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him." (Acts 8:2)

Those church members who had not actively shared their faith, or had done so only when convenient, were crushed. Those who had followed the Spirit and the way of love in testifying of Jesus would be tested, through stumbling, by a living, loving God. Those who lived the Way, lived it more fully. He who had been given much would be given more. Those who had failed to live it lost the little they had. Those who lacked to begin with, what they thought they had was taken. Such are the glorious stumbling blocks of Christ!

Even in preaching the gospel Paul was blocked by the stumbling stones that are hidden Jesus. These blocks would test Paul for egotism and idolatry. The "No," the stumbling block of grace, would teach Paul to say "no" to earthly passion - even the desire to preach from selfish motivations. This is why it is said in the book of James that those empowered by God's true grace stumble in many ways. But let no Christian ever be so foolish as to confuse stumbling with stubbornness - for they are as different as mercy is from wrath.

[Acts 16:6-7 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.](#)

Stumbling blocks are words, events, and the arrangements of life that test an individual - stones that block a path, or great rocks that stand in the way of opinions and rise like a wall towards rebellion.

In Psalm 66:10 the Christian sings, "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver." In a similar manner Jeremiah bemoans that the refining fires blazed in vain and the people of his time were as "rejected silver." (Jeremiah 6:30).

When a man takes a test, each phrase of the question is meant to be a stumbling block to ignorance. By probing for ignorance, by learning from each stumble, knowledge is discovered and increased. Even the wise in the world learn more after taking an exam - for they learn from the test itself. Those who refuse the test learn nothing. That is why Paul urges Timothy to join with him in suffering for the gospel.

Do you still doubt that stumbling blocks are *the* way that God talks to us? Remember that Proverbs promises wisdom only to those who respond to rebukes and corrections.

For those that need big proof, I point to the known and unknown universe. God created the universe so that man could have a place to live. God also created the Garden of Eden with its variety of fruits and beauty. God also placed a stumbling block to test man's faith in the form of one, repeat one, forbidden tree. All those promises, hopes and dreams of a whole world, a whole universe, were forsaken over one piece of fruit.

How like us sinners. It is the one little thing we will not strike at, give up, or allow to be broken to pieces, that costs us all. How often it is one thing, and only that one thing, that crushes floundering faith. The rich man walks away, the fool shakes his head and the lazy fold their hands for a bit of rest. Think of it. If that one thing had been suffered against in Christ then all other joys in Him would follow as surely as spring follows winter. It was Esau who sold a whole inheritance for a single meal, a bowl of food - and, likewise, many people sell their souls for a piece of pride. A whole Bible of promises, all forsaken over a vain lie, a moment's laziness, or a spur-of-the-moment desire.

In Genesis 2:17 we read, "but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The whole universe, stars, planets, and the moving heavenly bodies were perfectly aligned. Like dominos all lined up in perfect order, everything was in its place and it was good. Nothing was out of place until man stumbled over a piece of fruit. And, once the bite had been taken, all the universal dominos came slapping down.

When a pencil rolls off a desk and wedges itself in the groove of a corner, the proof of a fallen universe is declared. The whole universe is frustrated at every level. Metal rusts, toasters break, and teeth decay. Everywhere, in all corners of the universe, all things declare that they are blocking the way of man's will, wants, and dreams. If there is one truly universal language that God speaks in, it is stumbling blocks.

God has subjected the whole universe to frustration, not by its own choice (Romans 8:20). Not only is life in itself a stumbling block, but the vastness of the universe conspires against it. Death is the final proof that *the* way God talks to us is by means of stumbling blocks. There is no good or logical reason why death should be a part of life. It is so much of a stumbling block that scientists cannot even understand why it exists. Why, they ask, would life (that is, evolution) create death? Death is counterproductive to evolution in the extreme.

In *13 Things That Don't Make Sense*, author Michael Brooks writes:

"Why do living things die? It is a question that splits biologists. It has become like a game of Ping-Pong; over the years, theories have been batted back and forth as new evidence comes to light. Then, occasionally, someone steps in and ruins the game by pointing out that none of the theories fit all the available evidence; we still have not winners."

As all of mankind spends an entire lifetime attempting to cheat death, so too does the vast majority of doomed mankind seek to cheat Jesus - *the* stumbling block. Many do not understand, and many who do understand simply don't like it. Like death, we know we must die because we are forced into the coffin - but few rejoice in its loving design. Only those few who rejoice are permitted by God's mercy to fall to the ground and die to self. They stumble over the "stumbling stone."

[Romans 9:32-33](#) As it is written: See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall...

Jesus - the *real* Jesus - causes us to stumble in every way. Let that be repeated; there is nothing left of us that does not either stumble or get crushed. Those who stumble into His arms are saved. Those who are crushed by the stumbling stone perish forever in hell. Those who trip up, stumble, and are broken into pieces will live. Those who seek to avoid the stumbling stone are crushed as it falls upon them. Each individual in this world must choose one of only two options - there is no third. In fact, trying to find a third is really option number two. As Jesus said, "He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." (Matthew 21:44)

Such is the message of God's honest preachers and prophets. Their rebukes and encouragements all contain - sometimes hidden, sometimes not so hidden - the stumbling block called Jesus. Mankind, including church-going mankind, often prays for a Jesus who is not a stumbling block. Such a "Christ" is in reality the spirit of the antichrist, for which demons are all too happy to masquerade as the Light. Those things that are agreeable, comfortable, and manipulative, mankind is eager to label as godly. We, who are clay, try to make the Potter into moldable dirt.

It is wrong to say the way God talks to us is by the Holy Spirit - especially in light of the fact that Jesus said the worldly cannot know this Holy Spirit. Satan would like everyone to believe that God talks primarily through His Holy Spirit. Can you not see that man, in pride, will all too gladly assume that God is talking to him or her personally? Or are you still confused as to why we so often declare, "I will pray about it," and then conveniently hear what we want to hear?

However, even to the casual disciple of Jesus, it is clear that direct communication from the Holy Spirit is a blessing of suffering by way of the cross - a fruit of scorning the shame. As with a child, so it is with the

true Christian. To converse intelligently, to fellowship maturely, one has to grow up. That is why the writer of Hebrews warns us that those who drink milk will never be acquainted with the righteousness of God. To a mature Christian, drinking only milk is a method of painful, slow starvation. It is death by a famine of the Word of God (Amos 8:11).

Jesus' disciples, minus Judas, never understood what He was talking about until they had suffered with Him for over 3 years. It was only then that Jesus would send the Holy Spirit. To put a fine edge on this - it is through stumbling blocks that God talks so that we might hear His Holy Spirit more clearly. This will never cease until we finally overcome and, having crossed over into heaven, we can do as we see fit. Here, now, at this moment, true Christians are not permitted to do one thing that they like. Look at the world. Everyone seeks to do as they want, and murder and mayhem are the result. But, once we have crossed over to be with Him, doing what we see fit will be running in any direction unto the glorious holy joy of God. Only in heaven do all choices lead to God.

[Deuteronomy 12:8-9](#) You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you.

Do you still doubt that the Holy Spirit talks exclusively through the stumbling block of Jesus? Let me remind you that one of the last things Jesus told Peter was that he would be "led where he does not want to go."

Such is the true disciple's way of life; being led in obedience where he or she does not want to go (John 21:18). Whether matters of work, sleep, or pleasure - it is always going where we do not want to go. The man or woman who prays, "I think it is okay with God if I do..." is terrorizing the Good News of Jesus.

The fact that we, who claim to be Christians, do not have this answer rolling off our tongues shows how far we are from the true joy of Jesus Christ. We must ask ourselves, if we proclaim the gospel at all, exactly what are we proclaiming?

Though the yoke is easy and the burden is light, Jesus said that "few" discover this path to Life. Because embracing a Jesus who is a stumbling block is not what most people want, or will overcome the stumbling to want. Among those who honestly do desire it, understanding it breaks them to pieces. If the fiery John the Baptist, who ushered in the Savior of the world, questioned the stumbling block that was Christ, how much more will we who live in cold times? If John the Baptist, who pointed others to Jesus, later doubted his life's mission, then we must ask just how great is this stumbling block? How little the church is ready to acknowledge the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world! As Jesus told John, I repeat the words to you, blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Jesus (Matthew 11:6).

It is an even greater error to think that God will speak to us through our conscience. To do so is to equate ourselves with Pinocchio and listen to the blue fairy who tells us to "always let your conscience be your guide" - followed by a ridiculous song from Jiminy Cricket. It was listening to our conscience in the Garden of Eden, rather than obeying God, that brought nothing but misery.

It is true, however, that most people do listen to their conscience rather than God - but that is simply the idol of self-worship. As a result, there is an eager readiness to "go and pray about it" or study the Bible about an issue - so that our "conscience" can lead us to the right conclusion. But a man or woman is either an idolater or a lover of the Living God. The old serpent told us we could be as God, and that is just what we like to play with our conscience - telling ourselves when we are guilty, how we are guilty, and against whom we are guilty. Or, more commonly, that we are not guilty, or at least not *that* guilty.

The stumbling blocks from God show us who we really are. The stumbling stones of life, no matter how small or large, bring everything to light. They will quickly show if we worship excuses, concocted lies, or simply thrust the whole matter behind us - hardening our hearts. It is the stumbling stones that keep us from studying the Bible from a predetermined position, so that everything fits nicely.

If God is true, and "all a man's ways seem innocent to him," the conscience is the very last means by which God talks to a man or woman. Indeed, it is the last means by which God can speak to individuals. We might, in Christ, pledge a good conscience to God. But pledging is not the same as processing. I can pledge to give a million dollars to the church easily enough, but the truth of the pledge is in the details. A million details.

This is why Jude 1:15 tells us God will send "thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." God has to bring thousands upon thousands because we refuse to let the stumbling stones produce life giving guilt. And if we cannot gain life from those we know in the world today, how can we ever think we will stand on the Great Day?

Or are we still clueless as to why the worldly person feels so little guilt? Indeed, even in the church the littleness of guilt is staggering. Our guilt is miniscule and carefully chosen, then magnified and polished. We are selfish misers with the blood of Christ and greedy for gaining self.

Paul knew better than to put faith in his conscience, because he had picked up his cross. It wasn't as if listening to his conscience was last on Paul's list - it wasn't even on the list. Once Paul let the sufferings of Christ perform their mysterious work, it was removed from his list. To be shown yourself clearly by God is to see the first enemy you must oppose in everything.

1 Corinthians 4:4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

The Lord's stumbling stones will soften or sear the flesh of our heart, or our conscience. They show if we would rather have our self-righteousness and self-help words, or just forget the whole matter of salvation.

Even the question posed here - what is *the* way God talks to us? - was in Jesus Christ and thus a stumbling block. It reveals at the outset how well we listen, or do not listen, in Jesus. Those who do not hear the question correctly should be heart-broken over this "trivial" matter in Christ (Luke 8:18). It is a short, black and white question that should easily be understood. And if we are unable to hear the trivial in Christ from a man, what does that reveal about our listening to the Holy Spirit when God does attempt to talk on a daily basis?

Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.

Toward the end of the world God will send forth many a stumbling block. God will give the world two preachers, or prophets, as a gift - and they will grab the world's attention. These prophets will testify as to who God is and what the true God is all about. Any country or individual who does not listen will have plagues sent upon them. It is a rare moment when everyone has to go to church and listen to the sermon. God does this in love to seek out those few who will truly repent of their sins.

Revelation 11:4-14 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

Upon their resurrection from the dead mankind will burst forth in praise, but it will be the praise of the unrepentant. For men always praise when their suffering is alleviated. But this last praise will be followed by mankind's refusal to repent. Just as they did in the days of Jesus, and many in the church do today, they follow Jesus for the comfort He promises – not for the sake of righteousness (John 6:26). When it becomes clear to these kind of people that God requires repentance and righteousness they attempt to yell for crucifixion all over again.

[Revelation 16:21](#) From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.