

Hear God Speak

How to Connect
God's Word to
Your Work -
Book 1

Michael Dean Thomas



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By
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Hear God Speak, How to Connect God' s Word to Your Work – Book 1 by Michael Dean Thomas

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1. Career Guides 2. Christian Living 3. Business & Professional Growth

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Chapter 1: God's Word

The Bible defines God's Word:

In the beginning, the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

(John 1:1-15 NLT)

The Bible defines Jesus as God's word. Notably, the Bible does not define itself as God's word. It is clear that a living person – Jesus himself – is the living word of God.

Maybe you are saying, "what is the big deal? Why does it make a difference whether the Bible or Jesus is the word of God?"

Glad you asked! As it happens, the way you answer this question is going to determine:

- How you work for God
- The type of fruit you produce
- Whether your life makes a real impact

Let's start by taking the definition that is opposite to what the Bible says, that the Bible is the word of God. If you say that the Bible is the word of God, then it makes sense to study it. Seriously study! Seminaries around the world teach pastors-in-training Hebrew (the language the old testament is written in) and Greek (the language of the new testament), so that they can develop an accurate understanding of what the Bible says.

Not only that, but if you believe that the Bible is the word of God, then it makes a difference which Bible translation you use. If you are part of a religious Christian community online, you may have seen arguments between the King James Version followers versus the other adherents of different translations.

I'm not saying these debates are unimportant. What I am saying is that the reason why these debates strike such a nerve within certain Christian communities is because of the assumption that the Bible is the word of God.

Based on the "Bible is the word of God" assumption, we have over 30,000 denominations. If you had been brought up in a Christian home, or in a church, which focused on "good theology" – well there are at least 29,999

denominations that have a slightly different idea to you about what “good theology” looks like. This is mostly because one person’s interpretation of the Bible is going to be slightly different from the next.

Now let’s get to the point. If you are trying to connect the Bible to your work without listening to what Jesus is saying to you – you are going to have a lot of problems! There are sixty-six books of the Bible and none talk specifically about modern day work. Nowhere in the Bible are you going to see a verse that says you should become a graphic designer, entrepreneur, or university lecturer. So what the “Bible first” crowd does is analogize to Biblical principles.

Work hard. Study hard. Do things to the best of your ability.

Recently I heard a few more, where people build their career on a favorite verse:

- “we are all called to be the light of the world”
- “don’t you know that God promises he will give good gifts to his children, so just step out in faith”
- “don’t you know that God asked Moses – what do you have in your hand? So, look what’s in your hand and use it for God’s Kingdom!”

Often people who talk about Biblical principles have never had a real experience with Jesus. The reason I can confidently talk about this, is because of the vivid account of what it is like to enter the kingdom of God described in the book of Hebrews:

No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. You have come to the assembly of God’s firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous

ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven! (Hebrews 12:22-25)

The writer talks about entering God's kingdom, with Jesus as mediator, and seeing Mt Zion for ourselves. It provides a further warning to *not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking*. He doesn't say we need to listen to teachers, who have studied Hebrew. He doesn't focus on scripture. He is drawing us into God's kingdom, where God is speaking. The gospel of the kingdom, is the same gospel that Jesus taught.

Instead of working from the kingdom of God, so-called "Biblical principles" have taken over how many Christians see their work. Whether it be the "great commission" in Matthew 28, "love your neighbour as you would love yourself," or "turn or burn," these formulae have left many wondering where God is in all of this. Did he simply deliver a book of principles, a "manual for humans to live by," or did he break through the kingdom realm to build personal relationships with each person?

If the Bible says that Jesus is the word of God – then why is there a problem believing that Jesus truly is the word of God? The reason is simple and yet mysterious at the same time.

It is simply not possible to package Jesus as the word of God in a Biblical principle. It is not possible to understand fully where he is leading. It is not possible to know how the path will open up, which is why faith is required.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.*

(Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT)

Are you ready to let Jesus show you which path to take? The simplicity of following Jesus is deeply troubling to someone who needs to understand. Biblical principles are easier to grasp, and people instinctively look for low hanging fruit. But the Christian life is altogether simpler, and more radical than many of us have been brought up to believe. A real, interactive relationship with Jesus is required if you accept that Jesus is the living word of God.

Chapter 2: God's Word & Your Work

The revelation that Jesus is the word of God fundamentally changes our devotion time. Instead of cramming scripture into your brain, hoping that something will stick, focusing on Jesus means time in listening prayer. Jesus may refer you back to the Bible, but ultimately it is him speaking to you. The Bible is just an aide that he may use to lead you into a deeper understanding of your purpose.

Now, here is the challenging part when you define Jesus as the living word of God. When Jesus says something to you – what will you do with it? At the beginning of your time focused on him, you may have scars that need to heal. Listening to him speak at this stage will help you to heal up.

Later on, Jesus may start speaking to you about your future. He will start giving you keys to unlock the way that leads to your destiny. When he starts planting seeds about your future, listen up! The parable of the sower is about to apply to you:

“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God’s word. The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. The seeds that fell among the thorns

represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest." (Luke 8:11-15)

The parable of the sower starts with a farmer going out and scattering seeds across his field. The Father sent Jesus into the world, the living word of God. The key to producing real fruit is connecting "the word of God to the fruit," or connecting God's living word to your work.

Other verses begin to make sense too:

...For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

(Hebrews 4:12-16 NLT)

Many have read this verse assuming that the word of God, described as a sharp two-edged sword, is referring to the Bible. But if you look at the context, it is not the case. God's word is found by coming boldly to the throne of our gracious God. Yes – that is where Jesus is seated!!!

So then what is the purpose of the Bible? The Bible is referred to as scripture in the new testament:

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. **God uses it** to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT)*

It is clear that God is the one who uses scripture. It is not our job to focus on scripture. It is our job to focus on him, and let him direct us to what he wants to do. He may use scripture, worship, or something completely different to speak to you. As you can see, I am using scripture a lot in this book to discredit the rules, formulae and processes that Christians have been using for centuries in an attempt to do good work.

Connecting God's living word – Jesus – to your work means that you follow his voice:

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27 NLT)

You may ask, where do you see this practically applied in the Bible. Once again, I'm glad you asked! From the beginning to the end of the Bible, God is the one directing how His Kingdom is grown by giving people individual mandates. These mandates are examples of the parable of the sower in action. Here are just a few.

Mandate to Adam & Eve

“Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”” (Genesis 1:28)

Noah's Mandate

So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth! "Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. (Genesis 6:13-

14)

Abraham's Mandate

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

(Genesis 12:1-3)

Jacob's Mandate

"At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I

will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”” (Genesis 28:13-15)

Moses’ Mandate

“...Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:9)

Solomon’s Mandate

“The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. So God replied, “Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies— I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! And if you follow me and obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life.”” (1 Kings 3:10-14)

Jesus’ Mandate

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.” (Luke 4:18-19)

The Mandate of the Disciples

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”” (Matthew 28: 18-20)

Paul’s Mandate

“As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.

And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. By God’s grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

Though I am the least deserving of all God’s people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.”(Ephesians 3:3-9)

Chapter 3: Practical Application of the Parable of the Sower

If you are coming to God on the basis of knowing the Bible, then chances are good that a large part of your time is working through your understanding. However, if you come to Jesus, then you need to come as a child. Coming to an understanding of God, and coming to him as a child will lead to a completely different experience. For one, a child is able to enter the kingdom of God:

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

Many people I pray with, are so busy trying to understand their experiences that they can't fully enter God's kingdom. As soon as we pray, and experience something new, they start scratching around looking for a Bible verse to substantiate what they are experiencing. This is not what a child would do. A child would let Jesus lead them into his kingdom.

Let me give you a practical example of this in action. In his book "The Lost Choice," author Andy Andrews shares a story about George Washington Carver, a scientist best known for revolutionizing the southern agricultural

economy by showing that hundreds of products could be derived from the peanut. Despite an intellectual capacity that far exceeded ordinary man, Carver found his strength not in science but in the consistent dialogue he had each morning with God.

According to Andrews, Carver was once faced with a highly volatile problem by his supervisor, who just happened to be Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute. The problem involved Carver's decision to advise local farmers to plant peanuts rather than cotton. Decades of growing cotton had depleted the land into a virtual wasteland of withering weeds. His idea, which eventually became known as crop rotation, was to alternate soil depleting cotton crops with soil enriching crops such as peanuts. What Carver hadn't factored into his plan was that there was no commercial appeal for the peanut at the time. Without a market for their crops, farmers would be left penniless.

Washington was fearful that due to the highly volatile nature of race relations in 1914, that the mostly white farmers would not hesitate to retaliate on the bad advice of a black scientist.

George Washington Carver was not worried. He turned to face his obviously worried mentor and said, "All my life, I have risen regularly at four in the morning to go into the woods and talk with God. That's where He reveals His secrets to me. When everybody else is asleep, I hear God best and learn my plan... This morning, I asked Him why He made the peanut."

Washington looked at him incredulously but allowed Carver to continue.

“He told me, ‘separate the peanut into water, fats, oils, gums, resins, sugars, starches, and amino acids. Then recombine these under My three laws of compatibility, temperature, and pressure. Then, the Lord said, ‘then you will know why I made the peanut!’”

Washington laughed nervously, obviously skeptical at Carver’s suggestion. Finally, with much anxiety, he asked the humble scientist if God always gave him the right answers.

With a broad smile, Carver replied, “Let me put it this way: The Lord always provides me with life-changing ideas. Not that I am special. The Lord provides everyone with life-changing ideas. These ideas are quite literally a treasure from the Almighty. It is up to each of us; however, to choose and dig for the treasure.”

Within ten days, George Washington Carver had “discovered” more than 300 uses for the peanut. One trip to that special place in the woods to talk with God not only enhanced race relations at the time but also fundamentally changed the agricultural industry as we know it today. All because he listened to and felt the Spirit of God in his life.

Pastor Clayton Golliher is another example of someone who applies the parable of the sower with great results. He works with homeless youth in Los Angeles. He walks the streets offering free pizza as he goes.

After accepting Jesus as savior, the abandoned youth learn how to pray in the Spirit. Together they would the worship God. As they pray in the Spirit, God reveals inventions. To date Pastor Clayton has received more than USD20 million in royalties from ideas received during these prayer meetings.

When I asked Pastor Clayton how I could operate in this way, his advice to me was “Worship. Pray in the Spirit. Interpretation will come and then track with the anointing.” Notice how he enters the kingdom of God as a child through worship, and not in a way that he needs to understand.

When I told Pastor Clayton that sometimes I get fatigued from praying in the Spirit too frequently. His response was that praying in the Spirit needs to be led by God. It is not simply a result of forceful determination.

Nevertheless, Pastor Clayton’s example shows how the kingdom of God is literally inside of us. It is available to anyone who comes to God as a child. We need to be attentive to everything God shows us.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Jesus' message has the power to this day to transform Bible-fearing Christians into *honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest (Luke 8:15)*. I would rather walk in faith and trust His word than fear.

Perhaps Jesus himself said it best:

"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life. (John 5:39-40 NLT)

The simplicity and power of Jesus' message is startling. Are you listening:

Behold, the kingdom of God is at hand!