



Jesus, The Articulate, Living Word of God

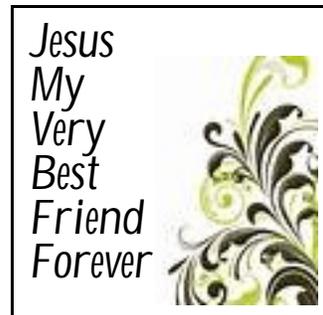
Schatzi, my little long-haired dachshund, tries to tell me when she wants something, but sometimes I have to work hard to find out what it is she wants. The other night I sat in an easy chair in the bedroom, reading a book. She came and pawed me with importunity, begging me desperately.

I asked her, “Do you want to go outside?” If so, she’d have run, with tail wagging, to the back door. No, that isn’t it, she conveyed, standing very still, looking straight ahead.

“Do you need water? Food?” No. If so, she’d have run to the utility room. Instead, she stood very still, looking straight ahead.

So I stood up, trying to find out what it was she wanted so urgently. Immediately she hopped up into my chair, flopped down, lay there with a sigh, looked up at me as if she were saying, “You can sit on the bed to read, my dear. I need this chair. I’m going to sleep now.” I am disadvantaged in communicating with Schatzi because she has no words.

1. You can express emotion without words, but you cannot communicate rational thought without words (and it’s conceivable that you can’t



even think rational thoughts without words.).

In 1970, NASA initiated the Apollo 13 mission, with three men on board, to make a second landing on the moon. On the third day of the mission, an oxygen tank exploded and doomed the command module. The purpose of the mission suddenly altered, not to land on the moon, but to get the three men home safely using only the undamaged landing module.

On the second day before launch, one of the three astronauts had been scrubbed because the doctors thought he had measles. That turned out to be a mercy of God, because after the explosion, the grounded man was able to go into the simulator to work out a program to save enough battery power to get the men home.

The immediate problem was to supply oxygen to the lunar module. They had to find some way to adapt the square CO₂ scrubber cartridges from the space ship to the round scrubber in the module, with only a few minutes of fresh oxygen left. How fit that square into a round hole using only materials available on board?

NASA set out to solve the problem. They radioed, “We’ve got a way to use those cartridges. And as soon as we get them written in some good words, we’ll pass them along.”

One minute later, they said, “We’re getting the words together to make it easy to build one of these things.”

Six minutes later they started giving the “words” they’d found so the men could use what they had on board to fit that square cartridge into a round one:

Words. Urgent, life-saving words.

Words are so important, that when God decided to stop human beings from building a tower to reach heaven, He

confounded their words, so they couldn't communicate with each other (Genesis 11:1-8).

But your God has said to you, "Come and talk with Me."

How could an ordinary human being, confined to space and time, ever communicate with the Great Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Eternal God? How could we hear the words we must hear if we are to understand Him? We need words, sounds that mean something, sounds that we can understand if we are to talk with this Almighty God!

2. Words must be used in communication, but there must be an agreement about what the words actually mean.

Language changes through the years, and at some point, perhaps, the meaning of a word will subtly change. But generally, scholars agree on the meaning in English of a Hebrew or Greek word. There is no equivocation in what God says and means.

Two examples. The Scriptures say Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Someone says, "But He didn't really die for the whole world. He died only for the elect." But the text says "the whole world."

The Scriptures say that if we believe in Christ, we receive everlasting life (John 3:16). But some people say, "You can lose your salvation if you sin." But there is no way to define everlasting life except to say it is life that lasts forever.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Humpty Dumpty says, in a scornful tone: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

But that makes a mockery of meaningful conversation. If you can decide arbitrarily what a word means, then you can use words like *trust, true, love, forgiven* and rob them of all meaning.

I am in conversation right now with a woman scientist who is a believer, but she thinks we must read the words of Scripture “like the unsophisticated original readers of the Bible would read them.” So, she says, when God says He created Adam and Eve in His image, that doesn’t mean that He actually took a glob of clay and made a man out of it, or that He actually made a woman out of Adam’s rib. She believes God uses evolution to bring human beings into life.

But that is sophistry. Words mean what we have agreed they mean, regardless of the background of the speakers. When God said He “breathed in” His Word, “inspiration,” we call it, He said we could understand the Words and agree on their meaning. Look again at Isaiah 45:19:

*I publicly proclaim bold promises.
I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner
so no one can understand what I mean.
And I did not tell the people of Israel to ask me
for something I did not plan to give.
I, the LORD, speak only what is true and right.*

Here we have the promise of God that we can hear Him speak, that He will speak clearly, unmistakably, so we can understand what He is saying.

What does 1 Corinthians 14:6-11 say about this concept?

To understand the words, and to believe them, is the essence of the Gospel.

3. The words convey the message, but both the transmitter and the receiver must be turned on and tuned in correctly for the recipient to hear the message.

We already know that the Sender, the Almighty, Triune God, wants to communicate with the receiver, us human beings. Fortunately, all the processes for His sending the message are complete in Him.

His radio is turned on; the power and frequency are tuned correctly.

He has the receiver's correct address.

His message is in the language the receiver understands.

The message will be very clear, conveying exactly what He wants to tell us.

But we, the receivers, must have our radio also turned on. We must want to receive the message the Transmitter sends us. We must be tuned to the right frequency. Only then we can receive the words the Transmitter sends us.

My cousin, Betty Ann Rice, is profoundly deaf, so her mother used sign language to communicate with her. But when Aunt Cathy told Betty Ann something she didn't want to hear, she would simply close her eyes!

A. W. Tozier, in *The Pursuit of God*, says,

The tragedy is that our eternal welfare depends on our hearing, and we have trained our hearts not to hear.

According to Hebrews 3:8 and 15, what should we *not* do when God talks to us?

What happens, over time, if we refuse to listen to God's word? (Hebrews 4:7)

How did the Israelites respond the the preaching of Zechariah, the Prophet? (Zechariah 7:11)

Why might we not want to hear God speak to us? Perhaps because we are so uncomfortable in His presence. How did the Prophet Isaiah react when he was in the temple, and saw the Lord "high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1-5)?

How did the seraphim respond to Isaiah's confession of his sinfulness (Isaiah 1:6)?

Our first response when we hear God asking us to come and talk to Him might be like Isaiah's. "He's too holy to look on the likes of me."

Years ago, Walt was in a revival in Podunk Center Iowa. (Yes, there was a Podunk Center in those days!) One night in the middle of the night we were awakened by unbelievable shafts of light streaming from the skies. We ran outside in awe and stood in radiant beams of shimmering rose and green light. We were sure that the Lord Jesus was coming.

But my first thought was not, “Oh, how wonderful!” It was “Oh, am I ready for His coming?” It was a spectacular show of the aurora borealis, very rarely seen that far south.

But I was humbled as I thought about my reaction. I love the Lord with all my heart, but that night I could see all the dirty stuff in my heart, and I felt unworthy.

So what do you do when you hear God’s sweet voice saying, “Come and talk with me”? You remind yourself of the true truth (!) because God Himself tells you:

Let the words of Christ, in all their richness,
live in your hearts.”

Colossians 3:16 nlt

Our hearts can be the place where we have conversation with Jesus Himself. How does Romans 10:6-10 express this?

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:10-16. Verse 14 says, “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

4. That is why the very name of Jesus is *The Word*: He is God’s audible, visible message.

Jesus! The Word! That’s His wonderful name. He is God’s hearable message. He exists. He is truth. We can understand God through His Word, Jesus. Jesus is the Word through Whom we have a right to communicate with our Holy God. What is His Word? “I love you. I died for you.”

That is in contrast to every other world religion.

Buddha said, “No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.”

In the Golden Temple mount in Rangoon, Myanmar, there are literally hundreds of statues of Buddha, and they each have a bowl of water and a scoop beside it. I watched a young woman take a dipper and pour water over a statue of Buddha. Curious, I asked her, “Why do you do that?”

She answered “To cleanse my god so he is able to answer my prayers.”

Buddha says, “No one saves us but ourselves.”

The Hindu Veda says, “The sun God grants bodies in different births, according to your deeds, providing a happy or unhappy place on this earth. May radiant beams prove helpful to you.” A Hindu believes she is doomed forever, in happy or unhappy incarnations, until she reaches Nirvana, a place where she no longer has any desire for anything.

The Koran, the Muslim Book, records that Jihad is a system of checks and balances as a way that Allah set up to “check one people by means of another.” When one person or group transgresses their limits and violates the rights of others, Muslims have the right and the duty to “check” them and bring them back into line.

In Japan, at a sacred Shinto shrine, we saw a huge gong, so big it was struck with a large swinging tree trunk. Again, I asked a woman, “Why do you do ring that gong?”

Surprised, she answered, “To wake up the gods so

they can hear me pray.”

But the Holy Word from God is Jesus Himself. We have nothing to do, nothing to earn. We have only to accept and believe His precious Word, the Incredible Word! Dottie Rambo’s song expresses this so wonderfully:

*“For what earthly reason would the Heavenly Father
send down His Son,
To suffer rejection and pay for crimes He had not done?
For what earthly reason would the Father
let Him hang on a tree?
I wept with the answer, that “what earthly reason” was me.
I was the guilty; He was the sacrifice.
I was the taker, He was the Giver.
Dying while I go free,
His only reason was me.”*

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How does John 1:1,2 and 14 express this mind-blowing truth?

This Jesus, this Word, became flesh so that we could understand Him speaking to us. The Word dwelt, “tabernacled,” among us. He pitched His tent with us. If we move, He moves with us! This Eternal God, the Word, took upon Himself flesh, so when God said, “Come and talk with me,” we could understand Him.

How does 1 John 1:1-4 express this truth?

5. The intangible God, Spirit, untouchable, unbearable, unknowable, is made visible to our human eyes in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-3 says, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Why did Jesus take the incredible step of becoming a human being? (Hebrews 2:14-18)

6. Hearing the Word of God actually gives us the power and the understanding to obey it!

God told Ezekiel to speak to a whole valley of dry bones to come alive. He did, and the dry bones heard the Word of the Lord and became human beings again (Ezekiel 37:4)! Can dead people actually obey a command? Yes, when God speaks!

Mark Twain once said, “It’s not the things in the Bible that I don’t understand that I don’t like. It’s the things I do understand.” He had his radio, his receiver, turned off!

Jesus, the Word, makes intercession for us to the

Father. He pleads for us. Notice how Isaiah 53:5-12 describes this:

7. Our hearing the Word and knowing Him will have an eternal impact on our lives, in the future, but also today. “Today I will hear His voice.”

What does Hebrews 3:6-9 warn?

How does Hebrews 4:12-14 describe this Living Word of God?

8. This Jesus, the very Word of God, will someday come in glory and rule the world.

Jesus, the Word of God, is not an effeminate, wishy-washy, sympathetic but powerless friend. He is your Creator-God who will someday triumph over all.

How does Revelation 19:11-16 describe Him?

Listen to this Jesus! He wants to be your very best friend forever!

More—

The Intimate Friendship Isaiah had with God

Isaiah, the prophet who served Kings Uzziah and Hezekiah, had numerous and intimate conversations with his Savior. But they did not come until after he'd come face to face with God's holiness and his own sinfulness, as we learned in this lesson (Isaiah 6:1-8).

How did God encourage Isaiah to talk to Him and express his point of view? Isaiah 1:18,19; Isaiah 41:21; Isaiah 43:26; Isaiah 45:21

Notice with what frankness Isaiah shares his sense of futility in his life ministry, and see how sweetly God comforts him: Isaiah 49:3-6.

See the comfort God offers Isaiah when he is worried about old age: Isaiah 46:4.

Notice that Isaiah's family was an intimate part of his public ministry: Isaiah 7:3,4; Isaiah 8:1-4,18.

The intimacy Isaiah experienced with God can be seen especially in:

Isaiah 12:1,2

Isaiah 26:1-9

Isaiah 20:1-3

Isaiah 50:4-7

Isaiah 22:1-4, 15,16

Isaiah 64:3-9

Isaiah 25:1-4

