

GOD'S LIFE-ALTERING WORD FOR 2022

Scripture used: [Genesis 1:3 \(NLT\)](#), [1 Kings 19:11-13 \(NLT\)](#), [John 11 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

We are starting 2022 as the coronavirus pandemic is raging because of the new Omicron variant. Our congregation is choosing to go back to online worship for the next 3 Sundays (tentatively planning to resume in person Gatherings on January 23rd). Many families have been affected, and we want to do our part to care well for our families within our community and for the larger Bay Area. We pray for wisdom, grace, and mercy, as well as for strength and renewal. We also pray for leaders, healthcare workers, and all those on the frontlines. We pray for healing for the community. And we stand ready to hear God's life-altering word for us for 2022, provided we're willing to take it in and to obey. Today, we reflect on the question, "How do we hear from God?", especially when God seems to be silent or slow in answering in the way we would hope.

KEY POINTS

1. A huge existential challenge is contending with the perceived silence of God. As we grapple with the loss of a dearly loved one, or we suffer physically and mentally... we sometimes face silence. We have no clarity about the future. We can forget that God is alive and loves us with an everlasting love. We fail to decode the silence. Sometimes God is silent in order to be heard.
2. There are three stages of creation in Genesis (see [Genesis 1:3, NLT](#)). There is nothing before creation. The void is formless, empty. There is no light. There is silence. Then there is good news: the Spirit of God is hovering over the chaos. It's a metaphor for our current circumstances. Then God speaks audible words. Let there be light. There is transformation, beauty, fulfillment of purpose. Yet even when God was hovering over the chaos, He was communicating. At that moment, He was saying, "Let it be." He was working in that time of chaos to bring about something new. Knowing that sometimes God says, "Let it be", means that we can persevere through times of chaos and walk patiently with God.
3. If God is on our side, it doesn't matter who is against us. Note the Elijah story from [1 Kings 19](#). When Elijah is exhausted, the Word of God comes to him, not in a cataclysm, but in a whisper, a still small voice, the sound of sheer silence (in Hebrew). It asks: What are you doing here? Are you clear about your purpose? Are you focused on the right thing? Are you in the right lane? It beckons sincere focus & discipline.
4. Consider [John 11:4 \(NLT\)](#) – Lazarus' death is not in vain but for the glory of God. It helps mankind see God for who He is. Silence is not equal to absence. We are precious and honored. God knows our names, and cares about us. Silence can be interpreted as an invitation to trust.
5. Pastor Tony Williams who preached last Sunday went through years of a terrible health ordeal. He had enough suffering and pain. Like Elijah, like Martha – he was lost in the appearance of God not being present. Then he realized that it's never hopeless as long as God is there. Morning may not come immediately, but it is coming. There is hope, and the promise of great redemption. Let it be. Stop manipulating, and honestly consider what our life is about. Trust God. He is there to walk with us through the challenges we are facing.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Our culture tends to prioritize verbal, explicit communication. But sometimes we have life-changing revelations through times of silence, reflection, or a quiet word. When was the last time you "heard" something in a time of silence or reflection?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - God speaks to us in many ways, sometimes through Scripture, sometimes through prayer, sometimes through other people. How has God tended to speak to you or to guide you in your life? Do you identify with God speaking in any of the passages we studied today? Is there a particular word from God, "let it be", "what are you doing here?", or "trust me" that speaks to you today?
- 3) **DO** - Create time to reflect on how God may be speaking to you in this season. Find a way to write down or share what you hear. Join us next Sunday online as we continue to walk together as a church!