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SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

A FLOW OF REVELATION

The Third Level of Hearing from God, Where It Turns On and What It Costs

> A word from God speaks to one thing; a flow of revelation changes everything. It turns on in the secret place, it costs to get and to keep, and it leads every believer to the same place: the revelation of Jesus Christ and His finished work.

MAIN TEXT
Revelation 1:9-13

FIRST PREACHED
November 16, 2025

SERIES
We're Rooted in the Bible, Week 5 of 6

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. A word from God is small in scope, but a flow of revelation is large in scope, touches everything, and becomes a framework for your theology.
2. The flow turns on in the right place: John was in the spirit on the Lord's day, alone with God in the most holy place, and the right place is usually the same place you show up every day.
3. Revelation becomes a North star, so when it comes give yourself grace, give yourself time, and keep your mouth shut until it works itself out.
4. Revelation maximizes level two, because a shorthand develops with the Holy Spirit and he can say less while communicating more.
5. Revelation lets you experience the presence and person of God, an exceeding abundant revelation that surpasses knowledge and cannot be handed to anyone else.
6. Revelation costs to obtain and costs to operate, and at bare minimum it is a burden you carry, not something that merely bothers you.
7. The levels of hearing from God are sequential, not four options, and holding people accountable to them keeps imitation Pentecost out of the church.
8. The one revelation everyone is heading toward is the revelation of Jesus Christ and the power of his finished work.



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PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the fifth message in a six-week series on being rooted in the Bible. The series began with the value of Scripture (inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative) and then moved into how a believer hears from God. The earlier weeks laid out the first two levels of hearing from God:

- **Level one:** the preached word.
- **Level two:** the Holy Spirit bringing Scripture back to your memory.

This message names **level three, a flow of revelation**. Level four comes next week.

Two cautions. First, define your terms early and say plainly that the definitions are for this message, not a theology textbook. “Word” and “revelation” are used loosely in everyday church talk. Here they mean two different things. Second, the closing movement confronts imitation Pentecostal display. Say it with a smile and land it on freedom, not restriction: the goal is the real power of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

Open with praise: “The Lord is good and his mercy endures forever.” Then set the series context. We are rooted in the Bible. We started with the value of the Scripture and moved to how you can get a word from God on your own. Today: the third level of hearing from God, **a flow of revelation**.

A WORD VERSUS A FLOW OF REVELATION

A word from God is smaller in scope. It is usually instruction, inspiration or insight about one thing, at one time, or a small series of things. It does not have fifty years of implications. The last four weeks have been about receiving a word from God: instruction, direction and insight from heaven on your own.

Revelation is large in scope. It touches everything. It impacts everything. It has far reaching implications. It is a shift in your paradigm. It will not only change the way you think about everything; it will change the way you think, period. It can, and should, become a framework for your theology. Out of revelation we begin to understand who God is.

The paradox: most people develop their theology and doctrine not only before they receive revelation, but before they have ever given the Bible a good pass through. Most people know what they believe about God regardless of what the Bible says. That should startle us. If you have strong beliefs about God and have never read the Bible, go home, stand in front of the bathroom mirror and think about that for fifteen minutes.

A flow of revelation is a flow. Once you have it, you operate from it constantly; even when it is not flowing, it impacts everything. But you have to turn it on.

1. Get in the Right Place

You turn on a flow of revelation by getting in the right place. As one preacher used to say, "You got to get under the spout where the glory comes out."

> **REVELATION 1:9-13** ESV
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> 9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

John tells us the right place. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). In the Spirit: that is what he was doing. On the Lord's day: that is when he was doing it.

THE TABERNACLE

Walk through the tabernacle on an imaginary whiteboard. The tabernacle and the temple followed the same pattern; one was portable, the other permanent.

- **The outer court**, inside the fence: the bronze altar and the bronze laver.
- **The Holy Place**, the first room of the tent, where the priests ministered: the altar of incense, the table of showbread and the golden lampstand.
- **The Most Holy Place**, the inner room, where only the high priest could enter, once a year (Leviticus 16): the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat on top. This is where the glory of God dwelt and the presence of the Lord manifested on earth.

John heard a voice behind him, turned, and saw one like the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands, with eyes "like a flame of fire" and feet "like burnished bronze" (Revelation 1:14-15). John was in the presence of the Lord, without the help of anyone. He had gotten into God's presence on his own. Then he had to turn and go out to carry the word he received to the churches. He could not stay there, but that is where he was when a flow of revelation turned on.

The right place is the secret place. And the right place is usually **the same place**: the place where you meet with the Lord daily. (As preached: "Same bat time, same bat channel.") As you keep showing up, the presence of the Lord meets you there, and a flow of revelation can activate in your life. You get there by doing what we talked about last week: spending 27 minutes with Jesus every day.

If you want revelation to flow, everything in the last four weeks will get you there. Here is what to look for when it turns on.

2. Revelation Becomes a North Star

Revelation is large in scope and massive in size. It is seismic. It becomes a framework for your theology, and it helps you navigate the path of Scripture that leads you to what you believe.

When revelation comes, you will find yourself standing with the revelation in one hand and everything you think you know in the other. The revelation will constantly challenge everything you believe. It may not change it, but it will probably shift it, curate it and update it. Many believers have good basic doctrine but not a full understanding, because they have not yet flowed in revelation.

When revelation comes, do three things:

- **Give yourself lots of grace.** You do not have to know everything about everything right now.
- **Give yourself lots of time.** If God told you everything at once, your brain would leak out of your ears. Give the revelation time to work itself out in your life.
- **Keep your mouth shut.** Our flesh wants to show off whatever we think is deep. But it only takes one conversation, you holding something you do not yet know how to handle and someone else holding an argument they know how to use, to have the revelation ripped off you. **You can be wrong and armed. You can be wrong and competent.**

Paul did this. He says his gospel did not come from man, "but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). Then he says, "I went away into Arabia" (Galatians 1:17), and only "after three years" went up to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18). When revelation comes, do the work on it before you poll your Facebook friends. You will know whether it is working, because it will bear fruit.

Do as Mary did: she "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Personal note, as preached: "When I came into the great revelation that changed my life, the one thing I wish I would have done is isolated a little bit more."

Revelation is not only for preachers. God can unlock a flow of revelation in the areas that impact you: a real estate anointing for the realtor, a contracting anointing for the contractor, an education revelation for the educator.

3. Revelation Maximizes Level Two

Review the levels. Level one is the preached word. If you are sitting in church this morning, you are at level one. Level two is the Holy Spirit drawing Scripture up to your memory and speaking through it. Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Level two is the primary way the Holy Spirit communicates. Even among the deepest

believers, it is not mostly visions and dreams. It is the Spirit bringing Scripture back to mind throughout the day.

Level three maximizes level two, because revelation frames your theology, and **whenever you operate within a framework, a shorthand develops.**

Illustration: the pastors' shorthand. Doctors have a shorthand. Contractors have a shorthand. Walk into a room of pastors and say, "I've got a lady who wants to sing," and every one of them hears the whole story: she can't sing, her husband gives a lot to the church, her kids are ministry leaders, and now the pastor has a decision to make.

You develop a shorthand with the Holy Spirit. He brings up one or two words of a verse, and suddenly you have insight into a whole situation. **The Holy Spirit can say less and communicate more.**

Revelation also takes your Bible reading to a new level, because you now read within a framework and begin to see things you never saw before.

Illustration: the black light. Remember black lights? Turn one on with the room lights off and you see everything you could not see before. When I came under a flow of revelation, it was as if the Holy Spirit turned a black light on over the Scripture. Not odds and ends, but whole sets of chapters, three or four at a time: "That's in there. The whole time."

4. Revelation Lets You Experience the Presence and Person of God

Call it **exceeding abundant revelation.**

Most of us read Ephesians 3:20 as a promise about how God answers prayer. There is truth in that; God is a God of excellence. But it is not how the Bible usually describes answered prayer. Jesus said, "According to your faith let it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29), and "everyone who asks receives" (Matthew 7:8). There is a direct correlation between our asking and God's doing, which is why we should pray bold prayers we could actually see answered. Read in context, Ephesians 3:20 is about revelation.

> **EPHESIANS 3:14-20** ESV
>
> 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on
> earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with
> power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—
> that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints
> what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses
> knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far
> more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Walk through the logic:

- The Spirit strengthens you “with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Ephesians 3:16).
- Strength to do what? To “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth” (Ephesians 3:18).
- To comprehend what? Something so massive you could not otherwise grasp it: “the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19).
- So God is able to do “far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

It is a revelation that exceeds your ability to articulate. You know it, and you know that you know it, but it surpasses knowledge. This kind of revelation is just for you. It is not that you must obey God and keep quiet; you could not explain it to anyone if you wanted to.

John and Paul both experienced it:

- John heard the seven thunders and was told, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down” (Revelation 10:4).
- Paul knew a man in Christ who was caught up into paradise “and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4).

Most people want to take their most spiritual experience and tell everybody. When you come into this place, you cannot show it off. It is just for you, from the presence of the Lord.

“Pastor, have you been there?” Yes. My life was changed by unlocking a flow of revelation.

5. Revelation Costs

What has been shared over the last four weeks is enough to change your life. Do those things, and you are set. This is another level, and **it costs.** It does not come free or easy.

There is a cost to obtain it, and there is an operating cost. You can buy a business; can you keep it open? Everybody wants to be famous, but nobody wants to give up their privacy. Everybody wants to be rich, but everybody wants all their relationships to stay the same. That does not happen.

Knowledge is power, and ignorance is bliss. **At bare minimum, revelation is a burden.**

We have confused a burden with being bothered. You can be bothered and move on. Some people are more bothered when the server doesn’t keep their tea glass full than they are that people are dying and going to hell. But a burden will not let you go. You think about it every night and every morning. You order fries at McDonald’s and find yourself thinking about it again.

No one can hand you revelation, and you cannot manufacture it. It only comes from the secret place. It has to find you in the right place, which is usually the same place.

Illustration: the kitchen in Michigan (as preached). When I first came into my revelation, Ashleigh and I did not come into it at the same time. We are both in it now. But I was drinking from a fire hydrant every day, and one evening, standing between the kitchen and the living room, I was telling her about it. She

ended up on the couch, frustrated with me, saying, “It can’t be that good!” Revelation costs. In a staff meeting around that time, the pastor said something, turned and said to me, “You don’t like it when I say that, do you?”

It costs, but it is worth it. I have seen the goodness of God. I have beheld His glory.

6. The Levels Come in Order

Everything in the last four weeks you can implement. This one you cannot implement. You can be ready for it, ask for it and wait for it. But if you try to skip level one, you will never get it.

If you can’t receive from the preaching, you can’t get revelation. If you can’t listen to a person, how are you going to listen to the Lord? Hebrews says, “For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25). If you will not get in the Word every day and spend even a minimum of time with Jesus, you will not step into revelation.

Most people skip level three and act like they walk in level four (next week) without having done anything. God spoke “at many times and in many ways” (Hebrews 1:1), but these levels are not four options to choose from. **They are sequential:** level one, then two, then three, then four. God is a God of order.

This is how we keep nonsense out of the church: we hold people accountable to these levels. When someone brings a strange word, ask three questions:

- How many times have you read the Bible?
- How often do you pray every day?
- Can you show me a record of your giving?

Strange, unhelpful words do not come out of these levels.

7. The Revelation of Jesus Christ

It is within reach for every believer to experience this. In about six months, I plan to begin teaching from the overflow of this revelation regularly. But you don’t need me to: if you follow these steps, you will arrive at the same revelation, because there is one revelation we are all heading toward.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1).

There is a revelation of what Jesus Christ has done. For years I had no idea how powerful the finished work of Jesus Christ was. I did not know why I couldn’t receive, why I couldn’t operate in power, why I had no flow of revelation. The revelation of Jesus Christ unlocked everything: His goodness, His mercy, His grace.

Spend time in the Word and in prayer, and listen for the Holy Spirit, and you will come into the same thing. It takes about three times through the Bible for it to start making sense, and that is about when revelation can start to unlock.

Conclusion: Real Power, Not Imitation

My greatest desire for this church is that we would be people who authentically operate in the power that comes when God speaks to His people. **Breakthrough is built on the back of a revelation, a word from God.** If you have a lost child, you need a word from God, not another book about moons.

Speak in faith: this will be a church in the Mobile region where people sense the presence of the Lord as they don't elsewhere, where Pentecostal power operates, and where unusual, uncommon miracles and breakthroughs take place.

But not if we entertain imitation. Moves of God come in seasons; there is a cycle to revival and outpouring. When a move begins to recede, as it naturally does, churches grasp at whatever looks like Pentecost and begin to imitate it, first sincerely ("I ought to be responding this way"), then out of habit, until we put it on so long we do not know how to behave any other way. That is Pentecost that isn't Pentecost.

There is no power in the manifestation itself: falling down, crying, even speaking in tongues or laying on of hands, done in our own strength. The power is in the Holy Spirit, who puts His power behind those things and causes them to happen. Not all crying is weeping; some people cry at soup commercials.

Order and restraint are not restriction. They are freedom. Because the church has been taught, it will know the real from the fake. God "is not man, that he should lie" (Numbers 23:19). He will do what He said He would do, but no amount of faking it will make it happen.

Fake a shout, a word of knowledge or a prophecy, and you will watch the dove take off in the other direction. Get real, get honest, and say, "Holy Spirit, we're open," and He will move in power.

Prayer: Thank the Holy Spirit for His ministry, His power, His presence and His person. Pray for everyone who has been faithful in the Scripture and has not yet unlocked a flow of revelation: that God would remove every hindrance and release a flow of revelation that takes them aback at its magnitude, in Jesus' name.



ABOUT

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