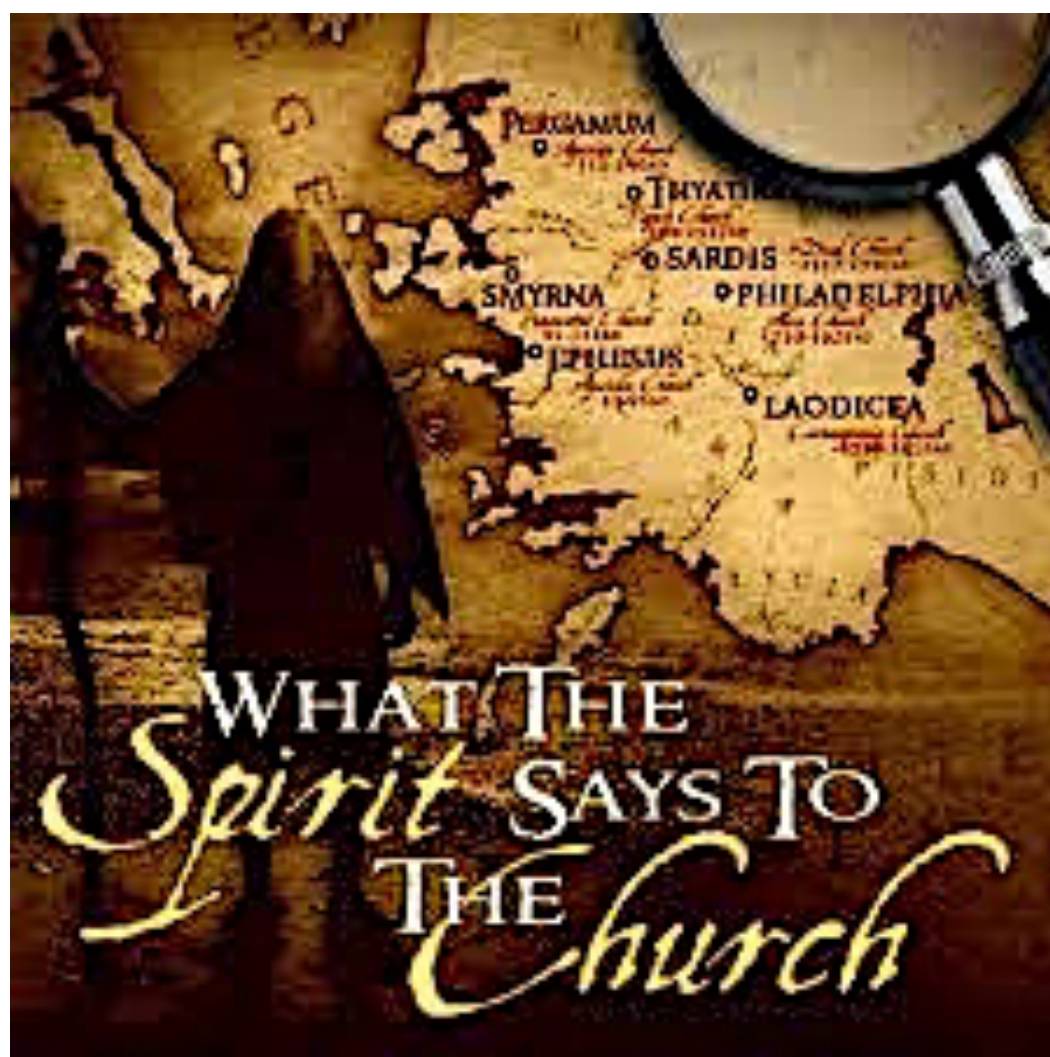






TITLE & AUTHOR

What the Spirit Says to the Church
By W D Furioso



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Preface

In this teaching, we'll be considering some scriptures that communicate to us that Jesus desires a people who are humble, submissive in spirit, and have respect and reverence for His word.¹ The Church Jesus is building is fostered by an anticipation and appreciation for hearing God speak into their hearts and lives.

Calling on the Lord

“² Thus says the Lord who made *the earth*, the Lord who formed it to establish it, the Lord is His name, ³ ‘Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’”

There is so much that can be said about “Calling on the Lord” – seeking to hear His voice and know His will.² Suffice to say here that as Jesus builds His Church, He is forming a people who gather to hear what He has to say to His Church (Ekklesia). In a manner of speaking, calling on the Lord in prayer is ultimately asking Him this question: “*Lord, what do you have to say to your people? What is ‘the word of the Lord’.*”³

¹ Isaiah 66:2

² See my articles: [“Seeking the Lord”](#) and [“Seeking God for Guidance in the Work of God”](#).

³ The phrase “the word of the Lord” is found throughout Scripture: Old Testament - Genesis 15:1; 1 Samuel 3:1; 1 Kings 6:11; Jeremiah 1:4; Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1; New Testament - Luke 22:61–62; Acts 11:16; Acts 12:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 1:23–25.

The Art of Asking Questions

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, **listening to them and asking them questions.** And all who heard him were amazed at **his understanding and his answers.**”⁴

Jesus was “asking the teachers questions” – “they were amazed at His understanding”. A good question displays good understanding of the subject matter.

“They were amazed at His answers”. This indicates they were also asking Him questions. In fact, this is a teaching technique. Known as the “Socratic Method”, it’s found in the “Dialogues” of Plato. It is a dialectical method based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas. Spiritual teachers like these scribes, and Jesus Himself, employed it as a means of leading the student to a point of understanding or revelation.

Ideally, questions are primarily initiated by the teacher; or if asked by the student, are “on track” with the subject matter.

There is a principle I learned while getting certified in a curriculum called “Accelerated Christian Education”:

⁴ Luke 2:46-47 English Standard Version

“It is the teacher’s responsibility to teach; and it is the student’s responsibility to learn.”

There is another principle from Scripture which can be applied to learning: “There is an appointed time for everything ... a time to be **silent** and a time to **speak**.”⁵ A teacher - and the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is the ultimate teacher - must be given the opportunity to present what he has to give. The virtues of humility and teachableness are displayed by giving the teacher - and the Holy Spirit - respect and appreciation for what they have to offer. Where there is not this respect, there is no sense of need or receiving, and ministry cannot take place.

The Subject Matter: “The Word of God”

There are two different Greek words in the New Testament which are both translated “word”. There is the Greek word, *logos*.⁶ It’s found in John 1:1 & 14, meaning God’s complete communication to humanity – namely, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has given the Scriptures to reveal Christ, and He employs the whole of the Bible to communicate the *logos* of God.

And there is the Greek word, *rhema*⁷: The *rhema* can be understood as being a portion of the *logos* – a particular

⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:1a & 7b

⁶ Strong’s # G3056

⁷ Strong’s # G4487

message at a particular time to a particular person or a particular people. In Hebrews 4:12, the Amplified Bible translates *rhema* as “the word that **God** speaks”. The *rhema* has to do with hearing the Spirit of God speak personally into our hearts and lives.

A statement appears 7 times in the Book of Revelation: “He who has an ear, **let him hear** what **the Spirit says** to the churches.”⁸ This speaks of an anticipation and appreciation for “the Word that God speaks”. It pictures a people who come desiring & expecting to hear the Spirit of God speak into their hearts and lives – that is, coming to a church meeting to hear from God – not just to hear a good message from a good speaker - but to hear what the Spirit of God has to say.

This is what the apostle Paul said to the Church: “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it **not as the word of men**, but for what it really is, **the word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe.”⁹

⁸ Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

⁹ I Thessalonians 2:13 New American Standard Bible

The Context: Different Types of Church Meetings

“There is **a time** ... for every **purpose** under heaven.” ¹⁰

There are different types of church meetings which have different formats and different purposes. In other words, God speaks in different ways in different meetings. There is a Scripture based perspective of church life and ministry shared by many, including Watchman Nee a book entitled, “The Normal Christian Church Life”. But more importantly, we see in the New Testament two different types of church meetings which we can be call “5-Fold Ministry Meetings” and “Body Ministry Meetings”.¹¹

5-Fold Ministry Meetings

(These can be either large or small group meetings.)

“And he gave the **apostles**, the **prophets**, the **evangelists**, the **shepherds** and **teachers**, to equip the saints for the work of **ministry, for building up the body of Christ**, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to mature** manhood, to the measure of the stature of **the fullness of Christ**, so that we may no longer

¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 3:1 New King James Version

¹¹ The conventional “Sunday Morning Worship Service” type of church meeting is actually akin to the Jewish Synagogue service. There really is no scriptural basis for this type of church meeting in the New Testament. See my articles: [“A New & Living Way”](#) and [“Concerning Gathering”](#).

be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head**, into Christ, **from whom** the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is **equipped**, **when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up** in love.”¹²

5-Fold Ministry Meetings are church meetings where the word of God is taught or preached by an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist or a pastor or a teacher.

An example would be Acts 2:42: **“They devoted themselves (“daily”, v. 46) to the apostles’ teaching** and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Another example is Acts 6:4: “But we (the apostles) will devote ourselves to prayer and to **the ministry of the word.**”

The ministry of the word is for the **“maturing and equipping of the saints”**. As it says: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.**”¹³

The maturing and equipping is for “the work of ministry”. The “work of ministry” is “for the building up of the body of Christ”. And the “building up of the body of

¹² Ephesians 4:11-16 English Standard Version

¹³ Ephesians 4:11-12

Christ” is the purpose of the other type of church meeting – namely, the “Body Ministry Meeting”.

Body Ministry Meetings

(These are best as small group meetings.)

These are meetings in which **all** the members of the Body – not just the 5-Fold ministers – share the Word of God.

An example would be 1 Corinthians 14:26: “What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, **each of you** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done **so that the church may be built up.**” ¹⁴

This meeting is primarily for “building up” – or better, “the **body builds itself up ...**”¹⁵

So, God speaks (*rhema*) through both formats, but both formats serve different functions and purposes. In other words, God speaks in different ways in different meetings.

“There is an appointed time for everything ... a time to be **silent** and a time to **speak.**” ¹⁶ There is “a time to be silent”. At 5-Fold Ministry Meetings, it is primarily a time for the body to “be silent” and “hear what the Spirit says to

¹⁴ New International Version

¹⁵ Ephesians 4:16

¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 3:1a & 7b *New American Standard Version*

the Church". It is a time for the Body to be matured and equipped.

There is a time to ask questions. The members of the Body are equipped to know how to do the "work of ministry" and to be matured in Christ so as to be able to minister the life of Christ to the Body of Christ.

There is "a time to speak". At Body Ministry Meetings, it is a time for each one to speak what they have received from the Holy Spirit to share with the Body, in order to "build it up".

"What the Spirit Says to the Church"

The Word of God - The Rhema

Anticipate It & Appreciate It

I will close this teaching with some scripture passages which encapsulate the heart of this message:

"For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart." ¹⁷

¹⁷ Hebrews 4:12 Amplified Bible

When we allow God to speak and when we hear what the Spirit has to say, it can profoundly impact our lives.

“The revelation of Your words brings light and gives understanding to the inexperienced.” ¹⁸

Jesus desires a people who anticipate and appreciate **revelation** that will **increase understanding**. The “inexperienced” (other translations read the “simple”) are those who are **humble** and **teachable**. They are the ones who are able to receive revelation and light.

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak**receive with meekness** the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” ¹⁹

“I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is **humble, submissive in spirit**, and who **trembles (i.e. shows respect and reverence) at My word**.” ²⁰

Jesus desires a people who are humble, submissive in spirit and have respect and reverence for His Word.

¹⁸ Psalm 119:130 Holman Christian Standard Bible

¹⁹ James 1:19a & 21b English Standard Version

²⁰ Isaiah 66:2b Holman Christian Standard Bible

“Mary sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what He taught.”
²¹ ... “There’s only one thing you need. Mary has made the right choice....” ²²

Here Mary is a type²³ of the Church which Jesus desires.

Again: At **Five-Fold Ministry Meetings**, it is a time to “hear” and “receive” in order to be “matured” and “equipped”. The time for sharing what the Holy Spirit has revealed to **you** is primarily at the **Body Ministry Meetings**.

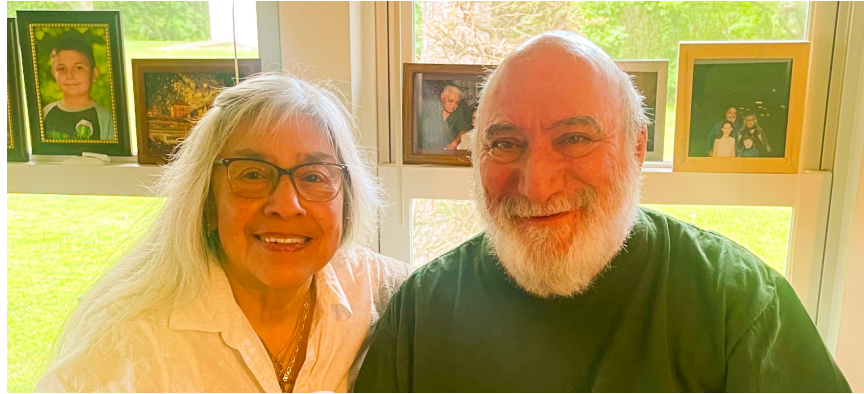
²¹ Luke 10:39 New Living Translation

²² Luke 10:42 God’s Word Translation

²³ A symbol, a picture.

Bill & Frances Furioso

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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“Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

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with a view to

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