

Are we hearing God's voice?

By [Bruce G. Epperly](#)

October 24, 2011

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Epperly's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

The passage from Micah raises some important theological questions related to God's revelation. Micah is clear that focusing solely on our well-being and declaring war on the poor will lead to a cessation of revelation and vision. Does Micah mean that God withholds God's revelation, thus plunging the spiritual leaders into darkness? Or does our failure to attend to the poor create a situation in which we limit God's ability to inspire us? In one case, God is the sole actor. God responds to our behavior with decisive action. In the other case, our behaviors create a situation in which God cannot be as fully present as God desires. God is still present in our lives but is thwarted to some extent by our turning away.

We live in a time when public figures assert that God has called them to run for political office. Books on spirituality and self-awareness, both Christian and non-Christian, are bestsellers. Religious figures have celebrity status. The prosperity gospel still attracts many people, especially among the unemployed and poor, who are told that if they follow the right spiritual steps, they will be able to buy beautiful homes and drive expensive cars. Yet the gap between the rich and poor is increasing.

Could it be that we are experiencing what Amos [describes](#) as a famine of hearing the word of God? In your own congregation, are people hearing the word of God? Are they even listening? What is preventing us from hearing God's voice? Given the

realities of duplicity asserted by Micah and Amos, how are we to judge the authenticity of the spiritual guidance we receive?

On a final note, Paul affirms that his integrity enables his words to be perceived as revealing divine wisdom. Could it be that Paul's integrity also enabled him to have a clearer sense of God's vision for the Thessalonian community? Does our clarity enable God to be more active in our lives?