

EARS TO HEAR?

Participants Guide

LISTENING TO GOD

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WELCOME TO AN EXPLORATION OF LISTENING PRAYER!

This material was created specifically for our small groups, and aligns with the “Ears to Hear” sermon series. The practicum’s included in this material take the weekend practicums to the next level. It is a more thorough experience crafted for increased group interactivity.

SERIES ELEMENTS

- The Weekend Sermons** Provide the teaching, theology and knowledge base. The sermon videos are available at www.rockpointe.ca every Monday morning.
- The Study & Practicums** Provide the basis of small group study, interaction and experience.
- The Homework** Provides personal, daily practice and is exactly the same as the homework received at weekend services.

ATTEND WEEKEND SERVICES >> ATTEND SMALL GROUP >> PRACTICE DAILY HOMEWORK

THE SCHEDULE

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| April 21 | Sermon series begins |
| April 21 | Homework for all RPC congregants begins |
| April 21 – April 27 | Begin study material at your first small group meeting |
| May 19 | Sermon series ends |
| May 19 – May 26 | End study material at your Last Small Group meeting |
| May 26 | Homework for all RPC congregants ends |

This sermon series is all about listening to God’s voice, and the small group component is all about strengthening our understanding and practicing! Regardless of whether this is all new to you, if you are filled with questions or have been listening to His voice for decades... *we desire to see everyone grow and experience His voice more. There is no better place to do this, than in community!*

AS A GROUP, AGREE TOGETHER THAT YOU WILL BE:

- » Open to what God may say
- » Honest and genuine with others in the group
- » Contributors to discussion
- » Faithful in attending each session
- » Motivators and encouragers of others in the group
- » Praying for the group
- » Obedient to whatever God may say to you
- » Bold and courageous if you feel led to share something difficult or take a risk
- » A helper to the leader/host in any way they need

A FEW IMPORTANT NOTES:

- » During the weekend services there will be short “practicums” or times of listening prayer. They may be similar or exactly the same as some of the practicum material in this study. However, we encourage you to do it again and continue practicing... even if you already did it on the weekend.
- » You will notice that we encourage different people in the group to read passages or read through teaching – this is to help get everyone involved and take some of the “heat” off the small group leader!
- » All scriptures referenced in this guide are in the New Living Translation.
- » For each week, make sure you keep track of the time (and skip questions if needed) so that you always have time to complete the practicum section with your group.

God bless as you journey together and experience God's voice!

WEEK ONE

DOES GOD STILL SPEAK TODAY?



Opening Questions

Do you believe God speaks today?

What was one thing that caught your attention, surprised you, affirmed you or confused you from the weekend teaching?



Discussion Question

Was it a surprise to hear that God does speak? How has this altered your perspective of Him or of your faith?

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. They only can comprehend it who practice and experience it; yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive. It is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because God would have us." - Brother Lawrence, "The Practice of the Presence of God"



Discussion Questions

The quote above describes an important mindset to have when listening to God and enjoying two way communication with Him. What are the dangers or pitfalls that someone can become entrapped in if we pursue this communication with faulty motives? What motives and perspective ought we to have moving forward?

How would you describe the ultimate goal of hearing God's voice? What is the fundamental reason that listening and hearing His voice is so critical?

BIG IDEA GOD STILL SPEAKS TODAY AND HIS CHILDREN CAN STILL HEAR HIS VOICE

>> Whoever is the oldest, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27

"The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize His voice and come to him. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. After He has gathered His own flock, He walks ahead of them, and they follow Him because they know His voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from Him because they don't know His voice." John 10:3-5

GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF KNOWN THROUGH GENERAL REVELATION

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God." Romans 1:20



Discussion Questions

How would you describe General Revelation?

How has God spoken to you through General Revelation?

GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF KNOWN THROUGH SPECIAL REVELATION – THE BIBLE

>> Whoever has been going to RockPointe the longest, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.” 2 Peter 1:20-21

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17



Discussion Question

Scripture is God’s special revelation to us. Describe a time when the Holy Spirit spoke to you about something specific in your life, through scripture. Was it a verse? A story? A scriptural truth?

GOD SPEAKS OUTSIDE THE BIBLE AS WELL

>> Whoever is the best looking, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

“But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.” John 14:26

“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” 1 Corinthians 12: 7-12



Discussion Questions

Scripture is God’s special revelation to us, but special revelation can come to us outside of the Bible as well. Does this statement startle you or give you pause? What is your initial reaction to this?

What does special revelation outside of the Bible look like? What are some examples of this?

HUMILITY

The state of our heart is important to God.

The attitude of **Humility & Openness** is the character we must cultivate as we come to understand God's word and look to Him.

"Jesus said, 'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.'"
Luke 10:21

In order to receive revelation from God's Spirit, you must have a humble and open heart.



Discussion Question

Why is humility so important in listening to God? How do we cultivate a humble heart?

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD REQUIRES COMMUNICATION

>> Whoever has had the most cups of coffee today, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

"So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." Romans 5:11

"Jesus said, 'Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.'" Luke 12:21



Discussion Questions

To have a great relationship with God you must have two-way communication. Consider your current relationship with God; would you characterize it as two-way communication? What would you characterize it as?

We are about to move into our practicum, but questions may still be brewing. What remains on your heart/mind as it relates to listening prayer and hearing God's voice?



Prayer

Take a few minutes to pray as a group. Pray that God would guide and lead your group through all of this. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give each of you discernment and wisdom. And pray that we would each have ears to hear the Spirit's voice in our lives. If anyone brought up concerns, issues, questions, etc., pray that God would provide insight and wisdom on these as you move through the study.

Take a quick break. Grab a coffee. And we will move into our first "practicum". This first practicum is an individual exercise, so you may want to spread out and find a comfortable spot where you can focus.

Remember: God speaks to us through a word, a picture, a verse, or a thought.

Spend a few minutes (15-20 min) individually answering any/all of the following questions:

1. Has there ever been a time when a passage of scripture you were reading seemed to be directed to you or a particular situation or circumstance you were going through? Or a verse seemed to pop out at you?

2. Have you ever heard a sermon that really seemed to be directed right at you? It almost seemed like the preacher was speaking right at you? Explain ...

3. Have you ever been reading scripture when suddenly a thought came to you that helped you understand that passage in a way you hadn't understood it before?

4. When you decided to become a follower of Jesus, what happened in you to make you think or feel that you needed to make that decision? How did you know or how could you tell that He had come into your life?

5. Have you ever felt a prompting, nudge or urgency to do, or not to do something? Explain ...

6. Are there other ways in which God has spoken to you? Dream? Vision? Audible voice? Other?

When you are finished, move into the “listening prayer exercise” below. This is an individual exercise, so stay where you are and keep going!

 **Ask God One of the Following Questions:**

- 1. Lord, what do you like about me? Why?
- 2. Lord, what passions or longings have you placed on my heart?
- 3. Lord, how are you pleased with me?

Gather back together as a group and share your experiences.



Discussion Questions

Was this anyone's first foray into listening prayer? If so, describe your thoughts and feelings as you prayed and listened. Were you nervous, fearful, joyful, calm, did it feel "right", weird, were you distracted...?

What did God say to you? Be bold and share.

What if I am not hearing anything?! At this point there may be some who feel they have not heard from God, or who are struggling to differentiate between God's voice and their own thoughts! This is ok! We will be talking about this in greater detail soon. For now, when you are in silent prayer and seem to hear nothing, just pray that God would open your heart/mind/ears to hear and enjoy resting in God's presence! Be bold, authentic and genuine about it with your group. It's ok to say "I didn't hear anything!" The last thing you want to do is make stuff up!



Prayer Take a minute to pray and ask God "What do you want us to pray for?"

As a group, take a look through the homework below (this is exactly the same homework as was given out at the weekend services!)

Depending on what night you meet, you may have completed none of it yet... or have 6 days completed.



Discussion Questions

If you have done one or more days worth of the homework... how has it been going so far? What has God spoken to you? What question has been most profound?

Have any of you continued the conversation with God in your homework... asking follow-up questions when He answers? What was that like? How did it play out for you?

Spend no less than 30 minutes per day - more if you can

Choose one of the following questions to listen in prayer about every day this next week:

1. What would You like to talk to me about today?
2. What do You see when You look at me?
3. If my heart is Your home, what does that home look like?
4. Is there anything in my life that You would like me to change? To add or subtract?
5. What area in my life am I keeping for myself? What am I holding back? Please speak to my fear of giving up that area...
6. Is there anything I need to confess or make right?
7. What were the chief joys of the day? God moments? Praise Him for those moments!
8. What did I spend time worrying about today? How can I turn that worry over to You?
9. How do You feel about my neighbors, friends and family members who don't know You personally? How would You like to change my heart for them?

Write your responses down below or in your journals.

Welcome Back! Check-in:

1. How did the homework go for everyone? What did God say to you?
2. If you struggled to get the homework done, what got in the way?
3. How is everyone doing and is there anything we can pray for?



Prayer

Spend time praying that God would speak, opposition would be removed and everyone would be increasingly opened to hear God's voice. Pray for any needs that are shared.



Opening Questions

What is the most meaningful thing you took from this weekend's message?

Has your opinion or understanding of hearing God's voice been altered, challenged or changed over the last 2 weeks? Describe any changes you have experienced so far!

BIG IDEA WE HEAR GOD PRIMARILY THROUGH HIS WORD – THE BIBLE

>> Whoever drove the oldest car to small group, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE BIBLE

Generally - to everybody.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Specifically - to individual people, with specific messages for specific situations at specific times.

"But it was to us that God revealed these things by His Spirit. For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths." 1 Corinthians 2:10-13

"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own but will tell you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever He receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever He receives from me'." John 16:12-15

Illumination is the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing special revelation to us through scripture; speaking something new to us that applies to our life.



Discussion Questions

Describe the difference between speaking generally and specifically through scripture. How does “illumination” play into this?

Share an experience of when the Holy Spirit spoke to you through scripture. Was it an encouragement, affirmation, warning, rebuke, conviction, direction...? Was it general or specific?

HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES US, REMINDS US, GUIDE US AND CONVICTS US

*Whoever was born closest to Calgary, read through the following verses (until the next discussion question!)

“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing.”
Psalm 143:10

“But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.” John 14:26

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own but will tell you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future.” John 16:13

And when He comes, He will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.
John 16:8



Discussion Question

What is the most profound thing the Holy Spirit has spoken to you? Was it about direction? guidance? conviction? teaching? In what way did He speak this to you?

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S THE HOLY SPIRIT?

This is a *huge deal*. We certainly don't want to be led astray by our own thoughts or by Satan.

The primary, essential and absolutely mandatory test is...

Does it agree with the testimony of scripture?

The Bible is the filter and what we hear will not contradict what it says.

Discussion Questions

Think of some hypothetical “words from the Spirit”, and discuss how they should be tested against scripture. How would one practically do this? How does something pass the test of scripture? How does something fail?

Does this “testing” reinforce the need for scripture knowledge and study for you? Do you feel prepared to test the words you hear, or what others say against scripture?

A second level of test and measure is...

Are other mature Christians in agreement with this?

Discussion Questions

Do you have people in your life that you can approach with these types of things? Who would be that ONE person you would trust to help you discern? What is it about them that gives you confidence?

Why is this so important to have as a second level of measuring what God has said to you? Does the weight of your decision affect your desire to seek outside council?

“The Spirit convicted me to give a meal to that homeless man”

“The Spirit reminded me to pray with my children today”

“The Spirit told me to sell everything and move to North Korea to become a missionary and spread the Good News... my wife should be fine with it”

Discussion Question

Has the counsel of other mature Christians ever affirmed something God has said to you? Have you ever had something not affirmed? Share an experience of this.

Remember: “Confidence and Faith is built through a life time of hearing His voice, and being obedient”.

As we hear from God over the years, as we practice listening and testing what we hear... it becomes more natural and automatic to us. Confidence builds and our faith grows. So take heart right now if you feel overwhelmed. It’s the beginning of a journey!



Prayer

Take a few minutes to pray. Pray that God would guide and lead your group through all of this. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give each of you discernment and wisdom. Pray that we would each have ears to hear the Spirit’s voice in our lives. Pray for those who do feel a bit lost, confused or overwhelmed.

Take a quick break. Grab a coffee. And we will move into the “practicum” portion.

Remember: God speaks to us through a word, a picture, a verse, or a thought.

Below is a beneficial tool that helps you ask God questions. As you read scripture either in the practicum or in the homework, have this handy. Read through the following together:

- » **S**in to confess? Do I need to ask forgiveness of anyone or make any restitution?
- » **P**romise to claim? Is it a universal promise? Have I met the condition(s)?
- » **A**ttitude to change? Am I willing to work on a negative attitude and begin building toward a positive one?
- » **C**ommand to obey? Am I willing to do it no matter how I feel?
- » **E**xample to follow? Is it a positive example for me to copy or a negative one to avoid?
- » **P**rayer to pray? Is there anything I need to pray back to God?
- » **E**rror to avoid? Is there any problem that I should be alert to, or beware of?
- » **T**ruth to believe? What new things can I learn about God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the other biblical teachings?
- » **S**omething to praise God for? Is there something here I can be thankful for?

Practicum Exercise #1

Spend a few minutes (15-20 min) individually reading, praying and using the SPACEPETS tool above. You may want to move somewhere a bit more comfortable where you can focus.

Read through **Matthew 7:15-27**, prayerfully asking the questions above. Be open to God’s voice as you read, and if He speaks to you on something specific to your life/situation, write it down and ask follow-up questions!

Reminder: We are not to try and “fix” anyone’s issues or struggles. We are there to listen to God’s voice together, share with each other and pray that God would transform us!

Practicum Exercise #2

In your pair/triad you are going to pray together, and listen to God’s voice FOR someone else. God speaks to us about ourselves certainly, but He also speaks to us about others!



Pair/Triad Discussion Question

Share with the other(s) in your pair/triad what your initial reaction is to listening to God’s voice FOR another person! How does this strike you?

Let’s take a risk and give it a shot.

Whoever is the youngest gets to “go” first! Enter into prayer and ask the following question to God:

“Lord, what do you want to encourage _____ (name) _____ with today?”

1. Spend a minute or two in silent prayer, listening to what God desires to encourage this person with.
2. Share with this person what God wanted to encourage them with. It could be a picture, a verse, a word, a thought...
3. Repeat this for each person in your pair/triad.



Pair/Triad Prayer

Take a minute to thank God for any encouragement that was heard.

Gather back together as an group when all pairs/triads are finished praying.



Discussion Questions

What was praying and listening FOR another like? Were you surprised that you can hear God’s voice FOR another?

As a group, take a look through the homework below (this is exactly the same homework as was given out at the weekend services!). Encourage one another to prioritize it!



Close in **prayer**

Check-in

1. How did the homework go for everyone? What did God say to you?
2. If you struggled to get the homework done, what got in the way?
3. How is everyone doing and is there anything we can pray for?



Prayer

Spend time praying that God would speak, opposition would be removed and everyone would be increasingly opened to hear God's voice. Pray for any needs that are shared.



Opening Question

What is the most meaningful thing you took from this weekends service?

Has your opinion or understanding of hearing God's voice been altered, challenged or changed over 3 weeks so far? Describe any changes you have experienced so far!



Discussion Question

What is the most unusual or unconventional means that God has used to speak to you? Do you think there was a reason behind why He chose that particular method?

BIG IDEA GOD IS NOT LIMITED. HE CAN SPEAK TO US THROUGH ANY MEANS HE WANTS

*Whoever has the longest commute to work, read through the following (up to the next discussion question)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27

Jesus said His sheep would hear His voice. The truth of the matter is that all of you have heard God speak already, but some of you didn't know you were hearing God!

Eli and Samuel provide a great example of God's voice, and how we may not even know it is Him talking to us!

"Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the LORD by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the LORD were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the LORD called out, "Samuel!" "Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So He did. Then the LORD called out again, "Samuel!" Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed." Samuel did not yet know the LORD because He had never had a message from the LORD before. So the LORD called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" Then Eli realized it was the LORD who was calling the boy. So He said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. And the LORD came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:1-10



Discussion Question

What do you draw from this story as it relates to the journey of hearing God's voice?

Have you ever been a Samuel; where someone else pointed out God's voice in your life? What was that experience like? Why do you think you didn't hear?

Have you ever been an Eli; where you helped another discern God's voice? What was that experience like?

Whoever has the longest drive to work, read through the following verse.

"For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. He makes them turn from doing wrong; He keeps them from pride." Job 33:14-17



Discussion Question

What do you think keeps people from recognizing God's voice?

What would you say is a primary reason in your life that hampers your ability to hear God's voice?

Scripture is the Primary Way We Hear God. But Here Are a Few Other Ways God Speaks to Us:

*Whoever has the most kids, read through the following, stopping for discussion (up to the next section "Other Ways God Speaks")

A Still Small Voice

This is the whisper, the leading or the impression that the Holy Spirit places on your heart and mind.

"So my God gave me the idea to call together all the nobles and leaders of the city, along with the ordinary citizens, for registration." Nehemiah 7:5a

"And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper." 1 Kings 19:12

Through Others

God speaks to us through other people. The words of trusted, respected mature Christians is a powerful vehicle for God's revelation.

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." Colossians 3:16

We should anticipate that God will use people who know us best and who are closest to us to bring messages to us.

Preaching

The Holy Spirit speaks through the preaching and proclamation of scripture and scriptural truths.

"Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received His message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

"And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth." Acts 17:11

Discipline

God corrects, calls and realigns His people through the use of circumstance or events.

"And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as His children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when He corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child." Hebrews 12:5-6

 **Discussion Question** Has God ever spoken to you in any of these ways?

Other Ways God Speaks

*Whoever has been to IKEA most recently, read through the following (up to the next discussion question)

*"In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike ...'"*Acts 2:17-18

Prophets/Prophecy

- » Agabus (Acts 11:28)

Dreams

- » Joseph (Genesis 37:1-11)

Visions

- » Peter (Acts 10:11-15)

Angels

- » Philip & Cornelious (Acts 10:1-8)

Audible Voice

- » Saul (Acts 9:4)

Other Phenomena

- » Burning Bush (Moses)
- » Donkey (Balaam)
- » Writing on the wall (Daniel)
- » The Fleece (Gideon)

Take a quick break. Grab a coffee. And we will move into the “practicum”. This practicum begins with an individual exercise, so you may want to spread out and find a comfortable spot where you can focus.

Remember: God speaks to us through a word, a picture, a verse, or a thought.

Practicum Exercise #1

Spend a few minutes (15-20 min) individually working through the following:

Enter into prayer and ask God this question:

» *“What question would you like me to ask you?”*

Wait, rest, and listen. Continue the conversation if He speaks.

When you’re ready, choose one or two of the following questions and listen in prayer. Write down God’s answer(s) to the question. Then, write out your prayer responses to Him. Begin to have conversation with Him!

- » Lord, what is the state of my faith in you?
- » Lord, what do you call my spouse and I to do together in our faith?
- » Lord, where is my marriage not God-honoring?
- » Lord, where am I strong as a husband/wife? Where am I weak?
- » Lord, what encouragement do you have for me?
- » Lord, is there someone in my group you want to encourage?
- » Lord, in what way do you call me to engage with my children?
- » Lord, what relationships do I have that are not honoring you? What do you call me to do in this relationship?
- » Lord, talk to me about my future. What vision do you have for my life?
- » Lord, are there things I need to confess to you and to my triad/pair?
- » Lord, how can I be an ambassador for you at my job?
- » Lord, is there anything else you want to talk to me about?
- » Lord, is there someone you want me to do something for? What do you want me to do?
- » Lord, is there someone you want me to pray for? What should I pray for?
- » Lord, what would you like me to stop doing in my life? What steps should I take for doing this?
- » Lord, what would you like me to begin doing in my life? What steps should I take for doing this?
- » Lord, is there anyone I need to forgive?

Practicum Exercise #2

Lets listen FOR another in our pair/triad

Whoever is the oldest get's to go first! Enter into prayer and ask the following question to God:

“Lord, how can _____ (name) _____ take steps towards abiding in you?”

Spend 3 to 5 minutes in silent prayer, listening to what God says.

Share with this person what God is saying. It could be a feeling, a picture, a verse, a word, a thought...

Repeat this for each in your pair/triad.



Pair/Triad Prayer Take a minute to pray. Thank God for any encouragement or direction that was heard.

Gather back together as an entire group when all pairs/triads are finished praying.



Discussion Questions This was the second time we have listened to God's voice FOR another. What was it like this time? Share your experience.

Is there anyone who would like to share what God told them THROUGH another?

Reminder: This may be all brand new to some... or maybe all of you! Don't be too stressed out if you are still trying to "get" it, or if you aren't hearing anything, or if you are having trouble differentiating your voice from God's. This series and this five week study is all about introducing the practice, and beginning to practice it! Let's keep walking through this series together, and practicing together!

As a group, take a look through the homework below (this is exactly the same homework as was given out at the weekend services!). Encourage one another to prioritize it!



Close in **prayer**

WEEK FOUR REASONS WE MAY NOT HEAR FROM GOD

Check-in:

1. How did the homework go for everyone? What did God say to you?
2. If you struggled to get the homework done, what got in the way?
3. How is everyone doing and is there anything we can pray for?



Prayer

Spend time praying that God would speak, opposition would be removed and everyone would be increasingly opened to hear God's voice. Pray for any needs that are shared.



Opening Questions

What is the most meaningful thing you took from this weekend's service?

Has your opinion or understanding of hearing God's voice been altered, challenged or changed over the last 4 weeks? Or has it been affirmed? Describe any changes you have experienced so far!



Discussion Question

Was it surprising that there could be barriers in the way of hearing God?

BIG IDEA WE MAY NOT HEAR FROM GOD BECAUSE BARRIERS ARE PRESENT IN OUR LIFE

Discussion Questions What barriers did you relate to personally?

There are none who are perfect. There are none who are "barrier-less". God chooses to speak to anyone, at anytime in any way that He wants, regardless of barriers. So what is the significance of barriers in our lives and why should we be concerned about them if God can speak in spite of them?


>> Whoever has most grey hair (also known as "wisdom"), read and lead through the rest of this discussion.

REASONS WHY WE MAY NOT HEAR FROM GOD

Unconfessed Sin

"If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18

If we lead a life filled with, overcome with, delighting in or in bondage to – sin – we live a fractured life with God and in opposition to His will and desire for us.




Discussion Questions

We are called to live a confessional lifestyle with God and others. How is unconfessed sin a barrier, and why is it that upon confession we are more apt to hear Him?

Is anyone willing to share a story about something you kept unconfessed that tarnished your faith life? What changed on the other side of confession? What would your encouragement be to those who hold onto unconfessed sin because of guilt/shame/fear/etc.?

Pain that others have caused me (another's sinfulness)




Discussion Questions

What are some hypothetical examples of this? And how exactly would it negatively impact our relationship with God and our ability to hear His voice?

This pain could be from something that seems small and insignificant (like getting teased in school) to something very personal and extreme (like abuse or assault). Regardless, they can both impact us immensely in a variety of ways – one of which is our relationship with God. Has anyone experienced Christ's freedom and deliverance from another's sinfulness?

Pain from a tragedy (general fallenness of the world)




Discussion Question

What would an example of this be? How does one remove this barrier? How do you overcome pain from a tragic event and disallow it from becoming or remaining a barrier in your life?

OTHER BARRIERS

Fear

"Fearing people is a dangerous trap; but trusting the Lord means safety." Proverbs 29:25



Discussion Question

Some really don't want to hear from God because they are afraid of what He might say, or ask. Some fear man rather than God. Some fear confusing their thoughts with God's thoughts. We can be overcome by many fears in our lives. What have you found to be fears that you carry that could act as barriers?

What fears have you overcome? How did this increase your faith or boost your relationship with God?

Spiritual Opposition

"The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away." Mark 4:14-15

Take a quick break. Grab a coffee. And we will move into the “practicum”. This practicum begins with an individual exercise, so you may want to spread out and find a comfortable spot where you can focus.

Remember: God speaks to us through a word, a picture, a verse, or a thought.

Spend a few minutes (15-20 min) individually answering any/all of the following questions:

1. Ask yourself if you believe God wants to speak to you. Do you!? Confess unbelief, if necessary.

2. In prayer, ask “Lord, I am open to Your voice, what do You have to say?”

3. Ask God to show you any barriers that are preventing you from hearing.

Finished? Move on to this individual listening prayer exercise:


Ultimately, we need the Holy Spirit to point out the barriers in our life, whatever they may be. This can be a profoundly personal and difficult thing to do. He may point to memories of your past, or illuminate current issues or sin that you didn’t even think about. Regardless, we must allow the Spirit to speak.

Individually, take some time (20 minutes) to rest in scripture and to listen to the Holy Spirit. Read over the following questions, and then read Psalm 139 slowly and prayerfully. You may feel led to re-read, stop halfway and pray... just do what you feel the Spirit leads you to do. Ask the following:

- » Lord, convict me of my unconfessed sin. What have I withheld from bringing to you?
- » Lord, show me the barriers in my life that come from pain that others' sin has caused me. Take me to the moment or the memory. Do I need to forgive someone? Do I need to forgive myself?

If God showed you or reminded you of a memory or moment in your life that caused you pain and acts as a barrier... Ask Him "where was Jesus in this particular moment"?

- » Lord, where do I have barriers in my life that come from tragedy? What are they?
- » Lord, what fears have me in bondage? What holds me back? Show me where I am fearful.
- » Lord, where does Satan have a grip on me? How have I been subject to spiritual opposition? What do I need to do to be freed from this?
- » Lord, what else is in my life that stands in the way of hearing your voice?

 **Pray** that God would lead and guide you in your listening prayer times and that you would grow to trust Him and learn to recognize His voice. Ask Him to help you trust the words, thoughts and pictures that He gives you.

When you are all done this, gather together in your Pairs/Triads.



Discussion Question

These listening prayer questions may have become pretty personal, and possibly very difficult for you. This is a moment to be as bold and courageous as possible. Share what God said to you or what He showed you.



Pair/Triad Prayer

Take a minute to pray. Pray for anything that God said to each of you (barriers, difficult memories, etc.)

Healing, Deliverance & Freedom: This exercise may have uncovered areas in your life that you need to surrender, and that God desires to heal. If this is the case, take a look at Appendix C either individually at a later time or with your triad/pair if you have time. Read it through, and it will guide you on some next steps.

Gather as a group, and take a look through the homework below (this is exactly the same homework as was given out at the weekend services!)

Encourage one another to prioritize it!



Close in **prayer**.

Check-in:

1. How did the homework go for everyone? What did God say to you?
2. If you struggled to get the homework done, what got in the way?
3. How is everyone doing and is there anything we can pray for?



Prayer

Spend time praying that God would speak, opposition would be removed and everyone would be increasingly opened to hear God's voice. Pray for any needs that are shared.



Opening Questions

What is the most meaningful thing you took from this weekends service?

Has your opinion or understanding of hearing God's voice been altered, challenged or changed over the last 5 weeks? Describe any changes you have experienced so far!



Discussion Question

Describe a time when God gave you direction, whether it was for a small decision or a big decision. How did He give it to you? What was the result?

BIG IDEA GOD DESIRES TO GUIDE US, AND WE CAN DISCOVER HIS DIRECTION FOR LIVES

>> Whoever has not had to read yet, read through the following (up to when the next person is chosen to read)

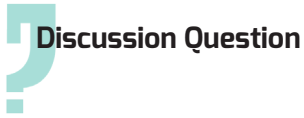
"Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take." Proverbs 3:5-6

God Gives Specific Direction To His People

"The Lord says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.'"
Psalm 32:8

Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. Acts 16:6-10

"Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, 'This is the way you should go,' whether to the right or to the left." Isaiah 30:21



Discussion Question

What are other biblical examples of God giving guidance? When did God give specific instruction to someone? How did He speak these instructions? Was there anything that the recipient did to receive this instruction and guidance?

So what do we do?

ASK, LISTEN, OBEY

Ask – We come before God, in a posture of surrender, submission and humility – and simply ask for guidance.

Listen – We wait patiently for His voice and guidance – ensuring our heart is right and our ears are open. He may speak immediately, He may speak later.

Obey – We are obedient when He speaks – faithfully following through on the direction He has given.

Discussion Question

We ask, we listen... and maybe we are still waiting on God to make His will known to us. What are you seeking God's guidance for in your life right now?

Would you say you are willing to commit to obedience, regardless of the guidance or direction God gives? Do you think God withholds direction because of this?

God Gives us Freedom to Choose Most Times

>> Whoever was born furthest from Calgary, read through the following (up to the next discussion question)

There are moments when God specially directs us, and moments when we have been given runway to choose.

"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves" Galatians 5:16

"Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." Galatians 5:25

So what do we do?

ASK, LISTEN, CHOOSE

Ask – We come before God, in a posture of surrender, submission and humility – and simply ask for guidance.

Listen – We wait patiently for His voice and guidance – ensuring our heart is right and our ears are open.

Choose – We walk forward and prayerfully and wisely choose a path – never ceasing to seek His guidance and always sensitive to His voice changing your trajectory.

Discussion Questions

So, on one hand we may ask and listen and God may speak something to us very specific – “do this, go here, don’t go there...” On the other hand we may ask and listen and God may not have a specific will for us, but there may be many avenues we can take that are within His will for us. Talk about how we navigate this truth? What does it look like practically?

Whether God has something specific for us or not... what perspective must we have as we ask and listen? What mindset must we have?

Confidence

>> Whoever is sitting to the immediate left of the youngest person, read through the following (up to the next discussion question)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. Romans 8:28

But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

- » Our confidence comes when we have a continual, daily posture of submission.
- » Our confidence comes when we consistently confess our sin and ensure we are right before God.
- » Our confidence comes when we are consistently in God’s word.

Discussion Questions

Why would God give us freedom to choose?

Do you think we are given freedom to choose in BIG decisions?

Describe a time when God gave you freedom to choose. Why do you think He gave you this freedom? What was the result?

Take a quick break. Grab a coffee. And we will move into the “practicum”. This practicum begins with an individual exercise, so you may want to spread out and find a comfortable spot where you can focus.

Remember: God speaks to us through a word, a picture, a verse, or a thought.

Spend a few minutes (15-20 min) individually answering any/all of the following questions:


1. Has God ever given you some type of direction before? Explain.

2. Have you ever received direction in response to a specific question you asked God for? Explain.

3. Ask God the following questions in prayer, and listen

- a. Lord, where do I need your guidance and leading in my life?
- b. Lord, what is my next step in regards to _____ ?
- c. Lord, do you have any specific direction for me that I have not been hearing or not been following through on?

Break into your Pairs/Triads


 **Discussion Questions** What did God speak to you through these questions?


Share with each other where you long to hear God's direction and leading in your life. What difficult decisions do you face? Is it with your job, your family, where to live, medical issues, relationships... etc?

Describe in the form of a question, exactly how you would like God to lead you or guide you.

 Let's **pray** and listen for each other:

Whoever is seeking guidance, pray a prayer to God out loud, asking for His voice and guidance. Then be silent and listen for a few minutes.


 **Discussion Question** What did God say to you? Share with each other. Did you see a picture, hear a word, had a thought or did God bring scripture to mind? Did you sense peace about something? Did you sense anxiousness or unsurety about something?

 **Pair/Triad PRAYER** Pray a prayer of thankfulness for who God is, and of submission to His will. Ask Him to speak in the days and weeks to come on any issues of direction in your lives. Ask God to help give each of you patience in waiting for God to speak, and also courage to move forward and make decisions where God has give freedom.

Reminder: God may give us specific direction, or He may give us freedom to choose. God also may withhold specific direction for purposes we cannot see or understand. What is important is our continual practice of prayer, asking and listening. This connection with God will help us receive direction when God wills we receive it! When we tune our hearts and ears to hear God's voice, we can wait for direction with patience and peace – knowing that we are not missing something!

Finishing Up

Gather back together as a group

 **Discussion Question** What has been the most profound experience or learning from this series for you? What has been the most challenging, frustrating or confusing thing? Describe this and as a group, discuss how this can be resolved. Spend some time praying for anything specific.

Do you feel more comfortable with listening prayer now that you have practiced? How will you engage with this practice moving forward? What will you do moving forward?

As a group, take a look through the homework below (this is exactly the same homework as was given out at the weekend services!)

Encourage one another to prioritize it!



Close in **prayer**

*This is a great time to have everyone fill out the evaluation forms, hand your completed form to your small group leader, and they will make sure it gets submitted to the church.

A FINAL WORD

You've embarked on the most important journey you'll ever take - a supernatural journey with God. Many have embarked on such a journey before you. Some of their stories are recorded in the Bible. Others, whose stories have been every bit as exciting and remarkable, are recorded in autobiographies, biographies or journals. As God speaks to you and directs your life, remember to always be thankful. One of the best ways you can express your gratitude to Him is by recording what He has, and continues to do for you. It will help you remember how good He has been to you and it will bring much glory to Him, as others hear or read about your journey with Him, and are drawn to Him too. May God richly bless you as you begin your walk.

"Nothing is more central to the practical life of the Christian than confidence in God's individual dealings with each person" - Dallas Willard

APPENDIX A

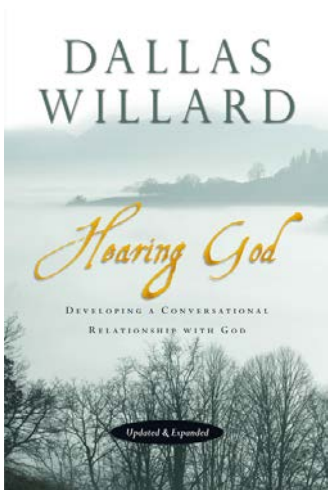
SUGGESTED PRAYER CATEGORIES

Here are a few ideas of topics for listening prayer.

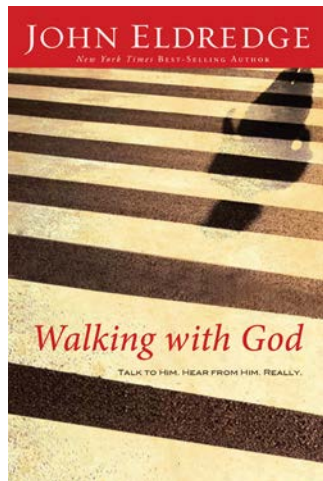
1. Yourself
2. Your Spouse
3. Your Children
4. Ministries you are involved with
5. Work
6. Extended Family
7. For Healing (yourself or others)
8. Friends
9. People in your Small Group
10. RockPointe leaders, elders, staff
11. RockPointe's Direction
12. Westhill's Site- Bearspaw Site – Bowridge Site – MetroMercy Site
13. Marketplace and government (civil, provincial, federal)
14. Social Issues
15. Missions & missionaries
16. Global crisis (floods, drought, poverty, etc)
17. Evangelism
18. Finances
19. Spiritual life
20. Direction

APPENDIX B

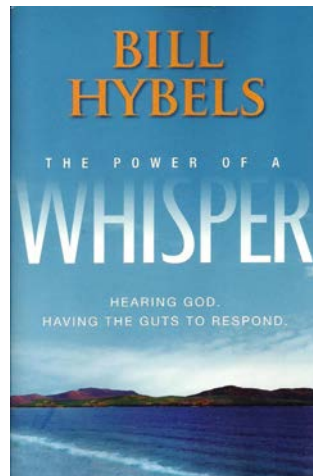
RECOMMENDED READING



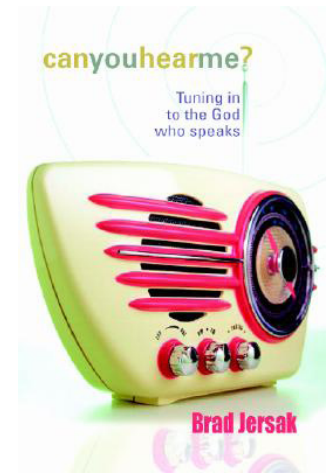
Hearing God by Dallas Willard



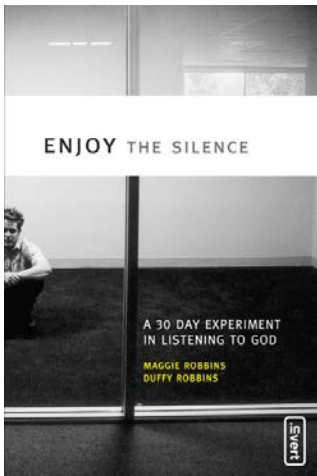
Walking With God by John Eldridge



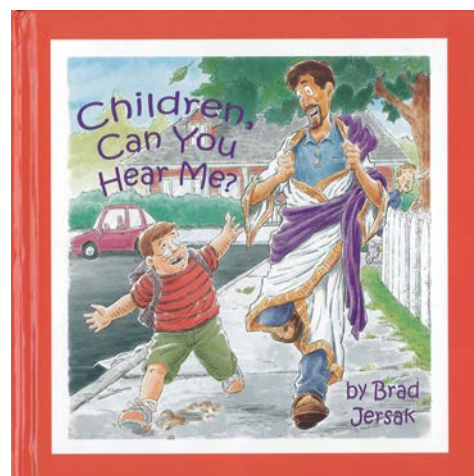
Power of a Whisper by Bill Hybels



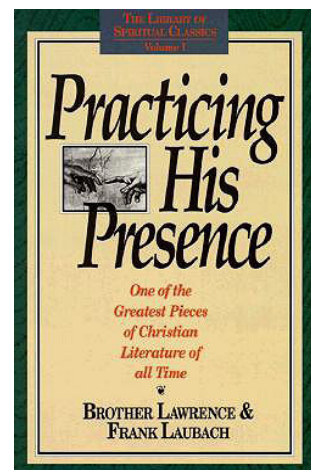
Can You Hear Me? by Brad Jersak



Teens
Enjoy the Silence by Duffy & Maggie Robbins



Kids
Children, Can you hear me? By Brad Jersak



Practicing His Presence
by Brother Lawrence & Frank Laubach

APPENDIX C

HEALING, FREEDOM & DELIVERANCE

"This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that His word has no place in our hearts." 1 John 1:5-10

God desires that we be healed, transformed and renewed. So, it should not surprise us that the Spirit may speak to us about sin, past issues, strongholds, areas of unforgiveness, etc. These may be painful to remember or surprising to discover, but if the Spirit spoke to you about them, they need to be dealt with. The following are ways that you can process and "deal" with areas of your life where you need freedom, healing and deliverance.

- Caveat #1 The following is a suggested pathway towards healing. However, we do not want to oversimplify a route towards healing nor suggest it's as easy as following these steps. These are merely suggestions that may help you to overcome and achieve freedom.
- Caveat #2 The Spirit may have spoken to you about something incredibly painful. If this is true of you, and you feel the immense weight and magnitude of it right now... it may be wise to seek the counsel of another. This could be a trusted friend who is a mature Christian, your Site Pastor or a Christian counselor. If you need help, contact RockPointe Church to be connected with the right person.

Exercise (individual or with another)

Step 1: Opening Prayer

Spend time in prayer, committing this time and yourself to Jesus. Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you and speak to you. Pray for protection and for guidance in Jesus name. As you pray, do so knowing and proclaiming the authority that has been given to you in Jesus.

Step 2: Confession

Take a few minutes to confess sin. Repent of ungodly actions, attitudes or character. Set your heart right with God.

“Heavenly Father, I confess _____ as my sin. I repent of it and ask you to forgive me.”

Step 3: Listening Prayer

- » Ask Jesus to show you through a word, thought or picture an issue or struggle that you need to deal with.
- » Ask Him to show you where this started in your life.
- » Ask Him to show you what He wants you to do with what He has shown you.
- » Ask Him to show you how this issue or struggle made you feel. Ask Him to show you a specific emotion or reaction.
- » Ask Him to show you any lies that you believed about this issue/struggle. Confess that you believed this lie and ask for His forgiveness.
- » Ask Him to show you the truth about this issue/struggle.
- » Ask Him to show you where He was and what He was doing at that time and how He feels about you.

Step 4: Thanksgiving

Spend some time thanking God for what He has revealed to you today; and for His goodness and mercy.

Step 5: Obedience

This is usually the hardest step. Actually DOING what God has called you to do. What did the Holy Spirit ask you to do? Did He ask you to...

- » Extend forgiveness to someone?
- » Forgive yourself for something?
- » Repair or “make right” something with Him?
- » Pray for something/someone?
- » Talk to someone about your story/situation?
- » Finally cast something away for good... to finally “let it go”?
- » To make a hard or difficult decision?
- » To take a stand?

Step 6: Yield to the Holy Spirit

Now that the Holy Spirit has identified an area that needs to be dealt with, and you have taken steps to deal with it, you must yield this area of your life over to Him as you move forward. In prayer, pray along these lines:

“Holy Spirit, you have cleaned me, freed me, delivered me and healed me. You have given me the strength and courage to be obedient and follow through on what you asked me to do. Now I ask that you fill any area of me that was previously filled with anger, lust, hatred, bitterness, sin, hurt, pain, _____ . Holy Spirit, take full residence in me, and in this particular area, so that the enemy may never sneak back in and regain control or leverage. I move forward, trusting that you have full control in my life and thankful for transforming me! Thank you Lord I pray, in the name of Jesus, Amen.”

This is a great exercise to do often. This Holy Spirit may show you areas of spiritual opposition and strongholds, barriers to freedom or areas of pain that need healing.

Never forget that healing, freedom and deliverance are found in Jesus. He is our healer, He has brought us freedom and He has power and victory over Satan and sin.

APPENDIX D

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Hearing God's voice is the last thing Satan wants you to experience. Because in hearing His voice:

- » You are called to righteousness
- » You gain a heightened and emboldened faith
- » You receive Spirit led direction
- » You are transformed
- » You live in deeper connection with God

This is the type of life that God calls us to experience, that we find truest and most lasting fulfillment in, but it is also the life that Satan desperately tries to attack and stall.

So, the warning is that in listening to God's voice and pursuing Him, you may encounter spiritual attack. It may come in different forms:

- » Temptation to old sins
- » Temptation to new sin
- » Distraction and heightened apathy
- » Negative emotion/feelings
- » Increased doubt or frustration
- » Even physical manifestations

Conversely, spiritual attack in someone's life actually can act as positive affirmation that indeed you are following God, pursuing God and hearing from God. For why else would Satan attack, if not to thwart true growth and connection to God!?

What can we do?

- » Pray – Jesus has conquered sin, death and the evil one. We already have victory in His name. In prayer, claim this victory, thank Him for it and ask for opposition to be removed. Use the “Morning Prayer” to guide you in prayer.
- » Read and pray through Ephesians 6:10-18 – The “Armor of God” passage
- » Talk about it with your group or someone you trust. Be open, authentic and ask for their prayer. Ask them to keep you accountable or to check in every so often.

Prayer

Good morning Lord. Thank you for assuring me of victory today. By faith I choose to follow Your battle plan and to prepare myself according to Your instructions.

To prepare myself for the battle ahead, by faith I put on the belt of truth. Renew my mind to what is true. Fill me with truth. Expose in my heart the lies that I am tempted to believe. The truth is that You are a sovereign God who loves me and cares for me. The truth about me is that I am your child - bought and paid for. Nothing can separate me from Your love.

By faith I put on the breastplate of righteousness. Today I am committed to doing what is right. I pray that I would be known as one who does what is right regardless of what it costs me. Allow the righteousness of Christ to shine through me today.

By faith I put on the sandals of the gospel. I am available to You. Use me in the lives of others. I pray that in my conduct and speech I would accurately represent You. Make me a calming presence everywhere I go.

I now take up the shield of faith. My faith is in You and You alone. Apart from You I can do nothing. In You, I can do all things. Everything that comes against me must come through You, for I am in You. As you walked without sin on the earth, live without sin through me today. By faith I claim victory over _____ (then I list some of the temptations I know I will face that day). When I face those temptations, remind me that the victory has already been won.

By faith I put on the helmet of salvation. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for forgiving me. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside me. Holy Spirit, I surrender my will to You today. I surrender my thoughts to You. I choose to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

And last, I take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

(Then claim several specific promises from Scripture.)

So Lord, I go now rejoicing that you have chosen me to represent you to this lost world. May others see Jesus in me. May Satan and His hosts shudder as Your power is manifest through me.

In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN.



