



HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD

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DAVID SYKES

These sessions are
for Christians
who want to
follow God and
have a close
relationship with
Him.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This manual is the culmination of nearly 40 years experience in Ministry.

I could not write these sessions without shedding a tear from time to time. I have so many great memories of people hearing from God and I love the way people get excited about the things of God as they draw closer to him.

There is often a strong presence of God as people open up their hearts to hear Him speak. God can use us to speak into each other's lives and he speaks to us about our own lives too. What we can achieve when we know how to hear the voice of the Father is limitless.

Anyone who cares deeply for the spiritual health of the people in their care will find these sessions to be of great value. You will see people's passion for God increase incredibly.

Let your faith rise!

David Sykes

INTRODUCTION

N

Welcome to the 'Hearing the Voice of God' sessions.

The purpose of these sessions is to introduce people to the wonderful world of relationship with God through hearing his voice and sensing his presence.

SESSION TIMES

These sessions are designed to run for around 40 - 45 minutes each.

It is best to break people into groups of about eight ready for the practical exercises.

An option can be to run these sessions as a small group for interested people in a suitable place such as someone's home.

BIBLES

The Scriptures used in these sessions are from the New International Version (NIV). If the people have other versions it is good to have them read out as well sometimes.

Everyone needs to bring their Bibles because they will be using them a lot. However, you may decide to read some verses to them rather than have them look them all up.

There are times when the people will discuss specific verses in groups. If there are not enough verses to share around each group give the same verse to more than one group.

DISPLAYING ANSWERS

When 'display their answers' or similar is required use whatever method you have chosen such as whiteboard or data projector via computer. If there are just a few people in a house setting or similar you may decide not to display answers.

BE GENTLE

Remember to be very gentle with the people as these may be the first steps they are taking. There may be people who will be very reluctant to keep going if they feel any pressure.

OTHER

Be careful not to add too much extra material into these sessions as they are already quite intense.

If there is time, a few songs would be a good way to start the sessions; songs that focus on worshipping God.

Words in blue are leader's instructions.

Some Scriptures are repeated, particularly when they apply to multiple subjects.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

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ITEMS REQUIRED:

- An exercise book for each small group for activities
- A whiteboard or other method to display answers

PREPARATION for all sessions

Decide how you want to set the room up. A circle of chairs for each group of eight people is recommended.

Prepare by carefully studying the session.

Pray for the session and the people who will be coming.

Make sure you get the letter ready for session three.

John 10:27
My sheep listen
to my voice.

*I know them,
and they follow
me.*

SESSION ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE VOICE OF GOD

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

How does God speak to us?

Staying close to God

The gentle voice of God

Why does God speak to us and through us?

What sort of people hear God's voice?

Why doesn't God show himself to us?

God desires to be a friend to us

DOING

Listening for a word from God

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome the people to the Hearing the Voice of God series.

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

Ask the people to think of ways God speaks to us.
Interact with their responses.

Four of the most common ways are through:

- the Holy Spirit
- the Bible
- people
- circumstances

God often uses the Holy Spirit to speak to us. The Holy Spirit is here to help us get closer to God and to teach us all sorts of wonderful things.

John 16:13 When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

STAYING CLOSE TO GOD

God does not often speak loudly to us so we need to stay close to him with our hearts and minds so we can hear what he is saying.

THE GENTLE VOICE OF GOD

Explain the setting for the following scripture and make sure everyone understands how dramatic the scene was.

*1 Kings 19:11-13 The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a **gentle whisper**. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here Elijah?'*

Explain how God was showing Elijah that he does not usually speak in a booming voice. He usually speaks so quietly that we would miss his voice if we weren't listening.

Hearing God's voice is rarely something we do with our ears. It is more a sensing inside us. It would be so easy if God just spoke out loud to us every time.

Knowing when God is speaking to us mostly comes from developing a close relationship with him.

John 10:27

***My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.***

WHY DOES GOD SPEAK TO US AND THROUGH US?

Ask the people why they think God wants to talk to us. Interact with their answers.

Find some of the reasons that God speaks to us from the following scriptures by reading them together and discussing the answers.

Ephesians 4:11&12 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to **prepare God's people for works of service**, so that **the body of Christ may be built up**.

1 Corinthians 14:1, 3&4 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. Everyone who prophesies speaks to men **for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort**. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies **edifies the church**.

John 16:13 When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will **guide you into all truth**.

WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

Ask the people: what sort of people hear God's voice? Interact with their answers.

God speaks mostly to Christians but sometimes he speaks to people who are not Christians.

Why do you think he would talk to people who do not believe in him?

He usually talks to people who are not Christians so they will become a Christian.

WHY DOESN'T GOD SHOW HIMSELF TO US?

If everyone could see God it would be easy to believe in him. He wants us to choose to believe in him even though we cannot see him. This is believing by faith. When someone chooses to believe in God, God starts to show them he is real as their relationship with him grows stronger.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

LISTENING FOR A WORD FROM GOD

Remind the group that most of the time we hear God 'inside ourselves'. Tell them that they are going to do an exercise to help them get started on hearing the voice of God.

Tell everyone that they are about to ask God to give them just one word.

Ask them to close their eyes.

Get them to pray this prayer out loud after you.

Dear Heavenly Father. I want to learn to hear your voice so I can love you and serve you more. Please speak a word to me now. Thank you God.

As they are 'listening' remind them that it will not be a word they hear in their ears. It will be a word that comes into their mind.

Give them about a minute to hear something. Remember not to pressure them as they are only just starting out. When they are ready, ask who sensed a word from God. Listen to what they say. Encourage them whenever you can.

This helps the people who did not sense anything realise it is okay if it takes a while before they hear God speaking to them.

Repeat the exercise.

Finish by encouraging the people that have not heard anything yet. Tell them that many people

take a few sessions before they sense God speaking to them.

GOD DESIRES TO BE A FRIEND TO US

We want Jesus to heal us, give us things, help us, rescue us and much more. But what does Jesus want from us?

You can work really hard doing things for God but he wants our love more than anything else.

I do not call you servants anymore. Servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends. I have told you everything I have learned from my Father (John 15:15).

It is important to realise that the greatest way we can show we love God is by obeying him. We all do things we should not do, but a true Christian wants to obey God more and more.

John 14:21 'Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him'.

John 15:14 'You are my friends if you do what I command'.

Ask everyone to pray, committing themselves to hearing his voice so they can better serve him.

SOMETHING TO DO

Encourage the people to ask God to speak to them as they have their quiet times at home through the week.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION TWO

WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

Relationship

Impressions

Anyone who loves God will hear his voice

Visions

Ways the Holy Spirit uses us

Interruptions

DOING

Visions

Visions and words

Talking and listening

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

REVISION

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in the first session.

Ask if there are any people who sensed God speaking to them while they were having a quiet time with God or at any other time since you last met together.

Get them to share what they felt God said to them.

Ask the people: how close does God want to be to us?

He wants to be our friend and to have a close relationship with us.

RELATIONSHIP

Ask the people how often they think God wants to speak to them.

God has something to say to us most of the time and sometimes he gives us a message for someone else.

God loves to share things with us. It is part of the relationship he wants to build between us and him because he loves us so much.

IMPRESSIONS

Last week we learnt that God often speaks to us by speaking quietly inside us. He bypasses our ears and goes straight to our mind. These are called Impressions. They are thoughts that come to us from the Holy Spirit.

Have the people look up the following Scriptures and discuss each one as a whole group.

Nehemiah 7:5,

My God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families.

Acts 14:9,

Paul looked directly at him, (the man who couldn't walk), saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

Mark 2:8

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts.

ANYONE WHO LOVES GOD WILL HEAR HIS VOICE

Ask a person to look up and read Joel 2:28&29

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Ask them who has what role according to the verses.

Explain that the Bible is telling us that all different people and ages get to experience all those things.

VISIONS

Visions are like a picture or a short movie in your mind.

Here is an example from a church in Newcastle, Australia:

'When some people were praying in a meeting a girl suddenly knelt and started to weep. At the same time the Lord gave another person a vision of the kneeling girl having chains broken from her life.'

Discuss how this vision could help the girl.

VISION EXERCISE

Tell the people that they are going to ask God to show them a picture of something.

Get them to close their eyes and pray, asking God to show them something.

When they are ready, ask for volunteers to share what they saw. Ask each volunteer why they think God gave them their picture.

Quite often we have to ask God what the vision means. You or other people may help with this but

do not dwell too long on the interpretations at this point.

Encourage them. The pictures may range from 'what on earth would God give them that picture for?' to 'wow! God has really shown them something special'. Be gentle. Remember they are just starting out.

Note for facilitator: Even at this early stage you may see one or more people receiving startling things from God. This is usually an indication that God is giving them a prophetic gift. Just wait and observe them over the next few sessions.

Go ahead and repeat the exercise. This will help more people gain confidence.

You may want to remind them that seeing visions and hearing from God often involves faith. In other words, we may not be sure something is from God but it is okay to have a go and see what happens.

WAYS THE HOLY SPIRIT USES US.

Tell the people that God uses a number of different ways to speak to us and through us. We often call this 'prophecy'.

Get them to look up the following Scriptures and discuss ways God speaks to us or uses us according to each scripture.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11, To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the **message of wisdom**, to another the **message of knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healing** by that one spirit, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another **speaking in different kinds of tongues**, and to still another **the interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one as he determines.

Job 33:15&16. In a **dream**, in a **vision of the night**, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears.

1 Corinthians 12:28 In the church God has appointed first of all **apostles**, second, **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **workers of miracles**, also those having **gifts of healing**, **those able to help others**, **those with gifts of administration**, and **those speaking in different kinds of tongues**.

*Numbers 12:6 The Lord said. 'Listen to my words: When the prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in **visions**. I speak to him in **dreams**.*

*Ephesians 4:11&12 It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors** and **teachers**, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

INTERRUPTIONS

When God speaks to us it is often an **interruption** to what we are thinking.

For example, we may be thinking or praying about someone who is not feeling well when suddenly we

have the thought that they need to be reminded that God loves them.

This is an interruption to what we were praying and thinking about.

God is the only one who knows the deepest needs of each one of us and He wants us to hear His voice.

VISIONS AND WORDS EXERCISE

Explain that God often gives us more than one word when he talks to us.

Have everyone ask God to show them a picture, or give them a word or words.

When they are ready, find out what they sensed the Lord was showing them or saying to them.

Facilitator Note: Watch for any people who are not sharing anything. If you have someone working with you, they could talk quietly to these people in turn to see if they can help. Sometimes a person is too shy to share or worried that what they sense will be rejected.

TALKING AND LISTENING EXERCISE

Have everyone spend a few minutes talking to God alone. Get them to talk to him about anything that worries them. Then get them to stop praying and just listen to see what God says back to them. Ask for volunteers to share their experience.

SOMETHING TO DO

Ask the people to spend a few minutes each day, talking to God about things that are important to them. Then they should listen to see what God may say to them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION

THREE

LEARNING TO LISTEN

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

How to be ready to hear the voice of God

Hearing God through the Bible

The Holy Spirit reminds us of Scriptures

DOING

Listening through the Bible

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

REVISION

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in previous sessions.

HOW TO BE READY TO HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD

WILLINGNESS

Jesus himself led by example when he said: *'By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgement is just, for I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me (John 5:30).*

We need God. When we want His will only, we will be able to know God's voice with confidence. This is an important principle.

We should pray as Jesus prayed – *'I have come to do your will O God'* (Hebrews 10:7).

BY BEING AVAILABLE ANYTIME.

Jesus was the best example.

Look up *Mark 1:32-34*.

What do we learn about Jesus availability?

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons.

Jesus was available for God no matter what he was doing or how tired he was. He must have continued ministering all night!

Jesus did not make time for God. His time **was** God's.

We want God to be there for anything we need at any time, but are we ready to be there for anything he wants any time?

HUMILITY

In the book of Numbers we see that Moses was a very humble man.

Numbers 12:3 Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

In verse 8 God says that: *'With Moses I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord.'*

In other words, God was pleased with Moses because he was a humble man.

Being humble is not putting yourself down. It is about having the heart of a servant.

In *James 4:6* we see further proof that humility is important to God; *God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE BIBLE AS WE READ IT.

The Bible is God's word to us.

DRAMA INTERRUPTION.

Have someone lined up to knock on the door. When you open the door they are to say: 'Special delivery. Please sign here.'

They hand you a letter addressed to the people. Have one of the people open it and read it out. It will be a letter from the Pastor or someone else the people respect. The letter is to encourage them to be excited about their relationship with God and passionate about hearing his voice.

Relate the letter to the Bible. Explain how the Bible is God's letter of love to us.

Look up *2 Timothy 3:16&17 All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Col 3:16. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all

wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

LISTENING THROUGH THE BIBLE

Have the people open their Bibles to anywhere in the New Testament. Get them to pray, asking God to show them something from his Word.

Leave them to read for a few minutes.

Ask if anyone felt God say something to them and what it was.

Tell them that we should all read our Bible each day, asking God to speak to us through the words. We should **always** read the Bible knowing God wants to teach us things.

THE HOLY SPIRIT REMINDS US OF SCRIPTURES WE KNOW WHEN WE NEED THEM

Ask for volunteers to quote verses they know or partly know. It will be interesting to find out how much scripture is known.

Read the story of Jesus temptation in the wilderness from Luke 4:1-12.

At the end, ask who in the story knew the Scriptures.

The devil did and Jesus did.

The devil misused the Bible to try and trick Jesus.

Why didn't Jesus fall for the devil's tricks?

Because he not only read the Scriptures, he had allowed his heavenly Father to teach him.

The Scriptures were not just words – they were life to him.

It needs to be the same for us.

We should always ask God to bring his word alive to us as we read it.

In conclusion – the more we read and study the Bible, the more scripture we have stored in our mind that the Holy Spirit can remind us of when we need it.

WORDS, VISIONS & SCRIPTURE EXERCISE

Form a circle and place a chair in the middle.
Choose a person to sit in the chair.

Ask the other people to seek God for something for that person.

It can be a word or words, a vision or a scripture.

When a few people have shared something choose a different person to sit in the chair.

After a few people have been ministered to, talk to everyone about how there is something wonderful about placing your hands on someone as you pray for them.

When we place our hands on someone it is like saying that you care even before you have said anything.

Also, the power of the Holy Spirit often moves through you and into the person you are praying for.

Matthew 19:13-15 Little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children

come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

This passage shows that the people knew that placing hands on people and praying for them was a powerful thing.

Now, if you have time, continue having people sit in the chair until everyone has been prayed for.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION

FOUR

OBEYING WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO YOU

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

Motives

Prophecy

Getting the message right

Words of wisdom & knowledge

DOING

Chinese whispers
Prophecy

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in previous sessions.

HAVING PURE MOTIVES

Ask the people what they think some good reasons to hear from God are.

Answers should include things such as:

- To help us and others.
- To teach us things.
- To encourage us.

What would some possible dangers be when we are getting lots of wonderful things from God:

We could:

- Want people to think we are doing something good when it is actually God using us.
- Like the attention for our self instead of helping people look to God.
- Use 'God's voice' to say what we want to say.

- Think we are more worthy to hear God's voice than other people.

Have everyone ask God to help them always have the right motives.

PROPHECY

We are looking at prophecy today.

1 Corinthians 14:39 says: Be eager to prophecy.

To prophesy is simply to bring a message from God. Most of the things we are doing in these sessions are prophetic.

Even the pictures we get from God are a prophetic message, just in a different form.

Let's do a fun exercise.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Choose about 5 people and tell them you are going to whisper a message to one of them while the others wait outside. Then you will ask them to come in one at a time so the first person can pass

the message on. Now choose one person and send the other four outside.

Whisper the message two times to the first person:

One short man ate 4 bananas and slipped on one, while a tall girl ate 2 apples and laughed happily.

Ask the next person to come in and have the first person whisper the message to them.

That person then whispers to the next person and so on.

Ask the last person to tell everyone, out loud, what the message was.

Now tell them what the actual message was.

It is usually quite funny to see the difference.

Play again making up your own or use a couple of the following:

The house was strange so Silly Sally said Sam should shout songs so slippery snakes should slither silently outside.

Five friends fed fifty ferrel ferrets fried fish.

The pig snorted loudly, the rat scurried along and the dog howled all night.

GETTING THE MESSAGE RIGHT

When we sense we are hearing something from God we really need to hear properly so we are passing on the correct message.

That does not always happen so sometimes the message is not as accurate as we would like.

This wonderful verse from John helps us:

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice.

I know them, and they follow me.

We know that as time goes on and we get closer to God, we will get better at knowing his voice.

If you want to play soccer you have to practise and be prepared to make lots of mistakes before you become a good player. Even the good players still make mistakes. We can get better and better at knowing what is the voice of God but we are

human and there will be times when we get it wrong.

Deuteronomy 18:22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken.

WORDS OF WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE

Words of wisdom are wise advice that comes from God.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 3:17

The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

One of the ways God uses us with words of wisdom is when we are talking to someone who needs help or advice. You may be talking and suddenly you have said something that has really helped the other person. That is a good time to thank God in

your heart for giving you the words that have helped.

Words of knowledge can be quite exciting. This is usually a special gift God gives to someone. When it is needed, God tells the person something they could not possibly know about the other person or situation so that it is clear that God is there to help them or warn them.

John 1:45-49 Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked.

'Come and see,' said Philip.

*When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, '**Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.**'*

'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked.

*Jesus answered, '**I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree** before Philip called you.'*

Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.'

What were the two words of knowledge that Jesus had for Nathanael?

Why did Nathanael need the words of knowledge? (Because he doubted that the Messiah would come from an insignificant place like Nazareth.)

PROPHECY

This next exercise involves having a person sitting in the middle of a circle again.

Tell the group that you are going to help them prophesy.

Let them know they are to ask God for something to say to the person in the middle.

When they have prayed, if they feel they have something, they are to go to the person in the middle and tell them the message.

This is not a time for them to pray for the person.

Have them start by saying, 'I feel the Lord is saying.....'

Encourage whole sentences.

Repeat with different people in the middle.

Have some good discussions every now and again about how they came about the words.

Some questions you could ask are:

Did they just get one word and then sensed how to make it into a sentence?

Are they growing in confidence?

What was it like receiving those prophecies from other people?

Proverbs 25:11

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

Ask the people why they think a right word is like 'apples of gold in settings of silver'. Make sure they understand that it means that a right word is just like something very beautiful – something to be treasured.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION

FIVE

FELLOWSHIP

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

Relationship

Fellowship

DOING

Fellowship assignments
Holy Spirit guided time

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

REVISION

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in previous sessions.

RELATIONSHIP

Ask them how they are all going. Do they feel like they are getting to know one another better through these sessions?

Do they feel like they are getting closer to God?

Today we are going to look at fellowship and what it means.

FELLOWSHIP

Give each group one of the Scripture assignments. If there are more groups than assignments, give the same assignment to more than one group. If there are not enough groups, discuss any leftover assignments with everyone.

ASSIGNMENT ONE

Acts 2:42&43. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

Make a list of the things the believers did together. Discuss each thing on your list, making sure you understand what they were doing.

What exciting things were happening?

Share your thoughts with the whole group.

ASSIGNMENT TWO

Look carefully at the verses below.
Discuss what they are talking about.
Share your findings with the whole group.
Maybe a different person could explain each verse.

1 Corinthians 1:9. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1 John 1:3. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:6. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live the truth.

BUT

1 John 1:9 says: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

ASSIGNMENT THREE

Read the Bible verses and talk about the different things people can bring when they get together to worship God in times of fellowship.

Can you think of anything else people might be able to bring?

Decide how you are going to share what you have discussed with the whole group.

1 Corinthians 14:26.

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

HOLY SPIRIT GUIDED TIME

Ask the people how they would feel about spending twenty minutes just letting the Holy Spirit guide them in a time of fellowship.

Make a list of all the things they might be able to bring if God desires them to. The list should include things like:

- Words
- Prophecies
- Scriptures
- Speaking
- Singing
- Visions
- Praying for one another

Get them to pray, declaring to God that they want to serve him and one another in this next 20 minutes and that they need the Holy Spirit to guide them.

Remember you are an observer in this exercise.

This time can often start slowly but can be very exciting by the time the people finish!

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for unity to start now and to continue into future times of 'fellowship'.

EXCURSION

If you are able, arrange to meet with as many of the people as possible at a set day and time in the local shopping centre or some other place where there are a lot of people wandering around.

Their mission, if they choose to accept it, is to walk around in pairs and look at people (that's look, not stare). They are to ask God if he wants to say anything about any of the people. Obviously it is very important that they do not attract attention to themselves or go up to any of the people.

Arrange to meet somewhere 20 minutes later to share what happened.

Now have them find a high spot where they can see as many of the people as possible. They are to ask God what he is saying about **all** the people.

Meet again in 20 minutes, perhaps at a coffee shop or McDonalds and debrief.

This can be worth the trouble of arranging as you may find some surprisingly strong emotional results. You may see evangelists, or people with empathy or intercessors suddenly give themselves away.

If that happens, let them know that they will be learning about their feelings in the next session.

SESSION

SIX

GETTING CLOSER TO GOD

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

Timing

God's presence

A devotional lifestyle

DOING

Devotions

Caring for one another

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

REVISION

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in previous sessions.

TIMING

1 Corinthians 14:40 Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

When we get a message from God for another person, usually we just share it. Sometimes though, we need to think about what God wants us to do with the message. This is often the case when the message is quite personal.

Let's say you have a sensitive word from the Lord about someone. The options to consider are:

- Should I tell them in front of everyone or is it private?
- Should I tell them at all? If not, what do I do with the information (maybe it's so you can pray for them)?
- Do I sense that this is the right time to give the message, or should I wait?
- Should I share what I have received with the leader to see what they think?

Getting a message is easy. Sharing it can be the hard part. Remember not to let nerves stop you! Whenever you receive something from God you need to do something with it; even if it is simply to pray for the person or situation.

GOD'S PRESENCE

When you come into the presence of God to worship him and to listen to what he says there are times when you will sense his presence.

This can vary from just a little bit to times when his presence almost completely overwhelms you.

These times are wonderful and mean that God is doing some exciting things.

Psalm 16: 11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

When God's presence is particularly strong it is almost like our emotions jump up and dance with excitement. You will see all sorts of things. People laughing, crying, kneeling, and lying flat on the floor. People unable to stand, shaking, listening, dancing and so on.

1 Kings 8:11 The priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Often certain things happen before, during and after God blesses us with his presence.

BEFORE:

- People are in unity together.
- Worship and prayer is going on.
- There is a desperation for the things of God.

DURING

- God comes and does miraculous things in people's lives. These sometimes include emotional healing, cleansing, filling, strengthening and deliverance.

AFTER

- The people are stronger in their faith.
- They are bolder in their witnessing.
- They are surer about the love of God in their lives.

You cannot 'turn on' the presence of God like a tap, but his presence is a great thing to long for. Every Christian should sense the gentle presence of God with them often.

WORSHIP, BIBLE & PRAYER AS A DEVOTIONAL LIFESTYLE

The way to sensing God's presence is by getting to know him.

2 Chronicles 15:2 The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you.

Discuss the things that make someone a best friend. Ask if anyone has ever had a friend where they sometimes know what the other one is thinking?

God wants to be our closest friend. We need to come close to him so we can sense his presence.

To do that we need to have a strong devotional life.

This is a time we set aside every day to talk to God and to listen to him. In other words, it is a time where we develop our friendship with our creator.

DEVOTION EXERCISE

The three main parts of devotions are worship, reading the Bible and prayer.

Let's do it now.

I will lead you through. It will take about 15 minutes.

This is your own time with God so find your own space and be ready with your Bible.

Get the people to start by praying; asking God to speak to them during this time.

Put on a worship song and encourage them to worship.

Then get them to read a chapter in their Bible, expecting God to speak to them through his Word.

Encourage them to spend 5 minutes talking and listening to God. It is about them and God. Other times are for praying for other people and situations.

Ask for feedback.

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Ask if there is anyone who needs prayer.

When you know what they need prayer for, ask the other people to wait on God and then do whatever he tells them to do.

When they are finished, ask for another person with a need they are willing to share. Repeat the process.

Continue as time allows.

Remember that your sensitivity to God helps you grow so that he can trust you with more important things.

SOMETHING TO DO

Encourage everyone to use the devotional method learnt today over the next week. Tell them you can't wait to hear how their devotional times went when you meet next week.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION

SEVEN

STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING

Visitation

Revelation

Dreams

Inspired singing

Holy Spirit leading next week

DOING

Singing

Singing & prophesying

OPENING PRAYER

Ask a person to open in prayer.

REVISION

Ask questions about a few things you discussed in previous sessions.

VISITATION

A visitation is fairly rare and is usually an angel bringing a message from God.

Some people have even seen Jesus.

There are many examples of messengers in the Bible. One of the most famous was the angels telling the shepherds about the birth of Jesus.

Read *Luke 2:8-15*

Here is another example:

Acts 5:17-21 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles

and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people the full message of this new life.'

REVELATION

Revelation is when God reveals something to us that we did not know. The two types of revelation are:

1. Information - *Acts 10:19&20 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'*

God tells Peter that there are three men downstairs that he should go with.

2. Understanding/enlightenment
Psalm 119:18. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Sometimes when you are reading the Bible you might suddenly say, 'now I get it'. God loves to

reveal something to us that we didn't fully understand before.

DREAMS

Sometimes God speaks to us through a dream.

Job 33:15&16. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears.

Ask God to speak to you through dreams and help you know when a dream is from him.

You may even remember a dream from your past that may have been from God.

Mary and Joseph saved the life of Jesus when he was a baby by obeying a dream they had.

Matthew 2:12 Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

INSPIRED SINGING

Most Christians love to worship God by singing to him. It would be very exciting to have the Holy Spirit give you a song to sing that you have never heard before.

It is possible to make up a song of worship to God. It may not be very tuneful and the words might not work out too well but it is still an expression of love. God loves it when we make up songs to express our love to him.

*Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.***

SINGING EXERCISE

If you would like to have a go then you can do it now. There is no pressure on anyone to participate. The singing we are about to do is not inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are just songs we are going to make up as we go.

Ps 149:1&3

*Praise the Lord. Sing a **new song** to the Lord. Sing praise to him in the community of his faithful people. Let them praise his name with dancing. Let them make music to him with harps and tambourines.*

You, the leader, sing a simple sentence of praise to God or have someone or a person lined up ready.

Now ask for volunteers to make up a simple one sentence song like you did.

Keep going if you keep getting volunteers.

Now we are going to ask God to give one or more of you a song that is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Once again, lead by example, or use the person lined up.

Now ask the people to wait and see if the Holy Spirit gives any of them something to sing.

When they are finished encourage everyone.

PROPHETIC EXERCISE

There may be times when you need to prophesy over somebody and you do not know what you are going to say. If you are willing to step out in faith, God will often give you the words to say – sometimes as late as when you open your mouth!

It can be the same with singing a Holy Spirit inspired song.

I am asking for people who are willing to either sing or prophesy on cue. When we are ready I will just point to you so you can start.

Break them into three groups; those just watching on your left, those prophesying in the middle, and those willing to sing on the right.

Now let's ask God to prepare our hearts.

As the leader, make sure you are being led by the Spirit. Point to someone and go from there.

Talk about how it all went at the end.

Do this exercise a second time, encouraging them to change position before you start.

HOLY SPIRIT LED NEXT WEEK

Tell the people that the last session is going to be completely Holy Spirit led.

Tell them the subject is going to be 'A Heart for the Lost' (or whatever you sense the subject should be).

Ask them: What are some other ways we can be led by the Holy Spirit? Things we have not talked about much?

Examples of answers are dance, rap, writing, speaking, art, craft, poems, testimonies, object lessons etc.

Talk to them about that and see if there are any volunteers who would like to pray about the subject

and bring something ready for next week that they feel is guided by the Holy Spirit.

They could even team up with others.

EXCURSION

Take the people to a lookout or similar high point over your town or region. Get them to worship God and then to ask him what he is saying about the town or region.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask someone to close in prayer, thanking God for what he has taught them today.

SESSION

EIGHT

HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRED

MEETING

OBJECTIVES

DOING

This whole session is devoted to allowing the Holy Spirit to guide the groups time of fellowship together.

PREPARATION

- Have some worship music on standby that they can use if they feel led. Some people may come prepared as well.
- Make sure the room is set up to suit the Holy Spirit inspired meeting.
- You may want to arrange a celebration party at the end.

GETTING STARTED

Talk to the people about things they may have prepared. Let them know that they need to wait until they sense it is the right time to use what they have prepared.

Have a few people open the meeting in prayer, asking God to guide everyone.

Allow them to start.

Your role is just to guide them and keep them on track.

They may take a while to get going, but usually their confidence and faith increases as the meeting progresses.

At the end have a few of them close in prayer, thanking God for what he has done during the meeting.