6. Hearing God's Voice

Learning Objectives

- Explore who God’s speaks to and why we would want to hear his voice.
- Understand how to listen for God’s voice for ourselves and to bless others.
- Practice listening to God’s voice through application

Welcome [10 mins]

Welcome the group to this session, recap the last session and review how the challenge went.

The challenge was to spend a regular time with God every day until our next session.

🏸 **Bonus Game: [10 mins]**
Select a game that will best suit your group and setting. Consider games this week that fit with the theme of listening to instructions, distractions or trying to hear someone.

> ***Pray for the session***

Introduction [5 mins]

Icebreaker:

In small groups or with everyone:

ASK - If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?

Sometimes it can feel like you need superpowers to hear God and it’s only for ‘special’ people. In this session, we’re going to look at how we can all hear the voice of God and pray for others.

📽️ **Video: God is speaking - Christian Short Film**
Watch this video together
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJARfWkQyH4

Sometimes we can think we have to work hard to get God to speak to us. Maybe we need to sit in a cave silently for 20 years and then we’ll earn it. Instead, let’s realise that like in the video, God is always speaking, we just need to practice, remove distractions and make space to listen.

Bible Focus [25 mins]

ASK - Why would we want to hear God's voice?

Get feedback

In our last session, we talked about how prayer can be a key part of our relationship with God, in the same way that communication is a vital part of any relationship. A relationship where we don't speak (or only one person speaks) is not really a relationship.

📖 **Read John 5:19**

"Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

Even Jesus, the son of God, relied on hearing and seeing what the Father was doing during his earthly ministry. In the same way, hearing and listening to God can and should be a part of our daily walk with God. That includes both the big decisions about the direction for our life but also in the everyday little things.

Ask - Who do you think God speaks to?

Get feedback. Emphasise that God can speak to anyone – even non-Christians, though it may or may not be an audible voice. We all hear God speak in some way through the gospel before becoming a Christian.

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

ASK - Who are the sheep in this passage?

The answer is Christians/Jesus' followers. Every believer ***can*** hear God's voice. We can **ALL** hear God's voice. There isn't an elite category of Christians who can hear God whilst the rest of us can't.

So *HOW* do we do it? We find it helpful to remember three things:

> **Try it. Test it. Do it in love.**

1. TRY IT

📖 **Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-3**

"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue[a] does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort."

The New Testament encourages us to desire spiritual gifts, including prophecy, words of knowledge and wisdom. Which, in their simplest form are when people hear God tell them something which is meant to encourage and build up the Church or another individual.

When you desire something, what do you do about it? For example, when you want to get better at something, run a marathon or learn an instrument, what do you do? You practice.

The first thing we need to do is TRY. We just need to have a go. It takes a little bit of time and practice, not because God makes it hard, but because we make it hard on ourselves. This is because we have so much noise or distraction in our lives, we find it hard to focus on God. But putting in the time to learn to listen to God is totally worth it.

📽️ **Video – Mike Pilavachi – "Stepping out and taking risks with the prophetic" [30:55- 33:55]**
This link takes you to the correct start point but you will have to stop the video at the correct point.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1gKYD9ZJqE&t=1896s

📽️ **Bonus Video [5 mins]**
Watch these others sections from Mike's talk above where he talks about making mistakes and persevering. [35:00 – 38:00] and [38:46 – 40:27]

2. TEST IT

📖 **Read**

1 Thessalonians 5:19 -22
"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil."

1 Corinthians 13:9-12
"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

None of us hear perfectly from God.

Imagine being underneath the water at a swimming pool and looking up at people outside of the water. You can make out shapes and get a general idea of what is outside the water, but it is difficult to see clearly.

Similarly, the Bible describes our ability to prophesy in this life as like seeing through a "*dim mirror*".

When sharing what you think God has said always say "*I **think** God might be saying this….*". Similarly, if you saw a picture or a vision, if God hasn't shown you what it means, don't feel the need to explain it, simply share the picture and leave it with them. It may mean something to them, that you would never have thought of.

Because we can't hear perfectly, the second thing we need to do after TRYing to hear God's voice is to TEST what we think we've heard.

We TEST any word from God by comparing it to the Bible and God's character. We should ask ourselves; does it line up with what we know about God's character and commands in the Bible?

You can use the acronym **"THINK"**

Write these on a whiteboard or flipchart paper.

Is it;

- ☐ **T**rue?
- ☐ **H**elpful?
- ☐ **I**nsightful?
- ☐ **N**ecessary?
- ☐ **K**ind?

Ask yourself; is what you think you heard from God encouraging and going to build up the person you are sharing it with?

Ask other Christians and your leaders what they think about it. Very often God will use multiple people to say something clearly to us, especially if it is important.

The more serious the leading from God is, the more you need to TEST it. For example, if someone felt God leading them to quit their job and become a missionary full time, that is a big life change and it would be wise to require more confirmation.

3. Do it in Love

The 1 Corinthians passage we read about spiritual gifts is interrupted by one of the most famous passage about love in the Bible.

📖 **Read:**
1 Corinthians 13:8-13

"*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Being loving is more important that using any spiritual gift. Love for God and others should always be our motivation and focus as followers of Jesus.

Love is the foundation for any gifts we use. Living a lifestyle of love for others is more important than having the most amazing gift of prophecy.

How does God speak:

ASK - What ways may God speak to you? - Think about the different ways God speaks to people in the Bible.

As the group suggest ideas, write them on a whiteboard or flipchart paper. As participants mention ideas you may need to unpack what they mean and how they work in practice. Feel free to add and explain any ways that you think the group may have missed.

For example;

- The Bible – It's been said "If you want to hear God speak, read the Bible out loud!"
- Preachers/Sermons
- Words/Songs that keep going around your head (that you didn't have before praying)
- Knowledge you have that you didn't know before
- Pictures in your mind's eye - this could be images or scenes that come into your imagination
- Visions – where you see something supernatural with your physical eyes
- Senses – God draws your attention to something you can physically see, touch or hear and shows you the significance of it.
- Dreams
- Feelings or emotions that are not your own

Testimony: [3 mins]

Have a leader share a testimony about when they have heard from God. This could be relating to the "bigger picture" of their direction & calling in life or another more day to day or immediate example such as receiving a word of knowledge, prophecy or being prompted to talk to someone about Jesus.

Application: [20 mins]

These exercises are designed to get over the initial barrier many people have when trying to hear God. They aren't required to hear God at all, but we view them like a scaffolding, providing a framework or reference point that helps you to engage with hearing God's voice.

Choose a couple of the activities below depending on how much time you have left in your session or you can pick one and spend longer on that one. We recommend doing either the Objects or Pictures activity first. It's better to take time over one activity and do it well than rush onto another.

🙏 **Bonus activity [15 mins]**
Try doing an additional activity listed below.

🙏 **Activity: Objects**

This activity can demonstrate how God can speak through simple everyday objects and situations. (Jeremiah 1:11 is just one example where God appears to encourage Jeremiah to practice listening to him using everyday objects. Jesus also used everyday objects and situations in his parables to speak to people.)

1. *Gather the group in a circle/s. We suggest no more than 10 people per group.*
2. *Prepare a tray of random objects beforehand from your home or Church building. Try and collect a variety of different ordinary objects.*
3. *Encourage the participants to pray for the person on their right/left or leave the group free to pray for whoever they are led to. Leaving the group to pray as they feel led may be more natural but try and make sure everyone gets prayed for at some point during the session, so they don't feel left out or "forgotten" by God.*
4. *Pray, asking God to speak and then wait for a couple of minutes.*
5. *Encourage the participants to ask God to highlight one of the objects on the tray to them and ask God to use that object as a picture/metaphor for something God wants to say to them about another in the group. For this activity make sure to ask God for a meaning to go along with the object.*
6. *Ask a couple of leaders to demonstrate this first*
7. *Encourage the participants to share in the group what they felt/heard from God for an individual in the group.*

🙏 **Activity: Pictures**

This activity is similar to the "Objects" activity.

Print out the "Pictures" activity from the appendix or you can use "Soularium" cards which are available from https://crustore.org/soularium-new.html

You can do this in two ways;
Either get the participants to pray for the person on their right/left or leave the group free to pray for whoever they are led to. Leaving the group to pray as they feel led may be more natural but try and make sure everyone gets prayed for at some point during the session, so they don't feel left out or "forgotten" by God.

1. *Arrange the group in a circle.*
2. *Place the cards on the floor so they are visible to everyone.*
3. *Pray and wait on God.*
4. *Ask God to speak through an image on one of the cards as a metaphor or picture for someone else.*
5. *Get a couple leaders to share/demonstrate this first.*

🙏 **Activity: What does God think?**

Put some quiet music on in the background.

Either break the group up into pairs or ask the participants to pray for the person on their left.

On your own try sitting quietly, clearing your head from distractions and asking God the simple question - "Father God, what do you think about [insert name]?" wait for 1-2 minutes.

Give a chance for any feedback or just ask for indications if anyone sensed anything.

🙏 **Activity: Hearing God for others**

- Using the "Encouraging Bible Verses" print out found in the appendix.
- Cut up the Bible verses so they are individual pieces of paper. You'll need one set of verses per small group.
- Break into smaller groups of about 3 or 4 people.
- Place the Bible verses in the middle of the group.
- Pray, wait on God and ask God to show you one verse that is for someone in the group.
- After 2 or 3 minutes get everyone to pick up the verse they felt and give it to that person.

You can't get this 'wrong', these verses are all encouraging Bible truths that God speaks to all Christians.

🙏 **Activity: Original Design**

Split the group into pairs or groups of three.

Ask God what his "Original design" for this person was.
Who did God make them to be? E.g. What giftings & personality traits do they have? What Biblical character are they like?

Allow a couple of minutes to wait on God and then share what you felt.

Feedback

Ask the group, what stood out for them today? What did they enjoy or find difficult?
Make sure to encourage those that didn't feel like they heard anything.

Conclusion & Challenge [2 mins]

God is always speaking. Hearing God is one of the keys to an exciting and full Christian life. As we try and hear God, let's remember to Try it, Test it and Do it in love!

Challenge:

Your challenge from this session is to pray for someone else in the group this week and share with them something you think God might be saying for them by the next session.

> ***Pray to end the session***