

Pray with Open Hands: Listening in Prayer

February 20, 2022

PREPARATION

▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying Psalm 95:7-8, Isaiah 50:4-5, John 10:14-16 and Revelation 3:20. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

▶ LANDING POINT

I want a two-way conversation with God of speaking and listening in prayer.

GROUP DISCUSSION

▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

THE ART OF SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Many have described prayer as simply talking to God. Well, prayer is about talking with God, but it is also about listening to God. We pray to God and He wants to hear from us and what's on our hearts; but prayer is also an incredible opportunity to hear from God—to listen for Him to speak and give us a word that can give us direction, encouragement, or assurance. We listen to God in order to hear truth that comes directly from the Source of all truth.

This week your group will discuss how to listen well in prayer and how to quiet your soul to hear the voice of the Father. Because He desires a personal relationship with you, He wants a two-way conversation with you in prayer. And as in any good relationship, there is a balance of speaking and listening in prayer that we need in order to have a healthy and vibrant prayer life.

Q: *What are the characteristics of a good listener?*

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PRAYING TO DO GOD'S WILL

We pray with open hands to receive whatever God wants us to pray for. We pray to listen for the voice of God to speak to us. Prayer isn't asking God to sign off on our plans and get our will done. Prayer is asking God to speak and tell us what we can do to get His will done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Let's take a look at a few scriptures that show us what it looks like to listen to God. We'll see that God desires to speak and for us to hear and know His voice when we pray.

Have volunteers read Psalm 95:7-8, Isaiah 50:4-5, John 10:14-16 and Revelation 3:20.

Q: *Based on Psalm 95:7-8 what are some ways we harden our hearts to what God reveals to us?*

Q: *What's one thing you can do differently in your life to make prayer a priority at the beginning of your day?*

Jesus said His sheep know His voice. How can we, as His sheep, become more familiar with His voice?

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

PRAYING WITH OPEN HANDS

What does it look like to pray with open hands and truly listen to God? Consider the following things you can do to have a posture of listening when you pray:

- **Quiet your soul.** Remove all possible distractions so that you can focus your attention on prayer and your relationship with the Father.
- **Tune out other voices.** Resist other voices competing for your attention. Resist them in Jesus's name and ask God to silence them.
- **Surrender your will.** Be open to whatever God has for you, trusting that it is for your ultimate good and His glory.
- **Invite God to speak.** Give the Father your time and attention to say something life-changing for you. Invite Him to speak a word to you that will give you wisdom, understanding and greater faith.
- **Wait and be still.** Be patient in prayer and don't anticipate an answer immediately. Prayer is about quieting your soul and that requires time and focus.
- **Remember what you hear.** If you hear something write it down. The truth is we easily forget things, even important things. So write down what you hear and put it in a place that reminds you of the time when God spoke directly to you.
- **Go to the Word.** God will never speak anything that goes against His revealed Word. So, if you are unsure of something you heard, confirm it in God's Word.

Q: *What are the distractions that disturb your soul currently? Take a moment to pray and ask God to help you focus your attention on Him in prayer.*

Q: *Brainstorm a phrase or statement your group can share together to remember that we need to surrender our will to God in prayer.*

Q: *In what ways could these suggestions improve your prayer life?*

Q: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

COMMENTARY

Rest and Obedience / Listening and Responding

The author of Hebrews connects rest and obedience to listening and responding God's voice (Hebrews 3:7-4:13).

God's Servant with Open Ears

"In 50:5 the Servant's behavior is set in contrast to the rest of Israel, for he responded positively and listened to what God said. This is because God opened his ears so that he would hear, but the Israelites refused to hear because their ears were not open (48:8). Thus Israel rebelled (48:8), but the Servant of God did not rebel (50:5b)."

Knowing the Good Shepherd

"As the shepherd cares for the sheep, the sheep get to know their shepherd better. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. They get to know Him better by listening to His voice (the Word) and experiencing His daily care. As the sheep follow the Shepherd, they learn to love and to trust Him. He loves "His own" (John 13:1) and He shows that love in the way He cares for them."

ENDNOTES:

1. Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, vol. 15B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 381.
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 331.