



Listening Hearts

Cultivating spiritual friendships through guided questions and discussions

The goal of Listening Hearts is to create opportunities where it feels natural to talk about your personal walk with God. It is a chance to minister to each other by becoming more relaxed listeners. It also gives you a chance to draw closer to God with some spiritual practices that may be new to you. They are: Silence, Praying Scripture, Listening for what God may be saying, and the ancient practice of Examen.

This booklet contains some basic instructions followed by eight session outlines.
Feel free to adapt them as needed.

We hope that you will make deep connections with each other, so that with the apostle you can say, “Dear friend I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” (3 John 1:2, NIV)

This resource is an adapted version of Soul Sisters, created by Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario. Atlantic Baptist Women is very grateful to our sisters at Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec for sharing their resource with us and allowing us to modify it for our context.

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1

INVITE one or more people to meet with you, explaining what is involved.

- For two people, each session will last about 30 minutes. For small groups, expect an hour and a half. Small groups of up to 6 people work best.
- Decide when you will meet and whether you will meet in person, by phone, Zoom, etc.

2

ORGANIZE

- *For two people:* Use the questions as fits you best.
- *For three to six people:*

You will probably want to choose a facilitator. It could be the same person every week or it could rotate from week to week. The facilitator reads the question and then opens it up for people to respond. The facilitator watches the time and gently signals when it's time to move ahead.

For large groups:

- Begin the session together for the welcome, reminders, and silence. Then divide up into groups of about 4-5 people each. Keep the same group divisions for all the sessions so you can develop depth over time.
- Let each group choose a facilitator as above.

3

PREPARE

- Download materials from Resources at atlanticbaptistwomen.ca or copy this booklet.
- Send each person the session outlines. People like to know the questions in advance.
- Send a reminder email or phone call a day before each meeting.

4

PRAYERFULLY BEGIN YOUR FIRST SESSION

SESSION 1: Who am I?

1. Welcome everyone. Emphasize that this needs to be a safe space to share—everyone needs to be committed to confidentiality.
2. Invite people to introduce themselves.
3. Explain the practice of silence:
During this time don't pray or think over things—just rest with God. Sometimes we need to be quiet and slow down in order to listen well (both to God and to others). Hear Jesus' invitation from Matthew 11:
4. Read Matthew 11:28–30 (NIV): “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
5. Have 1–2 minutes of silence (use a timer on vibrate, if desired) then say: “Come, Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen.”
6. Read this paragraph on listening skills:

We are often poor listeners. We interrupt; sometimes we preplan our answers while others are still talking. As soon as there is a pause, we give advice, try to fix their problems, perhaps even judge them. The following steps are designed to help us get beyond those habits. It will not be instant, but we will make progress.

Review the procedure for Sharing Times (Sessions 1–3):

- Read the question.
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- The whole group pauses. Take a few deep breaths. Let what that person said sink in
- Invite the next person to answer.
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to answer the first question while the others listen, pausing briefly after each one. Repeat these steps for the next question.

7. Share your answers to the questions for this session.
 - **Share with each other the story of how you came to Christ.**
 - **Share a favourite Bible verse. What stands out to you about it?**
8. Pray for each other. Confirm when you will talk next.

SESSION 2: What is in my soul?

1. Welcome
2. Reminders:
 - Remember to be absolutely disciplined about not sharing anything you hear in this group.
 - As we get to know each other, the natural tendency is to talk longer. Remember to keep your answers to 2–3 minutes so each person has time to share.
3. Say: *Let's pray and invite the presence of Christ. Remember He promises in Matthew 18:20 that where two or three are gathered in His name, He will be in the midst of them.* Then be silent for 1–2 minutes. At the end, say: *"Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen."*
4. Check in: **Share one high point and one low point since we last spoke.**
5. Share your answers to the questions for this session, using the sharing procedure from Session 1:

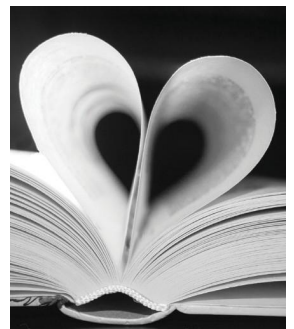
- Read the question.
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- The whole group pauses. Take a few deep breaths. Let what that person said sink in
- Invite the next person to answer.
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to answer the first question while the others listen, pausing briefly after each one. Repeat these steps for the next question.

Questions for this session:

- **Where/how would you like to grow in your relationship with God?**
- **Describe a time in your life when you felt especially close to God.**

6. Pray for each other. Set a date and time to talk again.

Notes:



SESSION 3: Am I growing spiritually?

1. Welcome.
2. Reminders: Remember to leave a small space after each person shares. Waiting shows we consider someone's thoughts to be valuable.
3. Read Revelation 3:20 (NIV): *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."* Let's pray and invite the presence of Christ. Then be silent for 1–2 minutes. At the end, say: *"Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen."*
4. Ask a volunteer to read How to Pray Scripture below:

How to Pray Scripture

Praying Scripture can broaden your prayers and it can give you confidence that you are praying the will of God. It's easy to do.

Read a few verses. (If a number of people will pray, you can choose to each read one verse before you pray, or you can read a short passage and then each pray as you are led.) Pray, asking God to give each of those blessings to the person you are praying for.

You can choose verses of praise or petition. Here are some possibilities:

1 Chronicles 29:10–13 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 Philippians 1:9–11 Colossians 1:9–13

Here is one example of how to pray Ephesians 1:16–20: *Lord, I thank you for ---. Please reveal yourself to her so that she can know you more and more deeply. Help her to have ever deeper assurance that you have called her to good things. Let her have great faith and experience your great power. Thank you that your power to work in and through her life is still as strong as when you raised Christ from the dead. Thank you for Jesus. Amen.*

The leader can pray a blessing from Scripture over the group to demonstrate. Numbers 3:24–26 (NIV) works well: *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."*

5. Check-in: **Choose one word to describe your life since our last session and explain why.**
6. Share your answers to the questions for this session using the sharing procedure. Hopefully this kind of patient listening is becoming more natural.
 - **Where do you see spiritual fruit in your life?**
 - **Where are the growing edges where God is inviting you to stretch?**
7. Choose one of the suggested passages and take turns praying Scripture over one another.
8. Confirm when you will meet again.

SESSION 4: What is in my way?

1. Welcome.
2. Read Lamentations 3:22-24 (NIV): *“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him.’”*

Say: *Let’s pray and invite the presence of Christ. Are you relaxing enough that you would be aware of Him? Spend some time in silence. At the end, say: “Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen.”*

3. The first step to genuine transformation is being aware of what is really going on inside you. As your ability to listen to others grows, you also grow in self-awareness.

At this session we will add a step. Instead of listening completely without comment, after each person shares, one or two others can ask a question to hear more of their story.

Sharing format (Sessions 4–8):

- Read the question.
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- Pause: Take a few deep breaths.
- Let one or two people ask a question to expand or clarify. For example, What else happened? How did you feel? How does this event connect to other things in your life? What do you want to do next?
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing after each one, and asking one or two questions.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

4. Check-in: **What has God been doing in your life?**
5. Questions for this session:
 - **What barriers are there in your life with God?**
 - **What past experiences continue to affect your spiritual life or make you overly reactive to others?**
6. Pray for each other. Include prayer that you would experience growing peace and freedom. Perhaps you recognize places where you are hurt and angry. Pray about these, too (either out loud or silently). Pray that the people involved (yes, the ones who have mistreated you) would receive as many blessings as you can think of. This can set you free.
7. Don’t forget to set your next meeting.

SESSION 5: Lord, increase my faith

1. Welcome.
2. *Let's pray and invite the presence of Christ. James 4:8 (ESV) says, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." As we have some silence, seek to be aware of His nearness.*

At the end of the time of silence, say: *"Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen."*

3. Most of this session is dedicated to looking back at how God has worked in all our lives. For each one, follow the pattern of sharing, listening without comment, pausing, and then possibly asking a few questions. Review the sharing format for sessions four through eight:

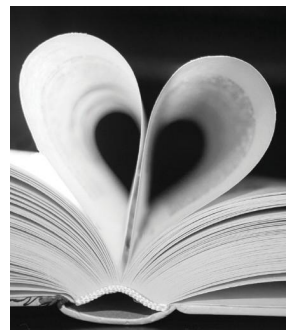
Sharing format (Sessions 4–8):

- Read the question.
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- Pause: Take a few deep breaths.
- Let one or two people ask a question to expand or clarify. For example, What else happened? How did you feel? How does this event connect to other things in your life? What do you want to do next?
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing after each one, and asking one or two questions.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

4. Check-in: **What is the strongest emotion you felt since last session. What caused it?**
5. Questions for this session:
 - **Tell about a time you felt especially close to God.**
 - **How has God used your mistakes or failures to help you grow closer to Him?**
6. Pray for each other and for God's anointing and fruitfulness.
7. Confirm the next date.

Notes:



SESSION 6: I appreciate you, my friend

1. Welcome.
2. Read Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV): *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Pray and invite the presence of Christ. Take about two minutes for silence.*

At the end, say: *“Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen.”*

3. Check in: **Invite each person to share one time they saw God active in their lives since the last session.**
4. Share your answers to the questions for this session. For each one, follow the pattern of sharing, listening without comment, pausing, and then possibly asking a few questions.

Sharing format (Sessions 4–8):

- Read the question.
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- Pause: Take a few deep breaths.
- Let one or two people ask a question to expand or clarify. For example, What else happened? How did you feel? How does this event connect to other things in your life? What do you want to do next?
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing after each one, and asking one or two questions.

Questions for this session:

- **Imagine yourself and your life if you had never accepted Christ.**
- **How are you different from what you were five years ago?**
- **In what ways would you like to be different five years from now?**

5. Take turns praying Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV) for each other.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

6. Confirm your next meeting time.

SESSION 7: Aiming for transformation

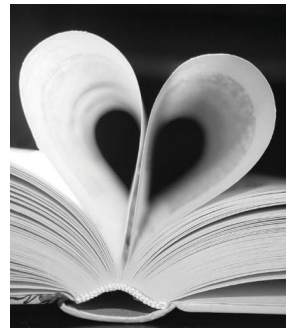
1. Welcome.
2. *Let's take two minutes to rest in the quiet presence of Christ. The Lord invites us, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10 NIV). At the end, say: "Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen."*
3. Read 2 Corinthians 3:17–18 (NIV): *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*
4. Share your answers to the questions for this session. We will add a step this time.

- Read the question
- Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
- Pause: Take a few deep breaths. This time, be aware if a Scripture comes to mind. This could be God speaking to you. Share that gently with the group.
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing to listen for God after each one.

Questions for this session:

- **How have you experienced God's freedom from something that used to weigh you down?**
 - **Talk about an area in your life where you see God is transforming you into the image of Christ.**
5. Pray Ephesians 3:16–19 (NIV) for each other: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."
 6. Confirm your next meeting time.

Notes:



SESSION 8: Spiritual formation

1. Welcome.
2. Read 1 Chronicles 16:29 two or three times. *“Give to the Lord the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor.”*

Picture yourself in the court of the King. Think of yourself as the offering that you bring and offer yourself to Him.

Have two minutes of silence. At the end, say: *“Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen.”*

3. Read the following: *The goal of all Spiritual Formation Practices is to help us become more aware of how God is working in us and around us, and then cooperate with Him.*
4. *Let's try something completely different this time. The ancient practice of Examen is one way to facilitate personal reflection. People sometimes follow it just before they go to sleep but any time is fine.* Read the instructions for the *Examen* below:

Examen

- Invite God.* Ask God to reveal himself to you. Then sit quietly.
- Be thankful.* Recall the day and give thanks for the people and events it contained. Give a sacrifice of praise for what was difficult.
- Notice emotions.* Pay attention to what you felt during the day. What might God want to reveal to you through those emotions? Ask God to help you untangle your experiences.
- Notice God.* What were your God Moments today? When were you aware of Him? What do you think He was doing?
- Bless tomorrow.* Give tomorrow to God, who is absolutely trustworthy. Offer yourself to Him in love. Rest.

5. Talk about the future.
 - a. What has God done in your life during these sessions?**
 - b. In what areas does He want you to grow next?**
6. Practice the *Examen* together.
 - a. Take turns reading one instruction at a time. After each instruction, leave 30 seconds of silence for individual contemplation.
 - b. After completing the *Examen*, let each person share their experience of practicing it.

Thank you for being a part of Listening Hearts 1.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to listen to Him and to one another.