



Listening Hearts 3

Cultivating spiritual friendships through guided questions and discussions

The goal of Listening Hearts 1 was learning to listen well to each other and Listening Hearts 2 focused on improving our ability to hear God and learning how to encourage each other with what we hear. In Listening Hearts 3, we will continue to meet together to work on the spiritual formation practices we've already learned as well as a new practice called Guided Prayer. We will also meet one-on-one each week with our Listening Hearts Companion to practice the Principles of Peer Spiritual Direction introduced at the end of Listening Hearts 2.

If you haven't completed Listening Hearts 1 and 2 yet, we recommend you start there. It is best to follow the Listening Hearts modules in order, completing each module before advancing to the next, so the spiritual practices used in the program become familiar and bonds are built within the group.

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 and "consider how to stir up [each] other to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24, ESV).

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: Reconnecting

1. Welcome back! Begin by renewing your commitment to confidentiality.
2. Review the practice of silence:
For these few minutes, we don't pray, we don't try to figure things out. We rest in God's grace.
3. Read Matthew 18:20 (TLB): *"For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I will be right there among them."*
4. Read the instructions for **Palms Down, Palms Up**. Then guide the participants through the practice and go directly into a time of silence.

Palms Down, Palms Up

Sometimes doing something physical can help us make an equivalent spiritual change. This ancient practice is designed to help us release our worries to Christ.

1. Close your eyes and hold your hands out in front of you with the palms facing down. Silently name the fears, frustrations and burdens you are carrying one by one. Perhaps there is someone you are worried about; perhaps you have a relationship in conflict. What is causing you stress?
2. As you name each item, pray to release it (e.g. Lord, I entrust my child to you; I give you my fear about this medical appointment ...). Imagine God's hands held out and ready to receive what you are letting go.
3. Then, slowly turn your hands over. With palms up, pray to receive whatever God has for you. Sit quietly for a minute or two.

*"Cast all your worries on him, for he cares for you."
(1 Peter 5:7, TLV)*

For slightly different versions try

<https://www.waterfromrock.org/2013/04/15/palms-up-palms-down-2/>

<https://waterfromrock.org/2016/07/25/palms-down-palms-up/>

5. Have three 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 2 Timothy 1:13-14 (CEV), which Paul wrote to Timothy, a young believer and leader he was mentoring: *“Now follow the example of the correct teaching I gave you, and let the faith and love of Christ Jesus be your model. You have been trusted with a wonderful treasure. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us.”*

The goal of peer spiritual formation is to speak the truth in love into each other’s lives: *“What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself”* (Ephesians 4:25, MSG). Another goal is to encourage and build one another up: *“Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NASB).

7. Review the Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction below:

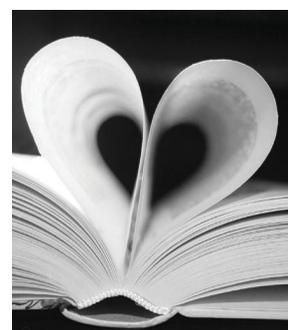
Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction

As the person speaks, try these steps of *Peer Spiritual Direction* all at once:

- **Notice** any memories or feelings of your own that could distort your listening.
- Is there a **question** that could bring out more of their story?
- Is there a **verse or phrase** that God seems to be bringing to mind?
- **Test** that verse or phrase.
- **Offer it as a possibility.**
- Give the receiver a chance to think briefly and respond.

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.” (Proverbs 16:24 ESV)

Notes:



8. Review the procedure for Sharing Times:

- 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

9. Check In: **Which of the spiritual disciplines we've learned have you incorporated into your spiritual practice? Which have you shared with others?**

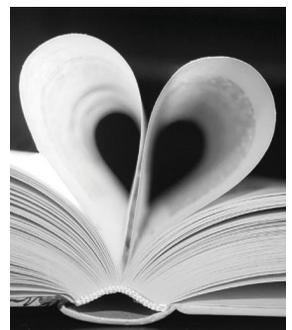
10. Share your answers to the questions for this session. Remember to pause for a moment after each person speaks.

- **How do you think peer spiritual direction can benefit believers?**
- **Name one benefit of peer spiritual direction you'd like to see for yourself and one benefit you'd like others to see in you.**

11. Close by praying that you'll grow together spiritually. Decide when you will meet next.

12. Connect with the Listening Companion you were paired with during Listening Hearts 2 sometime this week.

Notes:



SESSION 2: Learning to Notice

1. Welcome
2. Reminders: Remember to be absolutely disciplined about not sharing anything you hear in this group.
3. Read Philippians 2:4 (NIRV): *“None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others.”* Enjoy four 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.”*
4. During this session, we will focus on the first two principles for peer spiritual direction:
 - Notice any memories or feelings of your own that could distort your thinking.
 - Is there a question that could bring out more of their story?

Have someone read **Learning to Notice**:

Learning to Notice

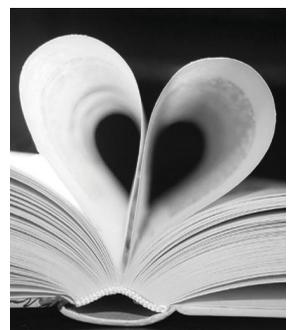
As you listen to the stories of others (in this session and others), you don't want distorted hearing. These steps help you to notice emotions that could cause that.

1) Take some deep breaths. Waiting gives us a chance to notice something in ourselves.

2) Notice any thoughts or feelings their story stirs up in you. Later you may want to think more about these thoughts and feelings later. *Where did they come from? Are they related to unresolved things in the past? Perhaps they reawaken dreams for the future?*

3) Try to ask the speaker questions that are not from your own reactions but that draw out their story.

Notes:



5. Review **Lectio Divina** below. Practice *Lectio Divina* with Luke 10:30-37 (the parable of the Good Samaritan).

Lectio Divina

This is simply Latin for divine reading. It is an ancient way of reflecting on Scripture.

1. Choose a short passage from the Bible.
2. Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word.
3. Read (or listen) to the passage slowly three times, pausing between each one.
 - *First time:* Imagine the scene. What does it look like? Sound like?
 - *Second time:* Which word or phrase are you noticing most?
 - *Third time:* How could that word or phrase apply to your life? What might God be saying?

6. Check in: **Who is your neighbour? What is one thing you can do to bless that person this week?** (We'll ask how it went next week.)
7. Share your answers to the question. Have others try to ask questions that draw out more from the person's response. Remember to focus on the other person's story more than on your own reactions to their story.
- **Reflecting on the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), were you or someone you know ever in a position of deep vulnerability or need? What did someone do to provide care in that moment?**
8. **Pray Scripture** over each other. You can use Philippians 4:6-9 or another passage if you prefer. Connect with your Listening Companion this week, focusing on the principles outlined in Learning to Notice while spending time together.

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.*

SESSION 3: Learning to Reflect Back

1. Welcome.
2. Read Proverbs 27:17 (CSB): *“Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.”* Practice a time of silence for five minutes. *Deliberately relax before you enter into silence. Close your eyes; take several slow, deep breaths. Notice where you might be holding tension (Neck hunched? Shoulders tight? Brow furrowed?).* At the end, say: *“Come Lord Jesus, fill our hearts and minds so we may keep company with you and one another. Amen.”*
3. Have someone read **Learning to Reflect Back: Guidelines** (based on Guidelines for Reflecting from <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/reflecting.html>)

Learning to Reflect Back: Guidelines

- Be natural.
- Listen for the basic message – consider the content, feeling, and meaning expressed by the speaker.
- Restate what you have been told in simple terms.
- When restating, look for non-verbal as well as verbal cues that confirm or deny the accuracy of your paraphrasing. Note that some speakers may pretend you have got it right because they feel unable to assert themselves and disagree with you.
- Do not question the speaker unnecessarily or add to their meaning.
- Do not take the speaker’s topic in a new direction.
- Always be non-judgmental.

4. Check-in: **How did it go with your neighbour? What did you do? How did they respond? Is there a next step you can take?**
5. Share your answers to the questions for this session. Practice reflecting back after each person speaks.
 - **What is one weakness you struggle with? What are its consequences? What steps could you take to overcome it?**
 - **How could someone else’s spiritual support and input help you overcome this struggle?**
6. Pray for each other’s spiritual growth.
7. Connect with your Listening Companion this week, focusing on the principles outlined in Learning to Reflect Back: Guidelines while spending time together.

SESSION 4: A Practice in Patience

1. Welcome.
2. Read Isaiah 64:8 (The Voice): *“Still, Eternal One, You are our Father. We are just clay, and You are the potter. We are the product of Your creative action, shaped and formed into something of worth.”* Enjoy five 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. Check-in: **Name one spiritual area and one other area in which you’ve been growing lately.**
4. Questions for this session:
 - **List five things that make you feel impatient and five things that make you feel loving and kind.**
 - **Using one thing from each list as examples, how do you think God is calling you to be patient? Why do you think that is?**
5. End this session with **Guided Prayer**:
 - Read Psalm 103:10-12 aloud. Choose any translation. For convenience, the NIV is in the box below.

*He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:10-12 (NIV)*
 - As people’s eyes are closed, gently read the following prompts, pausing briefly between each one:
 - Think about how forgiven you are – every single sin forgiven, nothing missed.
 - Think about how clean God has made you – white as snow, clothed in righteousness.
 - Think about how restored you are – no matter what happened in the past, God is still able to do amazing things in your life.
 - Invite people to share something that came to mind about God’s nature or character as they went through this exercise.
6. Ask someone to read what God says in Isaiah 43:19 (ESV): *“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”*
7. Decide how to stay in touch with your Listening Companion, remembering to deliberately practice the Learning to Notice and Learning to Reflect Back principles we learned in earlier sessions.

SESSION 5: Sharing Scripture with Each Other

1. Welcome.
2. Before you begin your time together, invite everyone to share a favourite Bible verse. Then pray silently for a few moments, giving yourselves afresh to God before moving into a time of silence for five minutes. 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. During this session, we will focus on the third, fourth, and fifth **Principles of Peer Spiritual Direction:**
 - Is there a verse or phrase that God seems to be bringing to mind?
 - Test that verse or phrase.
 - Offer the verse or phrase as a possibility.

Have someone read **Sharing Scripture with Each Other:**

Sharing Scripture with Each Other

1) Ask God to show you something to encourage the other person. If no verse comes readily to mind, consider Numbers 6:24-26 (The Message) for the person, asking God to make your thoughts personal for them:

²⁴ GOD bless you and keep you,
²⁵ GOD smile on you and gift you,
²⁶ GOD look you full in the face
and make you prosper.

2) As the person shares, pay attention to a verse or phrase that comes to mind.

3) Test the verse or phrase. If it blesses and doesn't break a confidence, then gently share it with them.

4) If no verse or phrase comes to mind, that's okay. Just reflect back what the person has said.

4. Check-in: **What new spiritual growth is God encouraging in your life? To what can you pay attention to promote that growth?**

5. As each person shares their answers to this session's questions, practice using the principles of Sharing Scripture with Each Other.
- **What loss have you experienced in the past?**
 - **What is one regret you have about your past? What do you wish you had done differently or not done at all?**
 - **What do you think God's healing could look like on your journey?**
6. End this session with **Palms Down, Palms Up** as a prayer.

Palms Down, Palms Up

Sometimes doing something physical can help us make an equivalent spiritual change. This ancient practice is designed to help us release our worries to Christ.

1. Close your eyes and hold your hands out in front of you with the palms facing down. Silently name the fears, frustrations and burdens you are carrying one by one. Perhaps there is someone you are worried about; perhaps you have a relationship in conflict. What is causing you stress?
2. As you name each item, pray to release it (e.g. Lord, I entrust my child to you; I give you my fear about this medical appointment ...). Imagine God's hands held out and ready to receive what you are letting go.
3. Then, slowly turn your hands over. With palms up, pray to receive whatever God has for you. Sit quietly for a minute or two.

*"Cast all your worries on him, for he cares for you."
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For slightly different versions try

<https://www.waterfromrock.org/2013/04/15/palms-up-palms-down-2/>

<https://waterfromrock.org/2016/07/25/palms-down-palms-up/>

7. Decide how to stay in touch with your Listening Companion, adding Sharing Scripture with Each Other to your time together.

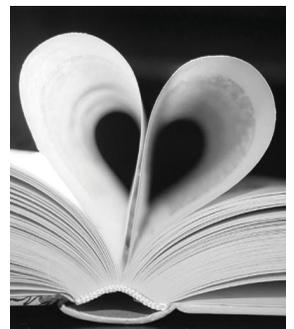
SESSION 6: Having a Discerning Heart

1. Welcome.
2. Read Hebrews 4:12 (ERV): *“God’s word is alive and working. It is sharper than the sharpest sword and cuts all the way into us. It cuts deep to the place where the soul and the spirit are joined. God’s word cuts to the center of our joints and our bones. It judges the thoughts and feelings in our hearts.”* Enjoy five 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 **Learning to Discern** (remember, we are all learning!):

Learning to Discern

- Test what you hear: *Is it true? Is it pure? Is it encouraging? Is it for them or for me?*
 - Test what you say: *What is the most encouraging way to say this?*
 - Use tentative language and leave the listener the freedom to decide if it applies: *Instead of “Thus saith the Lord!”, how about “While you were talking, this verse came to mind. Does it feel relevant to you? It’s okay if it doesn’t. It might be something for the future.”*
 - Test what you receive: *If someone shares a verse or phrase with you, you also test it. Does it confirm something God has already been saying? Do you feel encouraged? Drawn toward God? If not, just leave it to one side. If it is from God, you will be reminded of it again in the future.*
4. Check in: **What is something you are grateful for today? What is difficult for you right now?**
 5. Questions for this session:
 - **What can distract you from really listening to someone?**
 - **How can your own experiences positively or negatively influence your response to what someone is saying? Can you give an example?**
 - **What are some practices for listening well to others?**

Notes:



6. Read Philippians 1:9-11 in both the NIV and The Message:

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. (NIV)

So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God. (MSG)

Spend time briefly reflecting on what stood out to you from those verses. Take turns praying this Scripture for one another using the translation that stood out to you most.

7. Decide how to stay in touch with your Listening Companion, focusing on the principles of Learning to Discern during your time together.

Notes:



SESSION 7: We are All Called

1. Welcome.
2. Read Ephesians 4:1 (NLT): *“Therefore, I, [Paul,] a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”* Enjoy five 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. Review the **Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction**. This collects together the different pieces we have been learning: listening to God, testing what we think we may have heard, and filtering what we say. We will continue working on these skills during Listening Hearts 4.

Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction

As the person speaks, try these steps of *Peer Spiritual Direction* all at once:

- **Notice** any memories or feelings of your own that could distort your listening.
- Is there a **question** that could bring out more of their story?
- Is there a **verse or phrase** that God seems to be bringing to mind?
- **Test** that verse or phrase.
- **Offer it as a possibility.**
- Give the receiver a chance to think briefly and respond.

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.” (Proverbs 16:24 ESV)

4. Paul wrote Ephesians 4:1, the verse we read earlier, to the entire church in Ephesus. Not just their leaders.
 - Check in: **Have you ever considered that you have a calling to not only salvation but to service? Why or why not?**
5. After each person shares their response to the questions for this session, pause and try to respond using the Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction.
 - **What is something that God is calling you toward personally?**
 - **What steps would you need to take to move toward that calling?**
 - **What spiritual gift(s) would you need to fulfill that calling?**
6. Pray for the open doors and the spiritual gifts you need to fulfill your callings.
7. Decide how to stay in touch with your Listening Companion, focusing on the Principles of Peer Spiritual Direction. You could use your time together to discuss what God is calling you to do in more detail.

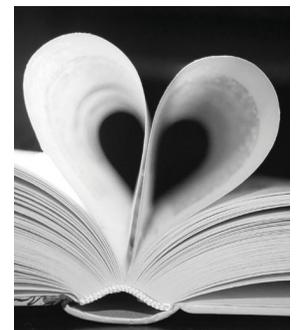
SESSION 8: Looking Ahead

1. Welcome.
2. Read Hebrews 10:23-24 (NIV): *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds....”* Enjoy five 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 Ecclesiastes 4:9-10a (NIRV): *“Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do. Suppose either of them falls down. Then the one can help the other one up.”*
4. Check In: **How has God encouraged you during these sessions? During your time with your Listening Companion?**
5. Session Questions:
 - **How has your view of yourself as a spiritual companion changed?**
 - **How could you use the principles of peer spiritual direction in your relationships with other believers? Does a specific person or situation come to mind?**
6. **Pray Scripture** over each other using hope-centred Bible verses. A couple of passages are included below as examples or you can use another passage of your choosing.

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.” (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NLT)

“Finally, brothers [and sisters], whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:8-9, ESV)
7. Consider if you would like to continue to meet with your Listening Companion.

Notes:



Thank-you, facilitators! We pray you will be blessed to overflowing.