

# Listening Hearts Resource Book



# Procedure for Sharing Times



# Sharing Times

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, we 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.

- 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.  
*What else happened? How did you feel? How does this event connect with other things in your life? What do you want to do next?*
- Be aware if a Scripture comes to mind. This could be God speaking to you. Gently share the Scripture.
- Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing to listen for God after each one.

# Spiritual Practices



# Silence

While practicing silence, we don't pray or think over things -- we just rest with God. Sometimes we need to be quiet and slow down to listen well (both to God and to others).

Set a timer with a gentle alert sound for one minute to be silent before God. As you continue to practice, you can slowly increase the time you spend in silence.



Listening Hearts 1

# Praying 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.

You can choose verses of praise or petition. Read the verses you've chosen. Pray, asking God to give each of those blessings to the person you're praying for.

Here's an example using Ephesians 1:16-20:

*Lord, I thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. Please reveal yourself to them so that they can know you more and more deeply. Help them to have ever deeper assurance that you have called them to good things. Let them have great faith and experience your great power. Thank-you that your power to work in and through their life is still as strong as when you raised Christ from the dead.*

*Thank-you for Jesus. Amen.*

Listening Hearts 1

# *Examen*

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.

- *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 these 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.



Listening Hearts I

# 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.

- Close your eyes and hold your hands out in front of you with palms facing down.
- Silently name the fears, frustrations, and burdens you are carrying one by one. Perhaps there is someone you're worried about. Perhaps you have a relationship in conflict. What is causing you stress?
- As you name each item, pray to release it (for example, "*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.
- Then slowly turn your hands over. With palms up, pray to receive whatever God has for you. Sit quietly for a minute or two.



# *Lectio Divina*

This is simply Latin for "Divine Reading". It is an ancient way of reflecting on Scripture.

- Choose a short passage from the Bible.
- Ask God to speak to you through his Word.
- Read (or listen to) the passage slowly three times, pausing between each one to reflect.
  - *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?



# Scripture Meditation

There are many ways to meditate on Scripture. This method will get you started but feel free to explore other methods as you deepen your practice.

- Read the same Bible verse or short passage from several translations.
- Notice words, phrases, or connections that stand out to you as you read. You may want to circle those words and phrases and draw lines between the connections you notice if you have a printed copy of the Scripture in front of you.
- Take a few minutes to think about the passage.
- Silently repeat a phrase that stands out to you, emphasizing a different word each time. What do you notice?
- If God wrote a note to you based on this phrase, verse, or passage, what would it say?



Listening Hearts 2

# Guided Prayer

This practice will need to be adapted according to the Scripture on which you base your prayer. Here's an example using Psalm 103:10-12:

*"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)*

Gently move through 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.

Now take some time to meditate on an aspect of God's nature or character that came to mind as you moved through the prompts.

# *Visio Divina*

With this practice, you look at a picture while meditating on a piece of Scripture. Visual learners may find this practice especially meaningful. The idea is to let God speak to you.

- Choose a short passage from the Bible and find a picture that relates to the passage (for example, a picture of sheep and a shepherd in a meadow could be used to meditate on Psalm 23).
- Slowly read (or listen to) the passage.
- Observe a few minutes of silence as you look at the picture while meditating on the passage.
- Read (or listen to) the passage at least one more time.
- Ask yourself what came to mind as you looked at the picture while meditating on Scripture.



# Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction



# Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction

The goal of peer spiritual direction is to speak the truth in love into each other's lives (Ephesians 4:25) and to encourage and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11). As the person speaks, keep these steps in mind.

- *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?
- 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.
- *Give* the other person a chance to think briefly and respond.



# Learning to Notice

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

- Take some deep breaths. Waiting gives us a chance to notice something in ourselves.
- Notice any thoughts or feelings their story stirs up in you. 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.*
- Try to ask the speaker questions that are not from your own reactions but that draw out more of their story.



# Learning to Reflect Back

*"Reflecting is the process of paraphrasing and restating both the feelings and words of the speaker. The purposes of reflecting are to allow the speaker to hear their own thoughts and to focus on what they feel, to show the speaker you are trying to perceive the world as they see it and that you are doing your best to understand their messages, and to encourage them to continue talking."*

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/reflecting.html>

- 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 gotten 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.



# Sharing Scripture with Each Other

- Ask God to show you something to encourage the other person.
- As the person shares, pay attention to a verse or phrase that comes to mind.
- Test the verse or phrase. If it blesses and doesn't break a confidence, then gently share it with them.
- If no verse or phrase comes to mind, that's okay. Just reflect back what the person has said. Consider Numbers 6:24-26 (MSG) for the person, asking God to make your thoughts personal for them:

*God bless you and keep you,  
God smile on you and gift you,  
God look you full in the face  
and make you prosper.*

# Learning to Discern

Sometimes it can be difficult to know whether a message is truly from God rather than our own thoughts. These guidelines can help you figure out if what you hear, say, and receive from others is in line with what God wants to say.

- 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 something like, "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 with you, you also test it. Does it confirm something God has already been saying? Do you feel encouraged? Do you feel 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.*

# Sacred Pathways & Blessings



# Sacred Pathways

Our personalities and gifts often make it easier to connect with God in certain ways. Some have called those differences sacred pathways. On one hand, we want to make best use of the pathway that suits how God made us. On the other hand, sometimes it's good to try other paths to broaden our experience of God.

- *Naturalists*: feel closest to God outdoors
- *Sensates*: worship God experientially
- *Traditionalists*: love God through ritual and symbol
- *Ascetics*: love God in solitude and in simplicity
- *Activists*: love God by advocating for justice
- *Caregivers*: love God by loving others
- *Enthusiasts*: celebrate a miraculous God
- *Contemplatives*: adore God
- *Intellectuals*: love God with their minds

*(Adapted from "Sacred Pathways", Alpha Discipleship Tool)*

# Blessing

Adapted from Every Moment Holy by Douglas Kaine McKelvey

We are gathered here because we believe that we are called together into a work we cannot yet know the fullness of. Still, we trust the voice of the One who has called us. And so we offer to you, O God, these things: our dreams, our plans, our vision -- shape them as you will; our moments and gifts -- may they be invested toward bright, eternal ends.

Richly bless the work before us, Father. Shepherd us well. Let us listen for your voice, our hearts ever open to the quiet beckoning of your Spirit in this endeavour. Let us in true humility remain ever ready to move at the impulse of your love in paths of your design.

We cannot know the end of another person's story. Our lives so often only briefly intersect. So let us be content to minister regardless of visible outcomes, trusting that the small mercies we extend will be woven into the larger theme of redemption at work in the lives of others as you woo them to yourself, drawing their hearts by graces offered, and shaping our own hearts too, in this process of learning to serve well, and by learning to serve well, learning to love well.

We praise you, Lord, and thank you for the commitment and time given by this community you have so uniquely charged and gifted for the specific ministries they have served. We pray blessing and abundance over their lives -- that they may receive all that they continue to pour out, and then some. Continue to walk with and lead us all as we tune into your continued promptings through the Spirit.

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”*

(Numbers 6:24-26, NKJV)

Amen!

Listening Hearts 4

# Blessing

by St. Teresa of Avila

May today there be peace within.  
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.  
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.  
May you use those gifts that you have received,  
and pass on the love that has been given to you.  
May you be content knowing you are a child of God.  
Let this presence settle into your bones,  
and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love.  
It is there for each and every one of us.



# Sample Scriptures for Reflection, Meditation, and Prayer



- *"Be still and know that I am God."* (Psalm 46:10, NIV)
- *"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."* (James 4:8a, ESV)
- *"For in him we live and move and have our being."* (Acts 17:28a, NIV)
- *"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."* (Psalm 119:105, NIV)
- *"Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another."* (Proverbs 27:17, CSB)
- *"I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry."* (Psalm 40:1, NIV)
- *"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."* (Matthew 18:20, NIV)
- *"Uncover my eyes so that I may see the miraculous things in your teachings."* (Psalm 119:18, GW)
- *"Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me."* (Psalm 31:3, NIV)
- *"Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."* (Proverbs 16:24, ESV)
- *"Turn all your troubles over to him, because he cares for you and is watching over you."* (1 Peter 5:7, WE)
- *"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."* (Psalm 143:10, NIV)
- *"Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NASB)
- *"None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others."* (Philippians 2:4, NIRV)



- *"Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." (Ephesians 4:1, NLT)*
- *"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11, ESV)*
- *"Give to the Lord the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor." (1 Chronicles 16:29, NLT)*
- *"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." (Isaiah 43:19, ESV)*
- *"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." (Numbers 3:24-26, 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." (Revelation 3:20, 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...." (Hebrews 10:23-24a, NIV)*
- *"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." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10a, NIRV)*
- *"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." (Isaiah 64:8, The Voice)*

- *"Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion." (Psalm 103:2-4, NIV)*
- *"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)*
- *"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)*
- *"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.'" (Lamentations 3:22-24, NIV)*
- *"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." (2 Timothy 1:13-14, CEV)*
- *"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting comfort and hope, which we don't deserve, comfort your hearts with all comfort, and help you in every good thing you say and do." (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, TLB)*

- *"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." (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)*
- *"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)*
- *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT)*
- *"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." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18, NIV)*
- *"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." (Hebrews 4:12, ERV)*

- *"I pray that your love will keep on growing and you will fully know and understand how to make the right choices. Then you will still be pure and innocent when Christ returns. And until that day, Jesus Christ will keep you busy doing good deeds that bring glory and praise to God." (Philippians 1:9-11, CEV)*
- *"But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 'Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy.'" (1 Peter 2:9-10, NLT)*
- *"Because you have these blessings, do your best to add these things to your lives: to your faith, add goodness; and to your goodness, add knowledge; and to your knowledge, add self-control; and to your self-control, add patience; and to your patience, add service for God; and to your service for God, add kindness for your brothers and sisters in Christ; and to this kindness, add love." (2 Peter 1:5-7, NCV)*
- *"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." (Romans 12:2, MSG)*

- *"Don't worry and say, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' The people who don't know God keep trying to get these things, and your Father in heaven knows you need them. Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well. So don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*  
(Matthew 6:31-34, NCV)
- *"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." (Ephesians 3:16-19, NIV)*
- *"Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name." (I Chronicles 29:10b-13, ESV)*

- *"To those who have sorrow in Zion I will give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes. I will give them the oil of joy instead of sorrow, and a spirit of praise instead of a spirit of no hope. Then they will be called oaks that are right with God, planted by the Lord, that He may be honored. They will build the cities again that were destroyed long ago. They will raise up what had been torn down, and will rebuild the cities that were destroyed, and have lain waste through the years of many families and their children's children." (Isaiah 61:3-4, NLT)*
- *"Don't worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks for what you have. And because you belong to Christ Jesus, God's peace will stand guard over all your thoughts and feelings. His peace can do this far better than our human minds. Brothers and sisters, continue to think about what is good and worthy of praise. Think about what is true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected. And do what you learned from me -- what I told you and what you saw me do. And the God who gives peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:6-9, ERV)*



- *"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...."* (Ephesians 1:16-20, NIV)
- *"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to all, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, enduring everything with perseverance and patience joyfully, giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled us to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His dear Son...."* (Colossians 1:9-13, MEV)

