

WEEK 3:

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

Objective: Create a safe environment where people can discuss whether or not they have heard God speak to them and explore their desires to know Him better. Use this discussion to logically transition to the prayer experience, which should be intimate, relational, and transformational. Through the experience, people will be drawn together into a bond that is strong and deep.

PRAYER POINTS

- There would be openness in your group to share and be honest about what stumbling blocks they have experienced with prayer in the past.
- They would understand God's great desire to have a personal and intimate relationship with them through His Word and prayer.
- People in your group will make time for the prayer experience and would hear from God in an intimate and personal way.

LEADER PREPARATION

- Take time to prepare your heart before you arrive, praying for your group time and each person in your group.
- Watch for "over talkers" and those that make community unsafe for the rest of the group. Redirect them.
- Pray that God would show you who He wants to be future Life Group leaders and Rooted leaders. Begin giving them responsibilities for the group to develop them as leaders.
- If you are leading a mixed gender group by yourself, pray for God to raise up a member of the opposite sex who will be able to pray for people during strongholds and any other appropriate times.
- Listen to what is said and what is not said as your group shares so you can ask great questions. Lead with the end in mind!
- As you prepare for your Life Group, see the appendix for more reading about the Holy Spirit.

GROUP TIME

10 minutes - Welcome

- Continue to use name tags to help everyone learn names.
- Appoint a future leader to help you welcome the group as they arrive.

20 minutes - Ice Breaker

Create a safe way to help people get to know each other (one minute per person)

- Play Peaks and Pits. Have everyone share the best and worst part of their day
- Play the Penny Game. Bring 20 pennies dated in the last 25 years and have everyone pick one and share something that happened in their life in that year.
- Play “Two Truths and a Lie.” Each person makes three statements about him or herself and one isn’t true. The group guesses which one is false.

20 minutes - Introductory Questions

- Have two or three people share their two-minute story.
- Whom do you recognize on the phone before they say their name? What makes them so recognizable for you?
- What do you love/hate about caller I.D.? Do you use it to screen your calls?
- What do you think the face of God looks like?

40 minutes - Discussion

The main message this week is that God speaks to us and wants a personal relationship with us.

As you transition out of the opening questions, you can segue to this week’s topics: talking to God (prayer) and hearing from God as He speaks into our lives.

Sample questions:

- What challenges you as we talk about prayer and hearing from God?
- Has anyone in the group ever questioned the authenticity of the Bible? What did you find out?
- How important is the Bible to you?
- What are different ways people hear from God? How do you hear from Him when you pray?
- Did this week’s homework make you think of prayer differently? If so, how?

- You can ask a question about the homework. “Which day did you like the best?” “Which day challenged you the most?” (Homework questions are listed on the following page).
- You can pick one or two questions they answered in homework and use it as a basis for discussion.

Leader notes: Remember that throughout this discussion and those that follow, everyone will not agree. In fact, create room for people to disagree. Everyone is on his or her own journey. Bring in truth by redirecting questions to others in the group. Don't teach – lead.

Remember to take notes when each person shares part of their story, writing down things they question or may not believe, and breakthroughs in their spiritual journey. You will use all of these notes when you pray for them to break free of strongholds and during Affirmation Prayers in Week 10.

20 minutes - Prayer Requests

- Prayer requests can be done as a group or you can break into prayer partners.
- Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality.
- Pray about the future of the group and why God brought you all together. Pray that people in the group would find their purpose individually and collectively.

10 minutes - Closing

- Ensure you have a set time and location for your prayer experience and everyone has the specifics on their calendars and has arranged for child care if needed. 100% participation is the goal.
- If your group has decided to fast as part of your experience, review your goals for fasting and your plan for breaking your fast.
- Update status of social media/email group.

See appendix for additional notes on fasting.

WORKBOOK REVIEW

How Does God Speak to Us?

The focus this week is that God speaks in many ways. We learn about the Holy Spirit, prayer, and listening to God.

Day 1 The Sword of the Spirit

- What is the biggest challenge you have to reading or studying God's Word?
- How about believing or following God's Word?

Day 2 God Speaks

- Does any of what you've read today surprise you? Why?
- Do you feel like God speaks to people as clearly today as He did in biblical times?
- How has God spoken to you?
- Do you really want to hear what God wants to say to you?

Day 3 Our Divine Helper

- What was your understanding and your relationship with the Holy Spirit up to this point?
- What is it now?
- How can you keep in step with the Holy Spirit?

Day 4 The Purpose of Prayer

- What new thoughts do you have about prayer?
- What is more challenging for you: to speak to God or to listen to God? Why?

Day 5 Connecting with God in a Meaningful Way

- What excites you and what seems daunting as you think about establishing a regular time to read the Bible and pray?
- What book of the Bible do you want to read/study first?

LEADING A SUCCESSFUL PRAYER EXPERIENCE

PREPARING FOR THE PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Pray for your group as a whole and for each individual, for what it is God plans to do as they meet with Him in the first Rooted experience.
- A sample prayer: “Lord, I pray that those who have never heard your voice would recognize it in this experience. That through Your Spirit, You will reveal Yourself to the non-believers in a powerful way so they would see and know that You are the One True Living God who knows them and loves them. For those in the group who know your voice, my prayer is that You will meet them and give them what they need from Your abundance and grace.”
- Choose a location for your prayer experience. Some places to consider are a group member’s home, at church, in the chapel, outdoors, or a quiet park. Feel free to create a welcoming and inviting environment for the Prayer Experience. Use music, candles, or whatever you feel would enhance a peaceful atmosphere.
- This is a great week to have group members pray for an opportunity to share their faith. God may open doors to spiritual conversations before Week 9.
- As you lead your group in prayer, pray through your church’s mission statement and how God might use your group to fulfill that mission. You can refer back to this in your Rooted group and your Life Group.
- You can use the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-14 as a guide for your time:
 - v. 6:9 Worship, thanksgiving
 - v. 6:10 God’s Kingdom to come, justice, mercy, righteousness and peace on earth
 - v. 6:11 Our needs
 - v. 6:12 Confession and forgiveness
 - v. 6:13 Protection

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- There will be many people in your group who have never prayed for 45 minutes, so help them understand how it will work and encourage them that the time will go by very quickly. You may be asked why the prayer experience is so long. The reason is that it usually takes a while to quiet our hearts and focus on the Lord and what He wants to say to us. In fact, some groups have wanted it to be longer and have taken a half day to pray. Use your judgment to determine the length of time.

- There may be people in your group who have never prayed before or who have never prayed out loud before. Be understanding of this as you lead them. Some people may not want to “lean in” to this experience. The thought of praying for an extended period of time may be intimidating to them. As their leader, be encouraging. Help them to understand that though this may be a challenge for them, God is working in and through their prayers.
- You may have people in your group who don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus. Invite them to explore who God is and how He talks with us. Encourage them to participate in this experience by asking Him to reveal Himself.
- See appendix for additional notes on the Prayer Experience.

FASTING (STRONGLY ENCOURAGED)

Depending on your group, you may want to challenge them to fast as a group before your prayer experience and then celebrate the completion of your experience with a meal together. If you are meeting in the afternoon, you could begin your fast after your evening meal the night before, and through breakfast and lunch the next day. Should your group not be ready for this, you as a leader could fast and/or ask a few of your more spiritually mature group members to join you.

See appendix for additional notes on fasting.

DEBRIEFING TIME (BREAKING FAST TOGETHER)

Be sure to make time for debrief. Listen for how God moved in this prayer experience. Take notes as your group discusses what they experienced as they took the extended time to pray and listen for God’s voice. What did they hear? How did they feel? Did the time go quickly? What was unique about this time when they prayed versus other times they’ve prayed?

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Isaiah 65:24

The Church of Scotland defines prayer this way: “Prayer is an offering of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.” This summarizes well the components of prayer. Our hearts should be set right before praying and our desires within God’s will in all things we bring to Him.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PRAYER TIME

- Review your notes from group time of how people have experienced hearing from God. This can help guide you, especially if you are new to prayer and hearing God speak directly to you.
- Review your journal for areas in your own life that you will want to incorporate into your prayer time.
- Come to the prayer time unencumbered, without your to-do lists or thoughts of what is scheduled next. Don’t bring a mobile device or other distractions.
- Consider fasting prior to your prayer time.

NOTES ON FASTING:

In order to make the most of your prayer and fasting time with your Rooted group, we recommend that you spend time preparing to hear from God. One of the disciplines that helps with this is fasting. Fasting is a way we eliminate the noise and distractions of the world around us and focus more completely on hearing God’s voice. While we fast, we are reminded and we become more aware of our dependence on God. By fasting, we intensify our prayers, place ourselves in a position of submission and become more sensitive to hearing God’s voice.

GROUP PRAYER TIME (30 MINUTES)

- Begin with a devotional or read Scripture (Psalms 8, 19, 34, 121 and/or 138 are great options) to prepare your heart and mind for time in prayer.
- Move into a space where you will not be interrupted.
- Talk about what prayer is, why it’s an important discipline, and what your hopes are for this experience.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER TIME (60 MINUTES)

- Begin praying. Take time to listen to what God wants to say to you.

You can use the following example of prayer structure and content. Remember prayer is a personal discipline. This is only an example of one way to pray. Write down any thoughts that come to mind so you can refer back and see how God answered your prayers.

- Praise/Thanksgiving/Worship
- Confession
- Ask:
 - Family, friends, specific needs from your journal
 - For your Rooted group requests
 - For your church and the Church in the world, to accomplish His will on earth as it is in Heaven
 - For your purpose
 - For those with whom God wants you to tell your story
 - Our community
 - Our nation and leaders
 - The world and world leaders
 - What God wants your group to do, where you should serve
 - People in whom God wants you to invest
 - In all things, pray that you are within His will

DEBRIEF AND CELEBRATION (60 MINUTES)

After your prayer time, take time to share a meal together to break your fast. Share how you heard God's voice, what this focused prayer time meant to you, and how it affected you. Share how the fasting time prepared you and whether your prayer time felt more intense from this discipline. Share any other relevant feelings or revelations from God during this time in fasting and prayer and if it is something you want to continue to add to your life on a more regular basis.

NAMES AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD

Abba	Romans 8:15	Love	1 John 4:8
Comforter	Isaiah 66:13	Merciful	Ephesians 2:4
Counselor	Isaiah 28:29	Mighty	Luke 1:49
Creator	Genesis 1:1	Miracle Worker	Matt. 19:26
Deliverer	Psalms 91:3	Never Changes	James 1:17
Faithful	Lam. 3:23	Never Weary	Isaiah 40:28
Forgiving	Num. 14:18	Peacemaker	Proverbs 16:7
Fortress	Psalms 91:2	Physician	Psalms 103:3
Gentle	Isaiah 40:11	Powerful	Psalms 66:7
Good	Psalms 145:7	Redeemer	Isaiah 54:5
Guide	Psalms 48:14	Refiner	Malachi 3:3
Healer	Exodus 15:26	Refuge	Psalms 46:1
Holy	Leviticus 19:2	Rescuer	Daniel 6:27
Husband	Isaiah 54:4	Rock	2 Sam 22:32
Jealous	Exodus 34:14	Shepherd	Psalms 23
Just	Isaiah 45:21	Steadfast	Daniel 6:26
Light	Psalms 27:1	Strong	Psalms 89:8
Living Water	Jeremiah 2:13	Teacher	Psalms 119
Longsuffering	Num. 14:18	Trustworthy	Psalms 144:2

NAMES OF GOD, TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW

HEBREW	TRANSLATION
El Elyon	The God Most High
Elohim	The Creator
Jehovah-nissi	The Lord my Banner
Qanni	Jealous
Jehovah-shalom	The Lord is Peace
Jehovah-saboath	The Lord of Hosts
El Shaddai	The All Sufficient One
Adonai	LORD, Master
Yahweh	LORD (Jehovah)
El Olam	The God Who Sees
Jehovah-mekoddishkem	The Lords Who Sanctifies You
Jehovah-jireh	The Lord Will Provide
Jehovah-raah	The Lord is my Shepherd
Jehovah-rapha	The Lord Who Heals
Jehovah-shammah	The Lord is There
Jehovah-tsidkenu	The Lord our Righteousness