

# WEEK 3: HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

## OBJECTIVE

Set the stage for an intimate, relational, and transformational prayer experience by creating space for honest discussion about each individual's journey with prayer. Receive each group members experiences of hearing, or not hearing God's voice with grace and truth.

### CHECK LIST

- Prepare by reviewing the devotions, and praying for each person in your group
- Have 2 people share their story
- Remind group about the details of your prayer experience and fasting
- Assign the next two people to share their story
- Consider who God is calling up in the group as a leader for small groups or Rooted. If you are leading a mixed gender group yourself, consider utilizing this individual, of the opposite sex, to pray for people during strongholds.

## 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.

God would show you who He wants to be future small group leaders and Rooted leaders. Begin giving them responsibilities for the group to develop them as leaders.

# GROUP TIME

## Welcome—5 minutes

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

## Icebreaker—15 minutes

- Use an icebreaker to help the group connect. See examples in the appendix.

## Story—10 minutes

- Have two people share their 2-5 minute story of how they came to Christ, or how they ended up in this group.

*TIP: Take notes when each person shares their story, writing down things they question or may not believe, or breakthroughs in their spiritual journey. You will use all of these notes when you pray for them to break free of strongholds and during the celebration.*

## Introductory Questions – 20 minutes

- 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?

## Discussion—40 minutes

*TIP: See the appendix for notes on the Holy Spirit to help prepare you for these conversations.*

- What challenged you or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- You can ask a question about the daily devotions such as, “Which day did you like the best?,” “Which day challenged you the most?,” or pick one or two questions they answered in homework, and use it as a basis for discussion.

*TIP: Remember that throughout this discussion and those that follow, not everyone will 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.*

## **Prayer Requests—20 minutes**

- 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 continue to hear God's voice in their daily life.

## **Closing—10 minutes**

- Ensure you have a set time and location for your prayer experience, and everyone has the details 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. *TIP: See appendix for additional notes on fasting.*
- Remind the group of the ways you are staying in touch during the week via emails or social media.

# **WORKBOOK REVIEW**

## **How Does God Speak To Us?**

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and request. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

### ***Ephesians 6:17-18***

#### **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?

What might keep you from really wanting 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?

In light of today's reading, where do you want to invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your life?

### **DAY 4 – THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER**

What thoughts or new ideas do you have about prayer?

What is more challenging for you: speaking to God, or listening 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 God plans to do as they meet with Him in the Rooted prayer experience.

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 a chapel, at the beach, or a quiet park. Feel free to create a welcoming and inviting environment for this experience. Use music, candles, or whatever you feel would enhance a peaceful atmosphere.

Review the prayer experience guideline here in this book.

*TIP: The appendix has an additional Prayer Experience model, if you want another option of structure for your group.*

## **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 your group should engage in this experience for.

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 to them.

The prayer experience is a great time to pray and listen for God to reveal people in our lives who we can serve, love, and share our stories with. You can encourage group members to pray for an opportunity to share their faith. God may open doors to spiritual conversations before Week 9.

Explain to your group that they will each be seeking an opportunity to share their faith story with someone during the Week 9 readings. Discuss how group members will be sharing their stories with someone in their life. Explore the idea of loving and knowing our neighbors. If they don’t know their neighbors, encourage them to simply take a step of introducing themselves. In His timing, God will provide opportunities for them to tell their stories of faith.

## **Fasting (Optional)**

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 by breaking your fast 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.

*TIP: See appendix for additional notes on fasting.*

## **Debriefing**

Be sure to make time for debriefing. 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 engage prayer as a way of aligning our desires with God's will.

## **Preparing For Your Prayer Time**

- Review your notes from group time about 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 you have 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 experience 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 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 you want to continue to add this to your life on a more regular basis.