

# 40 Days of Prayer

## Leaders Guide

### Session Four “Can You Hear Me Now?”

#### What Participants will need:

1. Handouts
2. Bible
3. Pens

#### IF TIME IS SHORT

As usual, there may be more material here than you can use in the time you have available. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU ALLOW 30 MINUTES FOR THE PRAYER SECTION** and its follow up questions. Although all the questions have value and purpose, if time is tight it is suggested that you skip questions 7 & 11 and the PRACTICE section. If time is still tight, consider skipping questions 5 & 9. PLEASE, DO NOT SHORT CHANGE THE PRAYER EXERCISE.

#### OPENING

#### SCRIPTURE MEMORY

#### BIBLE STUDY

**Do not just read verbatim the answers written here.** Give people the opportunity to think on their own and interact with the question and the issues it raises. Most questions are open-ended and there are many right answers. Ask the question and give people the opportunity to share what they think. Most times they'll get it right on their own and in the process they'll come up with many additional rich thoughts and ideas as well.

1. Welcome any and all answers. Oftentimes, when we seek God's direction and will we are looking for some kind of earth-shaking revelation. Something we can't miss. In this passage, there was a lot of earth-shaking but God was not in it. God spoke instead in a “gentle whisper”(NIV) or “still small voice” (KJV). God often speaks in the small things, the everyday things, in ways so simple that we can't believe it could be from God. Yet, Elijah recognizes God's whisper. A follow-up question could be, how do we learn to recognize God's whisper? My suggestion is that we learn it over time as we consistently focus ourselves on God and purposefully look for God's presence in the simple things. Each time we sense a leading of God and act on it and then discover that God was truly behind it, we increase our sensitivity to God's direction. We begin to recognize that inner sense of direction that stands out from other “gut” feelings because it has proven true time and time again.
2. Psalm 46 is a rich passage that has spoken deeply to millions over the centuries. There is much that people could draw out of this. Suggestions are: turning to and focusing on God in tough times; recognizing that God is present with us in the tumult and will be our refuge,

Strength, help. The best known verse is verse 10, "Be still, and know that I am God." If we want to hear from God in times of trouble, we are told by God to "Be still." Before we can hear from God, we must know God. To know God, we must spend time focus on him through the Bible and then in prayer we lift up our situation and needs and then be still, quiet, and let God work inside of us by His Spirit.

3. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This can only happen when we "offer our bodies as living sacrifices...to God." In other words, since transformation is the work of God, it can only occur when we surrender ourselves to God's work.
4. The short answer is that if we are to be guided by God, we must first be in a close relationship with God where we are being transformed and listening for his voice. That's the short answer but work to develop as broad and rich an answer as possible.
5. We obey God and walk as Jesus walked. To "know" and "live in" Christ suggests a tight personal relationship built on love for Jesus like you would have and feel for a close best friend.
6. This verse tells us that we are Jesus' friends when we obey him. The difference between a servant and a friend is that a servant does not know the Masters business. In other words, as Jesus' friends, who obey his teaching, we will know God's business and be given His direction. In fact, Jesus has told us that we have already received God's direction through the things Jesus taught.
7. We will not hear from God.
8. If we are not obeying the 99% of God's direction already revealed to us in Scripture, we should not expect to hear any additional personal and specific direction from God (unless you're the Blues Brothers). To a look at this in a positive light, through obeying God's directions in Scripture, we prepare ourselves and prove ourselves trustworthy of God's further personal guidance in our lives.
9. Possible lessons from Isaiah: We start with being aware of God's power and presence (Praise). We surrender ourselves to God and through confession, clearing out the sins that choke out the voice and direction of God. We experience God's forgiving, healing and empowering touch. We make willingly and eagerly make ourselves available for God's use. We share God's passion and desire.
10. This can be a very beneficial and group building time of sharing. I hope you don't have to skip this question.
11. Through Scripture, opportunity, circumstances, friends, inner convictions, thoughts, dreams to name a few.
12. Prayer plays a central role in hearing from God. The key to knowing God's will is to know God. We develop our relationship with God by spending consistent time with him in prayer. This is not the type of prayer that is just making requests of God. This is prayer that focuses on God in praise, surrenders to God in confession, gives thanks to God, and spends time being quiet ad letting God impress Himself and His desires on us.

## PRACTICE

The “4 C's” can be helpful way to study and apply scripture. It is part of the suggested exercises in the daily devotional book. By using it in your small group you reinforce the habit and its value. The “4 C's” also serve as a very helpful guide for prayer, providing you with praise, confession and requests.

## PRAYER

**To not leave time for prayer is to miss the point of the whole study!**

You will find Prayer Journaling to be a very interesting and rewarding experience if you have never tried it before.

Introduce it as an experiment and tell people that this small group study on prayer offers us the opportunity to stretch ourselves and try new things we might otherwise not do on our own.

The instructions are on the hand-out and are hopefully self-explanatory. Have extra pens for people to use. Emphasize that they are writing down a conversation with God. Tell them that they may feel stuck and not hearing anything from God. Let them know that God gave imaginations and if they're stuck they should feel free to imagine what God would say and not get too analytical and hung up at this point on whether or not it is actually God speaking.

Allow 10-20 minutes for this exercise depending on the group and it's creativity and comfort level.

After doing the exercise, process the experience by using the follow-up questions. If your group truly embraced this exercise, the response can be amazing. One issue that needs to be addressed is whether the thoughts they wrote down for God are truly from God. Let the group wrestle with this. God does communicate to us through our minds, but Satan also tempts us through our mind as well. There is a best-selling book out (whose title escapes me at the moment) that is based on the author's imaginary conversations with God. How can we discern if it is from God or not? By using the tests listed in the box on the hand-out. In the case of the best-selling book, it clearly and absolutely fails test number one.

## SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

If your church is doing a 24/7 prayer room, set-up a time when you can all meet together and pray during the final 3 weeks of the 40 Days of Prayer if you haven't done so already.

An application for week six's lesson is to do a Neighborhood Prayer Walk. You can read about the Prayer Walk on Day 34 of the Devotional Book. Think ahead and consider doing that as a group activity. Or, in addition to everyone doing their own personal neighborhood prayer walks, consider bringing your group to the church campus and doing a prayer walk around the facilities praying specifically for all the ministries that occur in each building or even each room.



This 40 Days of Prayer Study was written by Phil Sommerville & Christie Syftestad and can be reproduced by small group leaders for use in their groups