

# Discipleship Content: Hearing from God

## Section 1: PARTICIPANT PREP

### COMPETENCY

“Hearing from God” – Two Questions

Many of us wrestle with knowing if God is really speaking to us or if we are making it up in our heads. We can look to Scripture and see what Jesus modeled. Hearing from God is a process, and with every step we get to learn who God is, what He believes about us, and what He is saying to us.

Doing what God says can be as difficult as hearing what He says. We have two questions that help unlock our ability to hear, as well as, follow through on what God is saying: “What is God saying?” and “What am I going to do?”

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read the Scriptures below and answer the questions.
2. Read the blog and answers the questions.
3. Grab a notebook or use a notes app on your phone to take note of moments throughout the day where you feel prompted by the two questions.

**Scripture - Read the following passages and answer the questions provided.**

**Mark 1:14b-20** – *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

**Romans 12:2** – *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**James 1:22-25** – *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

**Habakkuk 2:1-2** – *I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the Lord replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.*

### **Scripture Questions:**

1. What do you notice about the posture of the people who heard from God?
2. What themes stand out to you?

3. How are listening and doing or responding to God intertwined?

**Blog – Read the following blog and answer the questions provided.**

### **Two Questions – “??” by Justin Warns**

*"Every day God invites us on the same kind of adventure. It's not a trip where He sends us a rigid itinerary, He simply invites us. God asks what it is He's made us to love, what it is that captures our attention, what feeds that deep indescribable need of our souls to experience the richness of the world He made. And then, leaning over us, He whispers, "Let's go do that together." - Bob Goff*

I love questions. I love the discussion that happens as a result of questions. It is in the questions that I find myself stretched in my beliefs, my assumptions, my bias, my desires, and my fears. Some of the biggest questions of faith that I hear from people are – How do you know if God is speaking? What does it feel like? How do you know if it is really Him and not just you making stuff up?

So, here is a question for you; have you ever struggled with the idea of hearing from God and doing what He tells you? If you are like me, you are probably raising your hand right now or thinking of the last time you wrestled with this very question.

Jesus lived in the question with his followers and any person willing to listen. As we look at the stories captured by eyewitnesses, we can learn from them and Jesus about how to hear from God and the impact of what He says.

**Mark 1:14-15 says - *After John was put into prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time (kairos) has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"***

At this moment, Mark is writing about a shift in time, an interruption. Jesus' good friend and cousin has just been put into prison. As you can imagine, He is hurting. The Greek word Jesus uses for time is "Kairos." It is different than the chronological time measured in minutes, days, or years but is a single moment in time. Kairos is a unique moment in time where God is breaking in, interrupting, and inviting us to lean into Him for wisdom and direction. We have these moments all the time. They could be the day you proposed, went on a retreat and gave your life to Christ, hit rock bottom, or saw your child for the first time. At every one of these moments, the kingdom of God is being revealed.

What is the kingdom of God as Jesus describes? It can be summarized as anywhere God's will is done and not just in heaven but on earth, too. It is the domain in which God reigns as King.

So, as Jesus ends this Kairos moment, He says, "repent and believe."

I love this description from Mike Breen about this section.

- Where *Kairos* is an event word – something that has a beginning and ending, *Repentance* (*metanoia* – to change one's mind) is a process word, as is believe (*pistis*).

Hearing from God is a process, moment by moment, question and answer, and maybe some more questions. And with every moment we get to be learners of who God is, what He believes about us, what He is saying to us. The process of hearing from God and doing what He says is the heart of becoming a disciple, a learner, and teaching others as well.

So whenever you feel a nudge from God, ask these two questions:

1. **God, what are you saying?** (repent= change one's mind)
2. **God, what do you want me to do (with what you just said)?** (Believe = take action)

These two questions not only unlock how we hear from God, but what we do about what He says. They are essential for cultivating our relationship with God, with others and the world around us.

So, what do these moments look like?

Dave Wilson, Co-Founder of Kensington Church, said that God speaks through the PEWS (not the rigid pews you fell asleep in as a child). So let's take a few moments and unpack each of the PEWS.

- People
- Events
- Word of God
- Spirit of God

### **People – How have people shaped your view of God, yourself, or your circumstances?**

When was a time that God spoke through people in your life? I bet you are thinking of someone right now. I remember when a mentor of mine, DC, invited me out to dinner my freshman year at Michigan State with some guys from a bible study. It ended up being a moment where the trajectory of my faith was shaped by those men and the conversations that followed.

I remember when Steve Andrews called me out from the stage as a squirrely 13-year-old, inviting me to engage with a God that might transform my life... if I start paying attention!!

These are just a couple of examples of moments where I had to wrestle with the 2 key questions because God used people in my life to stir something inside of me. How about you? How has God used people to speak to you, your identity, or your purpose? How has God used people to remind you about how much He loves you?

Consider taking a few moments and writing some names of people who God has used to influence your faith.

### **Events – What events have shaped you?**

There are events in our life that God uses to speak to us.

Some of these events can be positive; some can be negative. Either way, these events catalyze our faith and our desire to lean into God. Recently, I was talking to a friend who told me the reason why he started asking questions about faith and who God was, was because of a death in the family. I remember hearing about my grandfather getting hit by a train in his car as an 18-year-old. As I asked God the 2 key questions, he reminded me that the few inches that my grandfather was away from death were more than enough reminders for me that there is more

purpose, more hope, and more future for my life that I know. That event reminds me that God has more.

### **Has there been an event where God used it to call you out of something? Or to something?**

God speaks to us in these events that defy "coincidences" to get our attention, He's nudging us in these circumstances that open and shut doors, situations that try our faith, and moments that remind us who we are, who we want to be, and who God invites us to be.

Is there an event that is weighing on your mind, and these two questions can help unlock the potential God has for you or the truth He wants to speak to you?

*What is God saying through this event? And what should you do as a result of what He says?*

One of the realities of the People and Events that God uses is that they can come and go, and sometimes we focus on them to be a foundation, but they are often the catalyst. The next two are constants available to us at any point. And often, they are the ones that we can struggle with most when it comes to hearing from God.

#### **Word of God**

*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. - Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)*

That means God is whispering, and sometimes shouting, all through His Word, giving us insight, instructions, and principles for life. This is the backbone for hearing God. Sometimes you will hear something, or you will feel something, and you ask the question, "Is it God, or is it me talking to myself?". The Bible is the constant reminder that we have a missionary God who wrote missionary words for the people He loves. The Bible reveals the character, the consistency, and the core of God's message of hope, forgiveness, grace, love, and relationship. I will look at how that thought compares against the character of God that I see in the word of God. One of the simple ways we unpack the scriptures is through a method called "SOAP." It is a great way to start engaging with the Word and letting it speak to us through these two questions. Check out the Appendix for a link to a pdf that you can use anytime you dive into the Word of God.

As we engage the Bible, we are reminded of His character, that He is for us and with us.

#### **Spirit of God**

*"For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children" - Romans 8:16 (NLT)*

Typically, this is experienced in prayer and conversation, but honestly, the Spirit of God can just come out of nowhere. Theologically speaking, it's the Spirit of God that does the speaking through people, events, and His Word. For me, it is this gut feeling, the nudging or voice that I can hear. And when I feel that nudging, I look at the character of God and ask does this lineup, does this match? This is the beauty of the PEWS. They all work together because God uses it all to engage us. It is the spirit of God that is speaking to us, pointing us to his purpose, talking to us about what He believes about us, and what He longs for us to do. As we lean into the PEWS

with these two questions, we begin to unlock one of the most catalytic tools for growing our relationship with God and teaching others to do the same.

What nudges have you been feeling lately? How has God been nudging you to encourage someone? Forgive someone? Forgive yourself? Ask for help?

To help you get started with this practice of 2 questions let me share what my friend Sue Anderson uses to get started.

### **Two Questions Practical's**

#### **Question 1: "What is God saying?"**

**Feel free to use these two additional questions for clarity or specificity.**

- What is God saying about me?
- What is God saying about Himself?

Start with these 4 keys for hearing from God (see Appendix for more in-depth worksheet)

1. Be Still – Quiet yourself to be present with God and undistracted.
2. Be Looking – Look for the thoughts, words, or images that happen when you pray.
3. Be Listening - God speaks into your thoughts.
  - God's words will encourage you, build you up and convict you but in a loving way.
  - God's words will line up with scripture
  - God's words will produce peace and freedom and will align with the fruit of the spirit
  - God speaks using all the senses; you may hear a word, see an image or feel a peaceful feeling
  - It takes faith to listen to God, believe it is Him, and walk in the truth.
4. Be Journaling - Write out the flow of thoughts, words, and pictures.
  1. Why does writing help? What do you do with these thoughts he gives you if you don't write them down?
    1. Forget them
    2. Reason them away
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Take a moment to ask the first question while using those 4 keys.

\*\*\*What is God saying? About me? And Himself?

As you are using these 4 keys to hearing from God, follow up with the second question?

#### **Question 2: "What do I Do?"**

1. Be Still
2. Be Looking
3. Be Listening
4. Be Journaling

And whatever God speaks to you, as you write down what He wants you to do, write a plan for following through and obeying His words. One of the ways that I do this is I tell someone who can keep me accountable to act on what God said. Sometimes I find it easier to ask God what He is saying rather than doing what He says. But, as I follow him into the adventure of that

nudge, I am always reminded that the Kingdom of God is far greater than my desires, and the Kingdom of God is where I want to be.

It is why I cling to the thought that Steve Andrews shared one time (God using PEOPLE to speak), "Success in the Kingdom of God is NOT about Outcome but Obedience."

These two questions unlock the potential and possibility in our lives. They are an everyday tool that we can leverage in every situation!

What is God saying to you today?

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What is God inviting you to do about it?

**Reflection and Discussion Questions:**

1. Think about someone who you would say is good at hearing from God and doing what He says. What do you think are some of the keys to their posture?
2. Most people have different spiritual pathways. Which of the PEWS (People, Events, Word of God, Spirit of God) do you feel like is a strength? What about areas for growth? Why do you think that is?
3. Which of the two key questions do you find easier? Which one is more difficult?
4. What is one action step you can take to grow in your ability to hear and obey whatever God is inviting you into?

# Discipleship Content: Hearing from God

## Section 2: LEADER GUIDE

### SESSION CONTEXT

Questions are so important. They lead to discussion and they stretch our beliefs. Some questions about God and faith lead to bigger questions about God's presence and hearing from Him. Many of us wrestle with knowing if God is really speaking to us or if we are making it up in our heads. We can look to Scripture and see what Jesus modeled. Hearing from God is a process, and with every step we get to learn who God is, what He believes about us, and what He is saying to us.

The tool for hearing from God is "two questions". The process of hearing from God and doing what He says is the heart of becoming a disciple, a learner, and teaching others as well. So, whenever you feel a nudge from God, ask these two questions:

1. God, what are you saying?
2. God, what do you want me to do (with what you just said)?

### SESSION OUTLINE

#### **CONNECT [5 mins]**

Spend time allowing your group to connect with one another relationally.

#### **CELEBRATE [5 mins]**

What have you seen God do in your life since we met last that we can celebrate together?

#### **CHECK-UP [5 mins]**

How have you put the competency we learned last time into practice since we last met?

#### **COACH [30 mins]**

**Coaching Focus Reminder:** Overall reminder about this section. Below is the participant guide with added "COACHING BOXES with questions, thoughts or conversation starters for your discussion. Any of the highlighted questions are "highly suggested" while everything else is at your discretion.

*Remember, we have all faced this struggle at some point or another. What or who helped you learn this specific competency? How significant has it been for you to lead your family and others? How thankful are you for the reminder of overflow is the path towards fruitfulness?*

#### **COMMUNICATE [2 mins]**

Share important information with your group.

What to know before we meet again? Reiterate some of the next steps.

What do I need to know before the next meeting?

#### **CARE [5 mins]**

Spend time praying with your group (take specific prayer requests).

## PARTICIPANT GUIDE WITH “COACHING BOXES”

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### **Scripture Questions:**

1. What do you notice about the posture of the people who heard from God?
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### **Coaching Opportunity**

1. Take a moment to discuss a couple of the scripture reflection questions.
2. Reminder – we want to build upon the questions for engaging in a listening and hearing from God relationship from this session – What is God saying? What do I do?

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Take a moment to ask the first question while using those 4 keys.

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As you are using these 4 keys to hearing from God, follow up with the second question?

### **Question 2: "What do I Do?"**

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2. Be Looking
3. Be Listening
4. Be Journaling

And whatever God speaks to you, as you write down what He wants you to do, write a plan for following through and obeying His words. One of the ways that I do this is I tell someone who can keep me accountable to act on what God said. Sometimes I find it easier to ask God what He is saying rather than doing what He says. But, as I follow him into the adventure of that nudge, I am always reminded that the Kingdom of God is far greater than my desires, and the Kingdom of God is where I want to be.

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What is God inviting you to do about it?

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2. Most people have different spiritual pathways. Which of the PEWS (People, Events, Word of God, Spirit of God) do you feel like is a strength? What about areas for growth? Why do you think that is?
3. Which of the two key questions do you find easier? Which one is more difficult?
4. What is one action step you can take to grow in your ability to hear and obey whatever God is inviting you into?

**Coaching Opportunity**

1. Take some time to discuss the PEWS. Share stories of moments where you heard from God in each of the pathways. Ask them which ones they found most helpful? Encouraging? Difficult?
2. Spend some time using the SOAP method to walk through scripture so that their foundation and understanding of God's Character can expand. As a reminder, the scriptures are one of the best ways for people to understand the character of God and therefore informs us about how His Spirit speaks.
3. Key Learnings Question – What is one of the key learnings you want to them to walk away with?
4. Key Learnings Question – How will we use this principle in our homes, workplace, and volunteer role?
5. What are some practical ways I can apply this today?
  - o What is God saying to you about this principle?
  - o What are you going to do about it?
  - o How can I encourage you as you take this next step?

**Additional Resources – Use during session or for participant development.**

1. Watch this 3-minute Kairos video. <https://vimeo.com/102277409>
2. Read Sue Andersen's blog below.
3. Practice studying Scripture with the SOAP format below.

# **4 Keys to Hearing God's Voice**

**By Sue Andersen**

**Habakkuk 2:1 & 2**

"I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the LORD says and how he will answer my complaint.<sup>2</sup> Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others."

- 1 Be Still (I will stand at my guard post) – Quiet yourself in the Lord’s presence
  - Silence the enemy - be quiet in Jesus name
  - Silence the voices of outside world, your own thoughts
  - Ask God what your distraction are
  - Clear your mind of distractions (outside & Inside) – jot them down or do them
  - Quiet yourself down (Psalm 62:5 – Find rest, O my soul, in God alone)
  - Still your mind (Psalm 46:10 – Be still and know that I am God)
  - Confess your unbelief that He will speak (if needed)
- 2 Be Looking (I will keep watch and see) - Look for vision/pictures while you pray.
  - Fix your eyes on Jesus. (Hebrews 12:2)
    - Picture Jesus with you
  - Set your eyes/mind on things above (Colossians 3:2)
    - Picture God on His throne
  - Meditation means to imagine (Acts 2:25) David said, I saw the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
- 3 Be Listening (What He will speak to me) God’s voice often comes as a free flow of thoughts that light upon your mind when you are fixed on Jesus. God speaks into your thoughts.
  - John 7:38-39: Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living will flow from within him; by this he meant the spirit
  - Thoughts come from the river within (Holy Spirit) – the flow
  - We have the mind of Christ I Corth. 2:16
  - Prayer – Father I bind my mind to the mind of Jesus so I can hear your thoughts in my thoughts
  - God speaks to you in your vocabulary and style of speech (He knows you so well, he created you so of course he speaks to you in the most intimate way that you will understand.) Psalms 139: 13-17
  - Gods words will encourage you, build you up and convict you but in a loving way.
  - Enemies words will be full condemnation and accusation.
  - God’s words will line up with scripture
  - God’s words will produce peace and freedom and will align with the fruit of the spirit
  - God speaks using all the senses, you may hear a word, see an image or feel a peaceful feeling
  - It takes faith to listen to God, believe it is Him and walk in the truth. It takes no faith to believe the lies of the enemy.
  - We are training ourselves to silence the false and tune into the truth.

- 4 Be Journaling (Then the Lord said, "Record this vision...") Write out the flow of thoughts and visions (pictures). Called two-way journaling.

Write in simple childlike faith until the thoughts stop flowing

Write in faith that it is God, don't doubt it

Satan's scheme right from the very beginning is to get us to doubt, He said to Eve, did God really say?

Why does writing help? What do you do with these thoughts he gives you if you don't write them down?

- Forget them
- Reason them away
- Wonder if that's God

Writing them down helps us remember, allows us to act upon what God has told us to do and encourages us and builds our faith.

**Assignment:** Write a love letter to your Beloved – Two-way letter (you & God)

Write a paragraph to God telling him how and why you love Him and then ask Him to tell you what He thinks of you back.

Using the 4 keys you just learned let Him speak back to you, no testing or doubting allowed!

# SOAP

SOAP is a format used to study the scripture in a way that you don't just read it, but you seek to understand what is happening and what the scripture is saying, determine how you will apply the scripture to your life, and seek to hear from God as you read his Word.

**S**cripture. Read a passage from the Bible. Journal the verse or verses that stood out to you.

**O**bservation. What do you observe about this scripture? What is God saying through this scripture?

**A**pplication. What does God want you to do in your own life after reading this scripture?

**P**rayer. Write a prayer in your journal asking God to help you live this out in your life starting today.

*Digging Deeper...*

**S**cripture: What verse is sticking out to you?

- Pray and ask God to speak to you before you read his Word.
- Why is this verse sticking out to you today?
- Mark this verse: write it in a journal, underline it in your bible, highlight it, write the date by it, write a short thought, write a person's name by it if you are praying this for them.

**O**bservation: What is God saying in this scripture?

- Who are the people in this passage?
- What is happening in this passage?
- Where is this story taking place?
- When in time is it? (time of day, of the year, in history)

Additional helps:

- Study Bibles* - provide notes to help you understand more of what is going on in the scripture
- Bible Dictionaries* - define the meaning of a word in the original language
- Concordances* - help you locate other passages that contain the same word
- Commentaries* - illustrate how other men of God have interpreted a specific text
- Bible Translations or Paraphrases* – restate the text in different wording

**A**pplication: What does God want you to do because of this scripture?

- How does the truth revealed here affect my relationship with God?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with others?
- How does this truth affect me?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with the enemy?
- Is it instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise or correction for a particular area of my life?
- What am I going to do about it?

**P**rayer: Talk to God about what you are hearing from His Word.

- Confess any areas of your life where you have not been living according to his Word and direction for your life.
- Thank Him for revealing new things and speaking to you through this scripture.
- Ask Him to help you live this out in your life, starting today.

## Let's practice SOAP...

### **Matthew 5:43-48**

Start with prayer, then answer:

### Scripture

What part of this passage is sticking out to me?

### Observation

Who did what, where?

What does God want me to know about this passage?

What does this teach me about the heart of God?

### Application

How could I apply this to my life or circumstances?

### Prayer

To finish, write out a prayer, or pray quietly.