Tending Your Heart Part 1 - Handout

The Father's Invitation to Intimacy

OUR NEED:

Being able to connect with and receive from God what we need, no matter what is going on. Having proven through experience that we can come to God with anticipation and expectancy, confident of His heart for us.

INTIMACY WITH GOD – OUR PRIORITY and Biblical foundation

- Jesus died so we could enjoy intimacy with Him – two-way dialogue, sharing hearts. (Matthew 27:50-51; Exodus 25:22).
- We are to live listening to Him (Matt. 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).
- Jesus modeled this for us (John 5:19; 8:26 and 28).
- Jesus said it is the one thing necessary (Luke 10:39).
- We can all hear Him speak (John 10:27).
- By cultivating a lifestyle of proactively listening to and receiving from God, we are able to enjoy increasing intimacy with Him and deny the enemy opportunity to rob us.

Remember, how Jesus modeled intimacy with God:

John 8: 26-29- 26 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and ***what I have heard from him*** *I tell the world."*

27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that ***I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.*** *29 The one who sent me* ***is with me****; he has* ***not left me alone****, for I always do what pleases him."*

And invited his disciples into a close relationship with Him as well:

John 10.2, 14-16: 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep

that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Nature of God's Voice - The Litmus Test

1. It will draw us to Jesus, to see more of His heart, causing us to want to follow and love Him more.

2. His words will never violate but easily align with Scripture. So, the more we know the Bible, the more the Holy Spirit can bring pertinent verses to mind to guide us. The more familiar we are with the heart of God and His ways revealed in Scripture, the more easily we will recognize Him when He speaks.

3. It will reflect the character of the Spirit: loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good and gentle (Galatians 5:22).

4. It will affirm the roles of the Holy Spirit: Helper, Encourager, Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Life-giver, Strengthener, Empowerer, Liberator, Revealer of Truth, Gift-giver.

5. The nature of God's thoughts will be spontaneous and ultimately positive, usually in the first person, such as, I want you to know that I love you My child.

6. He will never create confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

7. He will never bring condemnation or shame on His children (Romans 8:1). While at times there may be a gentle rebuke or correction that will bring conviction, it's the kind of rebuke that produces a longing to come back to Him.

Additional indicators:

- His words are light, gentle and easily cut off by imposing our own thoughts or trying too hard to listen. As we trust Him to meet with us and speak to us in any way He chooses, we will always find Him faithful.
- When received, His words bring healing, freedom, transformation and strength to obey, even if it is costly.
- God's voice within us will not eradicate our personality or manner of speech. It may sound like us – our flavor – and so we are tempted to reject it. He is honoring our unique personality.

Activation: Listening Prayer & Journaling

Listening Prayer and Journaling is one practice we can use as we seek to hear God's voice. In the early stages of learning to listen to God, you should bring your journaling to a mentor whenever there is any question about the content being Scriptural or in line with God's Character.

It is often more helpful to start by asking God questions for encouragement. If we begin by asking questions that are emotionally loaded, then it may not be so easy for us to hear clearly what He has to say. As we build confidence in His heart and in hearing His voice, we may be led to ask deeper questions.

Avoid predictive journaling! In asking the deeper questions we can make the mistake of moving to predictive questions about the future. Moving from "should I ask this person to marry me?" to "will I marry this person?" He may say, "Yes, go ahead and ask" but the person has free will and can refuse.

Or the big one, "will this person be healed?" We cannot try and use God like a fortune teller. Witchcraft seeks knowledge of the future for our own personal ends and benefit. God may at times choose to tell us something of our future regarding His promises to us or His plans for us. But when we press for more detail we will often get, "trust Me."

If we keep pressing Him we can open the door to the enemy and become deceived by a lying spirit or invent an answer according to our own fleshly desires.

We must release our preferences to His care and let Him give them back to us if He chooses. In this life we are always in process as God seeks to shape us into the image of Christ.

To journal about what He wants to do in our hearts in the midst of struggles and challenges can be some of the deepest places of meeting God! With God, what He gains in us in the process is often the goal.

We grow in intimacy with Him by coming back again and again to receive from Him what He desires to give to our hearts as the process unfolds - confidence in His character, purifying our motives, reassurance, comfort, insight.

Practice:

To do this activation, take out your journal and follow the prompts below:

- Address the member of the Godhead with whom you are most comfortable. (We suggest Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit rather than general terms Lord or God)
- Tips:
    - Don't overthink it. It's easy to discard what you hear, because it sounds like you.
    - Don't edit. Write down your very first impression.

    - If it lines up with the Litmus Test, receive it as God
    - The spontaneous flow that comes from within you will usually be God speaking to you.
    - Keep writing until the flow stops.

Questions To Ask, and write down any impressions you have:

- Father, what kind of relationship do I want to have with You?
- Father, what kind of relationship do You want to have with me?
- Father, what does my heart need to hear from You right now?

Unpack what He says by asking more questions

If you are having trouble receiving, make these pronouncements in faith:

In the name of Jesus, I renounce the lie I cannot hear You. I renounce the lie that You don't want to speak with me. I renounce the lie that You want to speak to others more than me. I renounce the lie that it is not safe for me to hear from You. I give myself permission to hear from You.

Father, I give You permission to speak to me now. What do You give me in exchange for the lie that I cannot hear You?

Additional Questions For Going Deeper:

- Father, what do You want to say to me about Your desire to speak to me?
- What do You want to say to me about my ability to hear from You?
- How will hearing from You change my life?