

# LESSON FOUR

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## THE FOURTH MARK

# LISTEN

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### **DEFINITION**

I listen to Jesus' voice through the Bible so I can obey him.

### **LIFESTYLE**

I read the Bible multiple times a week so I can listen to and obey Jesus.

### **KEY QUESTION**

How am I learning to hear and obey Jesus by reading the Bible?

# OVERVIEW OF THIS LESSON

Every lesson has the same three steps: new learning, new practices, and new commitments.

Every lesson takes about four weeks to complete—*if you work at a moderate, consistent pace.*

- Complete *Step One: New Learning* in the first week.
- Complete *Step Two: New Practices* in the second-to-fourth weeks.
- Complete *Step Three: New Commitments* in the third and fourth weeks.

## **Step One: New Learning**

In this step, you'll explore what it means to listen to Jesus through the Bible by reading an overview and answering follow up questions.

When you're done, you'll understand what it means to listen to Jesus in the Bible and obey him.

Write down your start date for this step (complete in the first week): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Step Two: New Practices**

In this step, you'll integrate new practices to equip and empower you to listen to Jesus so you can obey him. These practices include reading the Bible, prayer, and journaling.

When you're done, you'll know how to use the Bible, prayer, and journaling to hear Jesus' voice.

Write down your start date for this step (complete in weeks two through four): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Step Three: New Commitments**

In this step, you'll discover how to read the Bible consistently.

When you're done, you'll know how to use the Bible to cultivate daily obedience.

Write down your start date for this step (complete in weeks three and four): \_\_\_\_\_

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STEP ONE

# **NEW LEARNING**

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# STEP ONE: NEW LEARNING

## LISTEN

### **Why Listening Matters**

We were created for God's presence and only when we're with him do we have life. Our hearts were shaped to live in constant communion with him, listening to his voice above all others.

However, Adam and Eve ran away from God's presence, seeking life in created things. Though he told them the truth, they refused to listen to him. Instead, they listened to other voices and believed lies. His words were life. Doubting his voice, they trusted their own. Rejecting his presence, they sought intimacy in dead sources. They tasted death because they were deaf.

In contrast, Jesus lived in God's presence and perfectly listened to the Father's voice (John 5:19-25). He willingly laid down his life to rescue us, listening to God with perfect trust (Matthew 26:39). And that's how we're invited to live: listening and responding to God's voice.

From the moment we start following Jesus, he invites us to listen to him. In fact, it's even more than an invitation. God *promises* to meet and speak with us (Exodus 29:42,43). When we position ourselves to be with God and listen to him, he will show up and speak to us.

But what does listening look like in daily life?

Listening is worship.

Listening is how we experience his life.

Listening is how we respond to Jesus to become like him.

### **Listening is Worship**

Humans were created to worship. That was our purpose and destiny, what gave us life.

Worship means we give our allegiance and affections to something we think will bring us life. By life, we mean our identity, purpose, hopes, commitments, desires, inner and outer habits, and every other part of our human experience. For humans, worship is how we seek life.

God created us to worship him, to come to him for life above every person and created thing. God alone is to be worshipped. When we do, we have life. When we don't, we taste death.

Adam and Eve were the first humans to worship something other than God. How did they do this? They listened to the wrong voices. The devil's voice. Each other's voice. Their own voices.

Like Adam and Eve, we've all sought life outside of God's presence. In other words, we've all worshipped other things (Romans 3:8-20). And this means we've all listened to the wrong voices.

To trust in Jesus is to believe he will restore us to his presence and give us life. More specifically, trusting Jesus means we listen to him. Deuteronomy 6:4 is one of the most important verses in the Bible about listening. It says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

The verse begins with the word *hear*.

If we listen to God, then we trust he is the one and only God, the only source of life, the only one we're to worship. We come to him to know who we are, to know why we're here, to tell us how to live, and to reshape our entire being from the inside out.

To listen is to worship.

### **Listening is Life**

There was a direct connection between listening and life. In John 5:24-25, Jesus says:

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

If we listen to Jesus' voice, though we are dead, we will live. Rescue from death has two sides. If we listen to Jesus' voice *now*, in our current life, then we will taste new life right now. And if we trust in Jesus right now and listen to him, even after our physical body dies, his voice will destroy death and we will be resurrected to new life.

To listen is to live.

### **Listening is Responding**

In the Bible, listening is more than hearing audible sounds rattle on our ears drums. Listening includes the state of the heart, our allegiances and affections, and our readiness to act with anticipation. Culturally, most of us were raised to think we can listen without any responsibility to integrate and act. But notice what Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27.

*"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

If we hear his words and *do them*, then we are wise. If we hear his words and *don't do them*, we're foolish. Jesus connected hearing and doing.

Even more, one of Jesus' disciples said it this way: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). If we hear and do, we embrace life and truth. If we hear and don't do, we cultivate deception.

We can only respond to God's voice based on the condition of our heart. In Deuteronomy 6:5-6, we discover that the heart is the place where hearing and responding takes place.

*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*

We listen and respond when our heart is devoted to Jesus in love. All of our heart and soul and strength exclusively his. We listen and respond to the degree that Jesus' voice penetrates the depths of our heart, reshaping our allegiance and affections, our devotions and desires.

To listen is to respond.

Knowing that listening is worship, life, and response, how do we learn to listen?

### **We Learn to Listen through Saturation**

We learn to communicate because we're born into families where older people already know how to do it. They talk to us. Even when we don't understand what they're saying, we listen. As we grow, we start to make sounds, then words, then sentences. However, we don't learn grammar before we start speaking and don't know we're being trained to speak when our their parents rock us in their arms and sing. We learn to communicate when we're present with their parents to listen, to watch, to imitate.

When we follow Jesus, we're like spiritual babies who don't know much about listening. Just like we learn to communicate through relational saturation, we learn to listen to Jesus easiest and best when we're saturated in his presence. Though we don't know how at first, we develop a life of listening day-by-day, step-by-step as we're continually immersed in his presence.

So how do we cultivate a life of saturating presence? Spiritual practices.

### **We Learn to Listen through Spiritual Practices**

We become fluent in language by the time we're five years old. This happens because we're saturated in *communication practices*. Essentially, *communication practices* describe the complex human interactions that teach us to communicate. They include making sounds, listening, physical touch, eye contact, mental and physical discipline, modeling, trial and error, and facial expressions.

Just like we learn to talk by engaging in communication practices, we learn to listen and respond to Jesus through *spiritual practices*. When we're saturated in communication practices, we learn to communicate; when we're saturated in *spiritual practices* we learn to listen to Jesus.

So what are spiritual practices? Spiritual practices are ways of shaping our inner and outer habits to make us into the type of person who can listen to Jesus well.

Practically, spiritual practices are something we do—or don't do. When we do spiritual practices that require us to *do*, we might read the Bible, sit quietly and think about what the Bible says, take a meal to a friend, or gather with other believers to pray about important things. When we do spiritual practices that invite us to *refrain* from something, we might not speak when we're angry, skip a meal to pray, or not do what we want so we can do what someone else wants.

But are spiritual practices the point? Is that our goal?

### **We Learn to Listen through Intimate Connection**

Communication is about connection and intimacy, listening and responding. We learn to communicate to share life, to connect with others in meaningful and life-changing ways. Every time a baby coos and stares into his parents' eyes or a toddler laughs at his sister's antics, they experience intimate communication. That said, no one expects babies to do grammar or punctuation or diagram a sentence. Why? That's not the point. Eventually, babies learn to say words correctly and put the right words in the right order. If done well, their capacity to communicate will grow equally with their capacity for relationship.

In the same way, spiritual practices are about intimacy with Jesus, about listening to his voice. We must remember that that intimacy is developed by spiritual practices but is, at the same time, so much more. As we grow, we'll learn to engage practices with more confidence and ability. That's great. However, our spiritual practices must never be separated from intimacy and listening.

It's also important to know spiritual practices don't earn anything from God. Healthy families don't expect their babies to talk to earn their meals. Neither does Jesus. He doesn't require us to do lots of stuff before we can be with him and listen to him. At the same time, he doesn't want us to think we can receive his life when we engage spiritual practices apart from intimacy.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE READING**

1. In your own words, summarize the big ideas about following Jesus.
2. What are some of your key take-aways from reading?
3. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. What does this passage reveal about listening? How might it impact your experience of listening?

4. Read Proverbs 2:1-5. Identify five verbs (actions words or doing words). How do these words paint a picture of what listening is? How is this different than what you've known?
5. Read Matthew 7:21-24. What happens to those who listen? To those who don't?
6. Based on what you've discovered, how does Jesus want you to obey this week?

### **Supplemental Videos**

The following videos may be helpful for you to watch as you think about this lesson and respond to the questions. You can find these videos on YouTube by searching for a YouTube channel called *The Bible Project*.

- Word Study: Shema—Listen
- Word Study: YHWH—Yahweh
- Word Study: Ahavah—Love
- Word Study: Lev—Heart
- Word Study: Nephesh—Soul
- Word Study: Me'od—Strength

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STEP TWO

# **NEW PRACTICES**

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## STEP TWO: NEW PRACTICES

# BIBLE—PRAYER—JOURNALING

### Introduction

In this step, you'll integrate three new practices: listen to Jesus in the Bible, talk to Jesus through prayer, and journal. It's best to spend most of your time in the Bible and in prayer (about 80%) and then follow up with journaling. If you spend the bulk of your time in the Bible and prayer, you'll experience the biggest impact toward growth.

To incorporate these new practices, you'll need to make some decisions: when, where, how much, and how long. In other words, when you know **WHEN** you'll do these practices, **WHERE** you'll do them, and **HOW** long you'll do them, you have a much better chance of integrating these practices into your lifestyle.

Here are two questions to help you decide.

*Where will I fit these practices into my weekly schedule/routine?* Consider working your way up to four times each week.

*How long will I spend each day doing all three practices?* Any amount of time is good to start with but consider working up to thirty minutes at a time.

Although not necessary, it will help you to spend time in the Bible, prayer, and journaling at the same time every day, in the same place, for the same length of time. Of course, if you can't do that, then do what you can.

The important part is this: *make a commitment and keep it.* When we make and keep our commitments, we increase our ability to hear and obey Jesus.

Use this chart to record your decisions.

	<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>What Day?</b>							
<b>When?</b>							
<b>How Long?</b>							
<b>Where?</b>							

On the next page, you'll find a helpful worksheet to direct your time in the Bible, prayer, and journaling each day.

# NEW PRACTICES WORKSHEET

## Listening to Jesus in the Bible

Each week, you'll learn to listen to Jesus through the Bible. To do this, you'll read, think about, and answer questions about a passage. For this lesson, you'll spend multiple days in EACH of the following texts.

- Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- Proverbs 2:1-15
- Matthew 7:21-27

As you spend multiple days in each passage, journal the following questions.

1. Who is God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)?
2. What is God doing?
3. Who are God's people—and as a result, who am I?
4. What is God inviting me to do today?

This Week's Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

## Talking to Jesus through Prayer

Each week, you'll learn to talk to Jesus in prayer. To do this, you'll learn to pray using the forms of prayer Jesus gave to his followers in Matthew 6:9-13.

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*

We call this *The Disciple's Prayer*. Each week, we explore one aspect of *The Disciple's Prayer*.

In this lesson, you'll explore the fourth form of prayer called *The Prayer of Provision*. Use *The Prayer of Provision* in *The Disciple's Prayer Guide* to pray this week.

## Reflect through Journaling

As you read and pray, it's helpful to journal your thoughts, feelings, and insights. Consider journaling to one or two of the following prompts.

- What I learned today was...
- What I discovered about Jesus was...
- What I discovered about myself was...
- What I sense I need to do is...
- What doesn't make sense is...

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STEP THREE

# **NEW COMMITMENTS**

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## STEP THREE: NEW COMMITMENTS

# READ THE BIBLE

### Introduction

In this lesson, you were introduced to the fourth mark of a planted disciple: listening to Jesus by reading the bible.

Reading the Bible changes our life. The Bible isn't a book with old stories and weird rituals and archaic commands. It's God's way of showing the story of history and the world, the story of humans, the story of his love, and how we can live in his love for eternity.

Because the Bible is such a big, diverse, and unfamiliar book, it can seem intimidating. But if we're patient, we'll learn to read and understand the Bible and Jesus will reward our efforts.

### Three Ways to Listen to Jesus in the Word

First, we *read* the Bible. As we start to follow Jesus, we must learn to read the Bible well. As we read, we learn the story and stories of the Bible so we can see our own story within the Bible's.

Second, we *study* the Bible. When we study, we take time to learn what the Bible says and, from this, discover what the Bible means. We learn the theology, principles, and practices found in God's Word so we can enact them in our daily lives.

Third, we *memorize* the Bible. When we memorize God's word, our hearts are softened to Jesus' voice. We learn to think, perceive, desire, and choose like he does. As we learn to memorize God's word, we *naturally* and *automatically* respond to people and situations with his heart.

In the next two weeks, you'll focus on *reading* God's Word by reading a short book of the Bible multiple times or some or all of a longer book. Learning to listen to Jesus through his Word is a lifetime of growth. However, you can start right now. As you do this, you'll learn to assimilate ideas, principles, and instruction.

# LEARNING TO READ THE BIBLE WORKSHEET

For the next two weeks, spend time reading the Bible. This reading should be done over and above your short, daily time in the Bible, prayer, and journal.

## First: Make a Commitment

- What book of the Bible will I read? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Short Books to Consider: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, James
  - Longer Books to Consider: Genesis, Exodus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
  - Books You Can Read By Chapter: Psalms, Proverbs
- How many chapters will I read each day/week? One chapter is best but it's not necessary. Consistency with smaller chunks is better than large quantities irregularly \_\_\_\_\_.
- When and where will I read? A place and time when you decide to read will help you stay on track and keep your commitment \_\_\_\_\_.
- With whom will I discuss what I'm learning? \_\_\_\_\_

## Second: Watch Overview Videos

The overview video will be helpful for you to watch as read a book of the Bible and respond to the questions. You can find these videos on YouTube by searching for a YouTube channel called *The Bible Project* and then searching for the name of the book of the Bible you chose.

## Third: Ponder and Journal

As you read, think about the following five questions. Then, come up with your own questions. As you do, write your answers down.

1. WHAT—Plot: What's going on? What's happening? What's the point?

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2. WHO—Characters: Who's involved? Who relates to whom? Who did it?

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3. WHEN/WHERE—Setting: When and where does this take place? Why does this place matter?

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4. WHY—Themes: Why is this happening? Why does it matter? What does it mean?

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5. HOW—Point of View: How is this story seen by God? Characters? You?

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**Supplemental Videos**

The following videos may be helpful for you to watch as you think about reading the Bible. You can find these videos on YouTube by searching for a YouTube channel called *The Bible Project*.

- How to Read the Bible: What is the Bible?
- How to Read the Bible: Biblical Story
- How to Read the Bible: Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature
- How to Read the Bible: Plot
- How to Read the Bible: Character
- How to Read the Bible: Setting