

# Listening and Reflection Guide

YOU'VE GOT  
THE TIME

A Journey of Biblical Faithfulness

## COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Welcome! We celebrate your decision to be more intentional about making room for God's Word in your life. God's Word is a gift to God's people, inspired by the Holy Spirit and useful for teaching and training in godliness. Be assured that time spent listening and reading about God's working in human history will increase your faith, strengthen your resolve to be all that God created you to be, and help you respond to God's extravagant love for you. Because the Word of God always leaves its mark on the human heart, your journey of transformation, as an individual or in community, promises to be exciting. Let's get started!

As you begin this journey, keep in mind a story Jesus shared long ago.

*A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.*

-Matthew 13:3-8 *The Message*

One perspective on this story helps us understand the role we play as recipients of something as special as God's Word. For danger of the seed falling on dry ground or among weeds, you should never rush your listening; rather, be realistic about the amount of time you have for listening and reflecting. The words and phrases are more likely to fall on "good earth," a fertile soil (your heart and mind) if you have properly prepared. Said another way, you'll want to do whatever is necessary to prepare and listen deeply. In this way God's Word will produce a harvest beyond your wildest dreams.

By following the listening format below, you will be sure to prepare the soil well, receive the proper amount of seed, and provide an initial watering toward your potential harvest. The format assumes that you are able to commit at least thirty to thirty-five minutes each day.

### *Listening for Individuals*

#### **Silence (1 minute or more as you are comfortable)**

Silence helps create a space where deep listening is possible. Find a comfortable, quiet place within reach of your listening materials and become still. If the experience of silence is new to you, be patient with yourself. Your first experience of silence may bring with it many thoughts; acknowledge them and move on. If this proves difficult, consider emptying your mind through a brief journal entry.

#### **Prayer (1 minute or less)**

Offer a prayer, verbally or in a quiet, interior way, inviting God into the space you have created, into conversation. Pray your own prayer or prime your heart with the following:

*Holy God, who caused the Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we might hear, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we might embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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### **Scripture Listening (28 minutes)**

During the Scripture reading, consider blocking out distractions in an effort to listen deeply. You may choose to close your eyes or perhaps to fix your sight on an object such as a cross on the wall, the visible print of a Bible, a natural scene, or (in the case of listening while driving) the traffic in front of you.

### **Reflection (3 to 5 minutes)**

Following the Scripture listening, reflect on the following questions. If you are at home, consider journaling a response as one way of recording insights related to your spiritual growth.

- What word, phrase, or image remains with me from today's reading?
- How does this word, phrase, or image intersect with my life today?
- How might God be asking me to respond?
- What is my response to God?

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Slowly and meaningfully recite the Lord's Prayer, listening for how its meaning may have deepened in light of the Scripture you examined or the reflection experienced.

### *Listening for Families and Groups*

While Scripture has meaning in all circumstances, its meaning is seldom deeper and more formative than in a community of trust and grace. If you share in such a community, you may want to plan to participate in You've Got the Time together. In this circumstance, plan for an experience of no less than thirty minutes to make room for reflective dialogue following the reading. Choosing a designated facilitator helps everyone have a more meaningful experience.

### **Gathering**

#### **Call to Silence**

Consider how you might call your group to silence. You might choose the ringing of a bell, the reading of a short verse of Scripture that speaks of silence, or the following:

*As we prepare to receive the seed that is God's Word, let us prepare the soil of our hearts and minds through a brief time of silence.*

#### **Silence**

Determine your group's comfort level, but allow for at least one minute of silence.

#### **Prayer**

Invite the group to pray the following prayer in unison:

*Holy God, who caused the Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we might hear, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we might embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you*

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*have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **Scripture Reading**

Offer direction for listening deeply: suggest that members close their eyes during the reading. If comfortable, invite listeners to sit with their hands in their lap, palms up, as a child receiving.

### **Reflection**

Following the Scripture reading, lead participants to reflect on the following questions, allowing for at least one minute of silence between each question. If participants enjoy journaling, consider allowing time for participants to record insights.

- What word, phrase, or image remains with me from today's reading?
- How does this word, phrase, or image intersect with my life today?
- How might God be asking me to respond?
- What is my response to God?

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Slowly and meaningfully recite the Lord's Prayer in unison.