

# HEARING GOD'S VOICE

**This 5-week series is all about helping your group get involved in practical ministry - both inside and outside the church. We start this week with the most important aspect of any ministry activity: hearing and obeying God's voice.**

## CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- What's your favourite smell?
- What's one thing you are thankful to God for at the moment?
- Name one person you've encouraged this week
- Tell us about the last time you remember laughing til it hurt. What happened?

OR

Play a few rounds of Chinese whispers.

Everyone sits in a circle. One person comes up with a sentence. They then whisper that sentence into the ear of the person on their right who passes on the message to the person on their right and so on until the message reaches the last person in the group. This person then says the message they received out loud.

Nb: teenagers have a tendency to change the message on purpose, so it's probably worth providing an incentive (maybe a chocolate prize for everyone) if they all complete all three rounds successfully.

## DISCUSS

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 3:1-11, John 10:27 and John 16:13.

### NEW CHRISTIANS

- Have you ever heard God tell you or ask you to do something before? What happened? Did you follow through?
- Do you know what God has called you to do with your life? What is it and how do you know?
- Do you think God wants to use everyone in ministry?
- How do you know when God is speaking to you? Do you think God always speaks with an audible voice? What are some different ways that we might hear from God?
- How do you think Samuel felt when he discovered it was God speaking to him? What can we learn from Samuel's response in v10 about hearing God's voice?



## PRACTICAL MINISTRY



# HEARING GOD'S VOICE

---

### ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out the most for you in these passages?
- What do you think the verses teach us about hearing from God?
- You're at a crossroads, needing to make a big decision in life. Would you stop to ask God what he wants? How would you go about finding out?
- Do you find it easy to work out what God is saying to you? Why do you think God is sometimes difficult to hear? Do you think sometimes God speaks and we don't hear him?
- Why do you think God chose to speak to Samuel and not Eli?
- What do you think a person should do to position themselves to hear from God?

### INVOLVE

As a group spend a few minutes in silent prayer asking God to speak to you about how he might want to use someone within the group, or the group as a whole. He might give you a word of encouragement, a scripture verse or a mental picture.

Leader: Famous theologian and preacher John Wesley used a four step tool to measure if a message was from God or not. His four steps were:

- Tradition - Does it line up with what we have learned through 2000 years of Christian Church history?
- Scripture – Does it line up with the Old and New Testaments?
- Experience – Does it match up with what we have learned about Jesus through personal our own journey?
- Reason – Does it make sense?

After a few minutes of silent prayer, read through each of these elements out loud and ask each member to consider whether the word they have received matches up to these elements. If so, ask them to share their word of encouragement, scripture or mental image with the whole group.

# HEARING GOD'S VOICE

---

### APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing they will do differently this week based on what they have learned

OR

Invite every person in your group to pause every morning until you next meet and pray the following prayer:

*Dear God,*

*This day is yours to use. I offer my time and talents, my skills and abilities for you to use me. Help me to stay open to your voice. When you speak*

*I will obey. Help me to hear your voice and follow you no matter what.*

*Speak Lord, your servant is listening.*

*Use me I pray.*

*Amen.*

### LEADER'S NOTES

- Create a helpful atmosphere before people arrive – put some music on, have a few snacks available, have something for people to do when they arrive.
- Encourage your group to stay open to listening to God's voice. Also, encourage any attempts or courage shown in sharing what they felt God say.
- You might want to print the prayer from the 'apply' section on a piece of card so that your young people can keep in their bible or stick it on the back of their toilet door.
- Are there any other young people in your church who you'd like to see join the group? Ask some group members to invite them during the week.
- In Week 3 you'll need to have a church leader come and present to your life group. Make arrangements this week for this to happen.
- In Week 5 you'll be spending the night doing some practical ministry. Check the notes out now and start planning the activity you will do. You might even want to let your group members decide.



## CHANGE YOUR WORLD

**Everyone has the power to do something. This week we take a look at some famous words from Jesus, and then brainstorm how that can apply to our everyday life.**

This week you'll need:

- A piece of paper and pen for every person

### CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions.

- What was your favourite TV show of all time and why?
- What was your favourite thing about being a kid?
- Describe your ideal day off.
- How have you shown God's love to your school this week?

### DISCUSS

Have a member of your group read Matthew 5:13-16 out loud.

*[Jesus says] "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*

*"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."*

### QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- What does Jesus mean when he says that we are the light of the world? In what ways is the world in darkness?
- What are some specific situations in your life where you could be light? Ask each person to name one.
- According to verse 16 – what's one reason why we should do good?
- What do you think Jesus means when he says we are the salt of the earth? What's the point of salt? How could you be like salt to the world around you?
- When you think of people who brought light into the world or who were the salt of the earth who do you think of? How did they bring about change?
- Do you think every Christian person has the capacity to transform the world? Do you think you could change the world? Why/why not?



### PRACTICAL MINISTRY



## CHANGE YOUR WORLD

### QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you the most in the passage we've just read?
- Who do you think Jesus is addressing when he says 'you are the salt of the earth' and 'you are the light of the world'? How do you think he would want those words to affect our lives? In what ways can a Christian young person bring light to the world?
- Why do you think Jesus uses 'salt' to illustrate the effect we should have on the earth?
- St Francis of Assisi once said that we should "preach the gospel at all times, using words when necessary". What do you think of this approach to evangelism?
- What aspects of your life do you think point people to Jesus? Which areas don't?
- What do you think Jesus is referring to when he talks about hiding your light under a basket? In what ways have you done this in your own life?
- Which Christians can you think of who have followed Jesus' instructions here and impacted their world? What did they do?

### INVOLVE

Give everyone in your group a sheet of paper and a pen. Turn the page horizontal (landscape) and divide it into 5 columns. At the top of each column have each group member write something that they are good at or that they enjoy doing (e.g. I like playing sport, I'm good at maths, I enjoy hanging out with my friends, I'm good at keeping secrets).

Underneath each of the 5 headings, have your group members brainstorm as many ideas as possible for how they could use those things for God and/or the church. For example...

Playing Soccer	Playing Wii	Writing stories
I could invite my teammates to church	I could invite the lonely kid from school over to play	I could help out with the church newsletter
I could get my soccer team involved in a Social Justice project	I could lend my Wii to the youth pastor for youth group events	I could write encouraging notes to my school friends

Ask your group to try to get at least 4 ideas for each column. Push your group to dream big and be creative! If your group is struggling for ideas, encourage them to think 5, 10, 20 or 50 years into the future.

Finish by asking your group members to present their favourite ideas to each other.



# CHANGE YOUR WORLD

---

### APPLY

Have your group choose something from the Involve activity that they will follow through on this week.

### LEADER'S NOTES

- The message paraphrase might be especially helpful this week:
  - \* *Matthew 5:13-16 (The Message): "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage."*  
*"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."*
- Is anyone missing from your group tonight? Don't forget to ask for volunteers to follow them up!
- Theological notes:
  - \* Salt brings out flavour and also preserves from corruption. We should bring out the god-flavours of the earth and should also be people who preserve the world from corruption.
- Don't forget! Next week you'll need to have a visit from a member of your church leadership. Maybe give them a quick call to make sure they are all prepped.



# GET INVOLVED @ CHURCH

**The Church is intended to a hub of ministry - both inwards and outwards focused. This week is about getting a broader view of your own local church.**

This week you'll need:

- Pens and paper
- A church leader (if you don't have one, perhaps hunt around on eBay and try to pick up a bargain)

## CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions.

- What has been the most exciting thing you've done in the past week/fortnight?
- What is your favourite month of the year? Why?
- Who is someone that you admire at the moment? Why?
- How are things going with your family at the moment? How would you rate your relationships on a scale of 1-10? Why?

## DISCUSS

Have someone read out loud Acts 2:42-47.

### QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- Make a list of all the different things you think a church could or should be doing. Once you're finished, choose the 5 things you think are most important. *(Leaders note: The purpose of this activity isn't to discredit or diminish individual ministries, but rather to help young people think on a deeper level about the core purposes of the church. Don't let your group slander other people's ministries – if they do, then redirect your group to vs 21-26).*
- If you were just a part of a human body, which part would you be? Why? (e.g. I would be a hand because I like to build things; I would be the brain because I like solving problems; I would be the bladder because I'm just like a sponge soaking everything around me up.)
- If you could do anything for God or for the church, what would you do? What would be your ultimate dream?

### QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you the most from the passage we've just read?
- Do you feel like you've found your 'right place' within the life of the church yet? Do you feel satisfied and fulfilled through the ministry/ministries you're currently involved in? If not, what would be your ideal situation?
- Re-read verse 22-26. What ministries do you think Paul is talking about here? How can we put these verses into action?



## PRACTICAL MINISTRY





# GET INVOLVED @ CHURCH

### INVOLVE

Invite your corps officer, senior pastor, or another church leader to come and present for 5-10 minutes on all the different ministries that happen within your church. In particular, ask them to focus on the different ways that volunteers are involved throughout the church. The chief aim should be to give young people an idea of how they can get involved in serving and building the church.

Ask if it's possible for your guest to bring some photos or video clips to show the different ministries in action.

At the end of the presentation, give your group a few minutes to write down 2 questions they'd like to ask the presenter. Allow another 5-10 minutes for a question and answer time.

*Leaders Note: If you haven't organised anything in advance, and you know enough about your church, you could give the presentation yourself. Alternatively, you could allow the group to brainstorm different ministries of the church, similar to the question for 'New Christians' in the 'Discuss' section.*

### APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

AND/OR

Have your group organise with the church leader present to help serve in a ministry at church one Sunday in the next month. It could be something like welcoming people at the front door of church, helping out with the kid's ministry, sharing their testimony, or leading worship.

### LEADER'S NOTES

- Remember to create a helpful atmosphere before people arrive – put some music on, have a few snacks available, have something for people to do when they arrive.
- Be sure to provide your young people with adequate support. If they are sharing their testimony in church for the first time, you might want to meet up with them beforehand to help them plan what they will say and to pray for them.



## NO EXCUSES

**The world needs more heroes who are passionate about making a difference, but unfortunately there are too many people making excuses about why they shouldn't get involved. This week we look at Moses and what happened when he overcame his excuses.**

This week you'll need:

- A pen and an A4 sheet of paper for every person

### CONNECT

Go around the circle and give everyone a chance to answer your choice of the following questions:

- What rating out of 5 would you give to your week so far? Why?
- If you could have any person in the world over for dinner who would you choose and why?
- What was the last movie you cried in?
- If you had one wish what would you wish for?

### DISCUSS

Ask a volunteer to read out loud Exodus 3:10 to Exodus 4:14

*(Leaders Note: If your group is likely to struggle with the length of this passage, search for 'Burning Bush Moses' on YouTube and play your group the movie version)*

#### QUESTIONS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

- Imagine you are Moses. How would you feel? How do you think you would have reacted?
- Have you ever felt like Moses – like you're inadequate to be used by God or like someone else would do a better job?
- How does God respond to the excuses Moses makes? How do you think he will respond to our excuses?
- Why do you think it is so important for us to be obedient when God asks us to do something?

#### QUESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What stands out to you most from these verses?
- Have you ever found yourself coming up with reasons why you can't do something for God –or why someone else would do a better job?
- What's the difference between an excuse and 'saying no'?
- Do you think that God uses certain people more than others? Why?
- Do you think sometimes it can be a good thing for us to feel underqualified when we step out in ministry? Why/why not?



PRACTICAL MINISTRY



# NO EXCUSES

### INVOLVE

Pray for each other as a group. Take turns putting someone in the centre of the room and allowing 1 or 2 people to pray for them.

Pray for:

- Clarity on what God is calling them to do
- The ability to dream big about what they can do for God
- Courage to do what they're called to do without making excuses
- That the Holy Spirit would fill and empower them

### APPLY

This week, commit to taking note of the times you make an excuse or are tempted to. What was the situation? Why was an excuse your natural response?

Share back with the group at a later date.

### LEADER'S NOTES

- Include prayer as a part of your night. Maybe ask someone to open and someone else to close in prayer?
- Don't forget to set aside some time to ENJOY – have supper, play a game, or just chill!
- Don't forget that next week is practical ministry week! Take time now to finalise your plans for your ministry activity. Also let your group know of the plans for next week, so that they can come ready or do any necessary preparation.

# PRACTICAL MINISTRY WEEK

**This week, instead of the usual format you'll spend your life group time doing a ministry activity.**

Choose from the following ideas or come up with your own. Try to select something that matches the passions and talents of your unique life group. And whatever you choose, make sure that every one of your young people has a role.

IMPORTANT: If you are taking your group somewhere different to your regular meeting place, you'll need signed parental permission first!

## ACTIVITIES

### LOW PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

#### Bless your church leaders

Drop in on any church leaders that are home/available and wash their car(s), mow their lawns, clean their house and/or pray for them.

- You'll need:
  - \* A phone

#### Unexpected encouragement

Phone some people you all know, put them on speaker phone and have everyone encourage them. Be thoughtful about what you say, remembering that encouraging someone isn't just saying nice words about them. It means 'putting courage into' them.

- You'll need:
  - \* A phone

### MEDIUM PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

#### Make some meals

Cook and freeze meals that can then be distributed to people who are unable to cook for themselves.

- You'll need:
  - \* Food
  - \* Tupperware
  - \* A kitchen



## PRACTICAL MINISTRY



# PRACTICAL MINISTRY WEEK

---

### Clean a house

Ask your corps officer for a referral to someone that could benefit from help with household chores. The dirtier the house the more humbling the experience!

- You'll need:
  - \* Old clothes
  - \* Cleaning products/tools

### Wash Cars

As a whole group, knock on doors and ask whether people would like their car washed free of charge. For safety reasons, always stay together. Make sure that the cars are washed properly and encourage your young people to think about how they will share when asked why they are serving like this for free.

- You'll need:
  - \* Old clothes
  - \* Cleaning products/tools

### Mow lawns

As a whole group, knock on doors and ask whether people would like their lawn mowed free of charge. You'll need some additional leaders – enough so that every young person is with a leader at all times. Again, encourage your young people to think about how they will share when asked why they are serving like this for free.

- You'll need:
  - \* Old clothes
  - \* A lawn mower

### Visit a hospital or nursing home

Organise for your group to visit and spend time talking to people. Ask your corps officer who you should liaise with on this.

- You'll need:
  - \* No special materials

### Organise for your group to testify

It could be at another church's bible study, choir night or scout meeting, at a school event or at a council meeting. The important thing is that each person in your group has opportunity to share with people about the way Jesus is at work in their life.

- You'll need
  - \* No special materials



# PRACTICAL MINISTRY WEEK

---

### HIGH PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

#### Make crafty presents

If your group is arty, spend the night making something to bless someone with as a present. **Crafts.alot.com** has some fun ideas. As you make your presents, encourage your young people to think about how they can use their craft ability to minister to someone.

- You'll need:
  - \* Instructions on how to make your chosen craft item(s)
  - \* Whatever materials the instructions say you need

#### Hold a pampering night

Organise a night of pampering for some people from your church, school or even just for all your mums! Think foot spas, back massages, relaxing music, lovely food - maybe freshly baked cupcakes or chocolate fondue and maybe a nice card from the members of your group.

- You'll need:
  - \* Foot spas
  - \* Hand cream
  - \* CD with relaxing music
  - \* Any food you plan to provide
  - \* People to be pampered

#### Hold a 'we appreciate you' dinner

Have the group host a meal for people they look up to and admire. Each member should be allowed to invite one hero each. Have the group decorate the room, cook, wait on tables, clean up and give a public encouragement to their hero during the dinner. Pray for the 'heroes' and some point in the night.

- You'll need:
  - \* A kitchen
  - \* Food
  - \* A dining area
  - \* Decorations

### LEADER'S NOTES

- As your group prepares or completes their activity, try using some of your favourite CONNECT questions from previous weeks as conversation starters.

