

Leader Guide

Listen More

and

Talk Less

Conversations with God

by Ronnie Fox

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PDF version

Listen More and Talk Less

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Is available in eBook and Paperback at:

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This is a pdf version of the Leader's Guide for small group study of the book *Listen More and Talk Less - Conversations with God*.

The small group leader facilitates a personal conversation between God and each participant. It is something God desires. He is the creator of everything; and yet, He wants to talk with each individual.

Success does not depend on the leader's abilities. It is a chance to be a co-laborer with God himself. The best news is ... God is already invested.

A conversation with God is not only available to every believer, it is amazing. The creator of the universe really wants to talk with each person. It is actually His idea.

Mankind is unique in all of God's creation. Being human means the capacity to have a relationship is already there. Mankind was created as a relational being as a reflection of God's very nature.

A relationship with God may sound anything but simple. Humans don't bring anything of value. If people focus on the differences, a personal relationship with God does seem impossible. But remember what Jesus said,

**Jesus looked at them intently and said,
'Humanly speaking, it is impossible.
But with God everything is possible.'"**

(Matthew 19:26 NLT)

The relationship He wants is free of coercion. He created mankind with the freedom to reject Him. Each person is free to choose or reject. God wouldn't have it any other way.

Therein lies the miracle. God does not require a minimum IQ or have behavior requirements. He is content with his creation and welcomes each one's individuality.

How To Use This Guide

The secret to a deeper relationship with God is to have regular conversations with him. That is the objective of this guide.

What is expected of a group leader?

1. Be a learner (rather than an expert).
2. Facilitate conversations with God.
3. Remember, God desires a unique relationship with each and every person.

Entries in a journal are personal. Anticipate some responses to seem unrelated to the text. Resist making this a Bible study. Practice listening to God speak.

A Typical Session:

Timeframe: adjustable but usually between 30 to 60 minutes.

The best word to describe a typical small group session is “unpredictable”.

This guide follows the weekly themes found in the book. However, be flexible. The subject matter should be directed by God, not the author of this guide or the leader. A word of caution is appropriate here, flexibility does not equal a free-for-all. Allowing God to lead requires a leader to follow God’s prompting before, during, and after the meeting times.

The Textbook:

The Bible is the textbook, not any other book.

The version of the Bible or even the language is not the most important element. Hearing from God is the objective. The use of multiple translations (even multiple languages for those who are multilingual) may help someone hear what God is saying to them.

Many Bible apps give access to different translations without any cost. It is sometimes healthy to listen with your ears rather than your eyes. Do not be afraid to use a phone, tablet, computer, or other device to allow participants to “listen” to God speak audibly.

Session 1: Week 1

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: Hear God Speak

Review and plan the session.

Have participant books available: Link to eBook (paperback books if needed)

Session Outline

Prayer: Start with a simple conversation with God.

Use everyday language.

Be brief!

Listen to God speak.

Theme: Hear God Speak

It is not like a seance. It is not secretive. It is simple because God wants to talk with you as part of a healthy relationship.

Let's practice. We are going to listen to Psalms 50. (Yes, with our ears.)

Be prepared:

Discussion questions will focus on ...

What did God say to you in this chapter?

Play a recording on Psalms 50, probably on a phone or other device.

(Test the link and volume in advance. Note: enlisting a participant to be ready to play it on their phone not only engages them, it encourages others to participate while it models how easy it can be.)

Discussion questions:

What did God say to you in this chapter?

If there is any long delay (play Psalms 50 again).
Then, ask the question again.

Review Introduction to Week 1

You, or someone you enlist (in advance of course), can read the introduction directly from the book - or tell it in your (or their) own words.

Discussion questions:

What is the primary focus of this study?

Have you ever felt like your personal prayer time was like a “want list”?

How did the author say he learned to have a conversation with God?

How long did the author say he followed the plan before he stopped to review what he and God had talked about? (1,986 days or over 4 years and 5 months)

Why and how do you think focusing on your conversation with God might change your life?

Digging Into the Theme

Listening to God can be life changing. God’s objective is a conversation because he desires a relationship.

The Bible says:

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:6-9 ESV

Discussion questions:

Do you think dialogue is foundational in a relationship? Why? or Why not?

Are God's thoughts and ways like ours? Explain why or why not.

Does God allow how different we are stand in the way of our having a relationship with him? How do we know?

Looking Ahead

Summarize the expectations for the week ahead.

1. Daily Bible listening (to hear God's voice)
2. Short notes of what God says to you
3. Your response

You might say ...

"The next 6 days - primarily listening to God's voice."

"The objective is to practice."

"It may be new. Be patient."

"It takes time to develop a new habit."

"This study may work for you or it may not."

"Give it seven weeks."

(There is no implied guarantee.)

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Optional:

Romans 5:10-11 NLT

For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

Discussion questions:

What do these verses say can be restored by the death of Jesus?

Who do these verses describe our relationship with God prior to the sacrifice of Jesus?

What does it say is restored?

Session 2: Week 2

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: God wants a relationship.
Review and plan the session.

Session Outline

Prayer: Start with a simple (and brief) conversation with God.

Give God permission to redirect the session

Review:

The leader might ask (or remind participants):

Your conversation with God is personal.
(and can remain private).

You do not need to tell anyone.

With that in mind: (Possible Discussion Questions)

Did you and God talk about something you can share?
If so, what did God say?

Is there a topic you want us to discuss?

Relationships with God

Theme: God wants a unique relationship with you.

Remember: A relationship with God is not like a spooky seance. God does not want it to be difficult. It is not secretive. God makes it easy because he wants to talk with you as part of a healthy relationship.

Let's practice.

We are going to listen to Psalms 139.

It's only 2 dozen verses.

(Use - or have one of the participants use - a phone or other device - to play a recording.)

Discussion question:

What did God say to you in this chapter?

How is the way God searches us described in these verses?

What places does the psalmist mention that he could go and still not get away from God?

What are some of the things this Psalm uses to describe how God created him?

How would you describe the conversation the Psalmist had with God?

What does it say about their relationship?

Think as I reread verses 23 and 24 but, do not answer out loud. What might make a person willing to ask God to search and try them like he does?

Review Introduction to Week 2

The title of this week's introduction is "God wants a relationship with me." Review it silently and then we will discuss it.

Discussion questions:

What is the primary focus of Week 2?

How deep is your relationship with God?

(Don't answer out loud.)

Very shallow

Shallow

Average

Deep enough

Getting deeper

Very deep

Read or have someone read Psalms 8:4.

What is your impression? Explain

Does your effort matter? Why? or Why not?

Digging Into the Theme

Why is a relationship with God so important?

Conversation with God is essential.

(If possible, write the following sentences on a chalk / white board.)

Be sure to copy the underlined letter in each.

(Alternative: Write them on a sheet of paper and pass it around.)

It is not a conversation with God.

It is not conversations with God.

Ask: Does it make a difference? Why? or Why not?

Do you agree or disagree?

Listening and talking are both essential to conversation.

The Bible says:

Read Luke 18:16-20 (in the NLT version if possible).

Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to

store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!" "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God. Luke 12:16-21 NLT

Pause: allow time for participants to process the implications.

Now read Luke 12:21 NLT.

"Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." Luke 12:21 NLT

Discussion questions:

How do these verses describe a person who stores up earthly wealth?

What does verse 21 indicate is the priority?

Think about this next question but don't answer it out loud.

How would you rate your personal priority of improving your relationship with God?

Looking Ahead

Summarize the expectations for the week ahead.

Daily Bible listening

Take short notes of what God says

Write your response

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Optional:

Listen to what Jesus said about people praying in church.

Play recording of ... Luke 18: 9-14

Discussion questions:

What differences did you hear in how the two people prayed?

Who had a better attitude? Why?

What does Jesus say about humility?

No answer required.

What do you think Jesus is teaching you about prayer?

Session 3: Week 3

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: How God has earned our trust.
Review and plan session.

Session Outline

Start with a simple conversation with God.

Participants have had two weeks of practice ... ask how it is going so far.

Possible discussion questions:

- How are things going so far?
- Has God spoken to you?
- What did God say?

Theme: God has earned our trust.

A good relationship, a strong relationship, is founded on mutual trust. Think for a few seconds (don't answer out loud):

Do you really trust God? (Pause)
If so, how much? (Pause)

A strong relationship should be mutual. Mutual does not necessarily mean each one involved contributes equally. Each one brings what they have. With that in mind ...

What can you bring to your relationship with God?

You're here again.
God gives you credit for just showing up.

You listen to God and talk with him.
He loves that.

You can begin with what makes you, you.

God made you, you.

You were made for this.

God brings himself. It is a big deal. The creator of the universe wants a personal relationship with you. That means a unique relationship with you. Not a general one. He wants a relationship tailored just for you. He wants a special relationship with you. The relationship with you is his idea.

Let's meet with him right now.

Listen to Psalm 33 together in at least 2 different versions (the most popular in your church and a modern version like NLT or ESV).

(If possible, use a phone app, to model how easy it can be to hear God speak differently. Remember to encourage participation.)

Discussion questions:

What did God say to you in this chapter?

From Psalms 33, what can we offer God?

Sing for joy (think "enjoy it")

Praise him (really praise him)

A new song (think "special to you")

Play music (an instrument or a recording)

Think about his creation - it is awesome

He spoke and things came to be

He breathed and stars were born
... put hope in him
... trust his holy name

Why does God think a relationship is so important?

Digging Into the Theme

Why is a mutual relationship with God so important?

God knows everything. Yep!
He already knows me. Yep!
He created me. Yep!

What can I offer him?

In the Bible, David asks a similar question:

... what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Psalms 8:4 NLT

But, it was God's idea to have a relationship with each person.

The Bible says:

Read Romans 5:11

"More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Romans 5:11 ESV

You might say: "Listen again."

Pause: Then read Romans 5:11 again.

Give time for participants to process the implications.

Discussion questions:

What does reconciliation mean?

Reconcile = to make right

So, when someone receives reconciliation, what happens?

They are made right. Made right with God.

Are you right with God?

Yes, but only through Jesus.

Looking Ahead

Summarize the expectations of week 4.

Daily Bible listening

Brief notes of what God says to you

What you say to God

If it is private, we will all respect privacy.

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Optional:

Listen to what Jesus said about being the shepherd.

Play recording of ... John 10:14-16

Discussion questions:

What does Jesus say the good shepherd knows?

What does the good shepherd do for his sheep?

What do his sheep do?

What does Jesus say about unity?

Session 4: Week 4

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: Who God is ...

Review and plan the session.

Have - paper or chalk or whiteboard markers - ready to use.

Session Outline

Start with a simple conversation with God.

Participants have had three full weeks of practice ...

Possible discussion questions:

Is having a conversation with God getting easier and harder at the same time? (By the way, that's normal, if it feels that way.)

How would you describe your conversation with God?

Who God is ...

An important part of any conversation is the relationship between the participants. A meaningful relationship with God requires one to know "who God is".

Scripture is clear. God is not like us. God is love, perfect love. God is the creator of everything. God created each person.

Find it ...

Take time to find Bible verses that describe God. * Write each characteristic of God you find and the scripture reference where it can be found (in large print on a piece of paper if no chalk or white board is available, or on the chalkboard, or on the whiteboard).

Review the list of God's attributes.

Seeing this list, one might wonder ... How can a person have a conversation with God? God is not like us at all. We have nothing to offer God. So, why?

Answer: conversation is his idea

Read or have someone read: Acts 22:14-15

Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard.

Whose voice does these verses say they will hear?

What difference does it make to hear directly from God?

Digging Into the Theme

Why is knowing who God is so important?

The depth of a relationship is increased as the parties know each other better.

The Bible says:

Assign a verse to each participant. (prepare to read your verse and identify what it says God is ...

If the group is large - assign each verse to a team (pair or more) of participants. If the group is small assign more than one verse to cover all the scriptures.

1 John 4:8 NLT

"But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Psalms 34:8 NLT

"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!"

Matthew 5:48 NLT

“But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Jeremiah 10:10 NLT

“But the Lord is the only true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King! The whole earth trembles at his anger. The nations cannot stand up to his wrath.”

1 Corinthians 1:9 NLT

“God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 John 1:5 NLT

“This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.”

Deuteronomy 4:24 NLT

“The Lord your God is a devouring fire; he is a jealous God.”

Exodus 3:15 NLT

God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.”

Revelation 11:17 NLT

“And they said, “We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign.”

Discussion questions:

Remember: The Bible lists many more names that describe God.

Why do you think the Bible has so many names (or descriptions) for God?

Does God change?

Looking at the week ahead

Week 5 is a focus on living by God's standard.

Week 5 will give you the opportunity to know and understand God better. It is designed to allow you to deepen your relationship with him.

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Thank God for wanting to converse with us.

Optional:

Listen to what the Bible says:

Romans 12: 1-2

And so, dear brothers and sisters. I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Discussion questions:

What does a living sacrifice look like?

According to these verses, why are we to give our bodies as a living sacrifice?

What do these verses say about true worship?

It tells us not to behave like the world. How can we do this?

How do these verses describe "God's will for you"?

Session 5: Week 5

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: Live by God's standards

Stated another way: relationship over rules

Review and plan the session.

Session Outline

Start with a simple conversation with God.

Possible introduction:

Remember that conversation with God is personal and can need to remain confidential.

Caution members not to share anything that might be confidential for them or someone else.

It may be that God has said something for your ears only. He may need to deal with confession and forgiveness. God already knows everything, good and bad, and he still wants a personal relationship with you. He just wants for both of you to be on the same page.

Listen to what the Bible says in 1 John 1:5-10. (Read)

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:5-10 ESV)

Again, remember!

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 ESV)

Week 5

Living by God's standard - is the theme for this week.

What is God's standard?

God's standard is not a set of rules.

God's standard is based on God's power, not the amount of a person's faith. His standard is perfection because it is based on his limitless power.

God's standard is humanly unattainable. Many believe that having stronger faith is what qualifies us as more useful to God. In a way, the opposite is actually true. Faith is knowing we are completely dependent on God.

In the Bible, Paul says:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ESV

Weakness is an asset.

Does it feel like God is doing you a favor when he shows you, you are weak?

Digging Into the Theme

Read, or have someone read, the following verses: Galatians 1:6-7

In the Bible, Paul told believers:

I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to

be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.”

Galatians 1:6-7 NLT

God’s standard is often the opposite of what the world would say is important.

God’s standard ...

That’s why a cross makes sense.

Sacrifice gives power.

Victory is redefined.

Discussion questions:

Don’t worry if participants don’t have answers.

Don’t worry if there is hesitation.

Why do you think God’s standard is important?

(Why do you think it is needed?)

How would you define God’s standard?

Looking at the week ahead

Week 6 is a focus on Jesus as our savior.

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Optional:

Listen to what the Bible says:

James 3:13-18 NLT

If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are

earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

Discussion questions:

According to these verses, what are some of the behaviors that are the opposite of what God wants?

What are we cautioned not to do? (be bitterly jealous or harbor selfish ambition)

What do these verses say is the first characteristic of the wisdom from above? (Pure)

What other positive characteristics are mentioned?

Session 6: Week 6

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: Jesus is God's way of restoring our relationship with him.

Stated briefly: Jesus is the way

Review and plan the session.

Session Outline

Start with a simple (brief) conversation with God.

Encourage participants in their conversation with God. Remind them they are doing something that is utterly amazing. They are having an ongoing, personal, conversation with God.

They are listening and talking to the creator of everything.

He is the beginning and the end (Alpha and Omega).

Yet, he wants a personal, private, on going conversation with you.

If that doesn't do something for you, we probably need to call 911. You might even be dead.

Theme: Jesus is God's way of restoring our relationship with him.

Stated briefly: Jesus is the way

Listen to what the Bible says in John 14:5-11 (Read)

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father

also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."
" John 14:5-11 ESV

Discussion question:

How can we have access to God (the Father)?

It is worth repeating:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 ESV

In verse 7, Jesus reminds Thomas that knowing him (Jesus) is knowing the Father. What does that mean to you and why is it important?

If needed:

In a practical sense (rather than a theological sense) - What do you think it means to have access to God through Jesus?

Week 6

Jesus is God's way of restoring our relationship with him - that's why "Jesus is the way" is the theme for this week.

How is our relationship with God restored?

Remember from last week:

God's standard is humanly unattainable. Many believe that having stronger faith is what qualifies us as more useful to God. In a way, the opposite is actually true. Faith is knowing we are completely dependent on God.

Digging Into the Theme

Read - John 10:7-15

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

John 10:7-15 ESV

Discussion questions:

In these verses: What does Jesus say he is?

How does Jesus describe the relationship with his sheep?

Follow up to the previous question: How do you think a sheep learns to know its shepherd's voice?

What is the take away from these verses? or What is Jesus teaching us today?

Examples of conversations with God:

Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:9-13

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Abraham

Genesis 18:22-33 ESV

So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place."

Moses

Exodus 3:3-7

And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,"

Moses

Exodus 3:10-14

Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel,

out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

These conversations are examples of actual dialogues with God. There are many other biblical examples.

Discussion questions:

What words or phrases would you use to describe these conversations?

Does it seem God is bothered by sincere questions, even doubt?

The Bible is full of examples of conversations with God.

Looking at the week ahead

Week 7 Theme: How to avoid quitting.

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group. Thank God, if you can be specific.

Optional:

Listen to what the Bible says:

James 1:5-8 NLT

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

Discussion questions:

How do these verses describe God?

What advice do these verses give a person in need?

What is the caution mentioned in these verses?

Session 7: Week 7

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: How to avoid quitting

Review and plan the session.

Session Outline

Start with a simple (brief) conversation with God.

Week 7 addresses: How to avoid quitting.

Be a motivator:

The reason driving week 7 is to motivate and prepare participants to continue to have conversation with God.

Encourage participants.

Remind them: They are doing something that is utterly amazing. They are having an ongoing, personal, conversation with God, the creator of everything. (Yes, it's worth repeating.)

Remind them: God doesn't want the conversation to end. Matter-of-fact, he is more invested than we will ever be. We were created to have a relationship with God and regular conversation is a vital part of a healthy relationship.

Remind them: God is not going to force anyone to have a conversation with him. He leaves the choice up to each person.

Remind them: Encourage others. Each participant is an encourager.

How to be an encourager ...

Ask participants:

What are things you can do to encourage others to have conversation with God?

If they struggle to think of ideas, here are a few suggestions. (You can use examples from your own conversations with God.)

1) Explain how simple it is. Listening to God's voice through the Bible is easy and reliable - responding to what you hear God saying to you could be the difficult part (sometimes).

2) Give an example of something you heard God say to you. (Be brief.)

3) God even says some things that are personal and private. That's normal and you can keep appropriate things confidential.

Theme: How to avoid quitting.

Idea: Use the introduction to week 7 (found in the book) to begin generating ideas for "avoiding quitting".

Week 7 is focused on verses where God speaks to things that will motivate and instruct you to continue. It also reminds us that God is invested in our success. Jesus not only died to pay the penalty for our sin, he rose from the dead to demonstrate he has power over death and whatever this world might throw at you.

Three practical things to propel you forward.

1) Commitment:

Commitment does not mean you never miss. Commitment does not mean you never fall down. Commitment means you get up. Commitment means you start again. Remember: God will never punish you for getting up and starting over.

1 John 1:9 ESV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is a familiar verse to many. But reading it carefully, it doesn't tell us to be committed and never fail. Instead, it reminds us that when we fail (sin), he (God) forgives. Our job is to confess.

So what commitment does he want? (We are to "commit our ways to God".)

Psalm 37:4-5 ESV

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.

2) Preparation:

Preparation can be both practical and motivational. But more importantly, biblical (scriptural) training is even better. The Bible is used to prepare us to do "every good work".

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

This week has verses that can guide your preparation. Think longterm. Think about next week, next month, next year, even next decade.

3) Accountability:

Perhaps you have already heard of the concept of an "accountability partner."

Ecclesiastes chapter 4 is the biblical concept of an "accountability partner"

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NLT

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

A partner ...

- 1) helps you when you fall
- 2) shares warmth
- 3) has your back

But the twist is at the end. The scriptural advice adds a 3rd person to the mix. A small group, where participants agree to submit to being accountable to each other, is an example of where “three are even better”.

Accountability to other followers of Jesus can help you.

Theme: How to avoid quitting

Some practical questions:

Where do I go next?

Ideas:

Choose a book of the Bible rather than a topic.

Think: conversation

Not: devotional

The Bible should be the textbook.

(No matter what guide you may use.)

Remember:

“Listen more and talk less.”

Close with prayer:

Be brief, just talk to God on behalf of the group.

Ask God for where to go next.

Optional:

Consider leading a group to have conversation with God.

For example:

1) Psalm 121:1-2 ESV

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

What did God say to you?

What is your reply?

2) Acts 17:10-11 ESV

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

What did God say to you?

What is your reply?

3) Psalm 86:15-16 ESV

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.

What did God say to you?

What is your reply?

Session 8: Optional

Preparation: Before the Session

Theme: What next?

Review and plan the session.

Session Outline

Start with a simple (brief) conversation with God.

You may ask: Does anyone want to begin this session with a conversation with God?

The Bible is the textbook

The most reliable way to hear God speak is through his word.

Hebrews 4:12 ESV

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

What do you hear God saying to you in this verse?

Look at Psalms 119:1-8

Identify phrases that refer to God's Word.

Psalm 119:1-8 ESV

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

What are the phrases that refer to God's Word?
(See underlines)

Psalms 119 is actually a poem.

It is not like our poetry.

No rhyme

No repeating number of syllables

It is 176 verses.

Actually, it is 22 sets of 8 verses.

Each set of 8 verses is like a unit.

Suggestion or idea:

Listen to God speak by hearing a set of 8 verses each day for 22 days. There will be repetition. Hearing the same phrase over and over again is an intentional message in and of itself.

This could be a plan to use as a Bible based conversation with God. Three weeks and one day of hearing God speak.

Be a motivator:

Challenge participants to be motivators.

Remind them they are doing something that is utterly amazing. They are having an ongoing, personal, conversation with God (the creator of everything). God wants others to have regular conversation with them. Be a catalyst.

Point out: God doesn't want it to end. But, help them see at least two dimensions.

1) God wants to continue to have ongoing conversations with them.

2) God wants to talk with others (and they can be a part of that).

Matter-of-fact, God is more invested in genuine conversation than we will ever be. We were created in God's image so we could have a relationship with him. Conversation is a vital part of that relationship.

Optional ideas and questions:

Write down the names of at least three people who you think might want to follow this simple book.

Does God want you to lead the small group?
(Did you know there is a Leader Guide to help you?)

Provide copies of the books based on this method.

Listening to God in the Proverbs

By Ronnie Fox

Available in eBook & paperback

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09C2NPFQM>

Listening to God in the Psalms

By Ronnie Fox

Available in eBook & paperback

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08S9K84DP>

(Disclosure: The author, Ronnie Fox, receives a royalty from the sale of these books on Amazon.)

**Books By
Ronnie Fox**

Listen More and Talk Less - Revised

Conversations with God

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08NMW9X6F>

Prayer Guide Based on Listen More and Talk Less

Listening to God in the Proverbs

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09C2NPFQM>

Prayer Guide Based on Listen More and Talk Less

Listening to God in the Psalms

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08S9K84DP>

Ronnie's autobiography:

Beyond My Strength

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08QWCG8T4/>

Other books by Ronnie:

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/Ronnie-Fox/author/B08CF3WYFJ>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ronnie Fox is a writer and minister living in Hiram, Georgia. He is married to Gwenn and they have three adult children and four grandchildren.

His ministry experience includes six years as a member of the Church Planting Group at the North American Mission Board, SBC. In this ministry, he served as a strategic coordinator for urban projects.

Ronnie and Gwenn also served as missionaries assigned to Peru with the International Mission Board, SBC, from February 1986 until August 2004. These 18 years of ministry included a variety of roles among Spanish-speaking and Quechua-speaking Peruvians.

He is currently disabled due to a stroke he suffered in August 2010. The stroke left him partially paralyzed on his right side. In December 2020 Ronnie published the book *Beyond My Strength*, the story of his life, ministry, and partial recovery from a debilitating stroke.

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